

National Media Teleconference

Transcript – 45:19

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OPERATOR

Welcome to the National Media Teleconference, Thursday, May 28th, previewing 158th Belmont Stakes. Let me introduce our host, Mr. Jim Gluckson. Please go ahead.

JIM GLUCKSON

Ynnah, thank you very much and good day, everyone. And welcome to the National Thoroughbred Racing Association National Media Teleconference previewing the 158th Belmont Stakes presented by NIRA Vests, which is taking place on Saturday, June 6th at Saratoga Racecourse in Saratoga Springs, New York. This is the third consecutive year that the Belmont will be held at Saratoga before it moves back to the new Belmont Park in 2027.

Joining us today will be trainers Cherie DeVaux, Todd Pletcher, and Brad Cox to discuss their leading contenders for the third jewel of Thoroughbred Racing's Triple Crown. I want to remind everyone that today's call is being recorded. The playback of the call and the transcript will be posted on NTRA.com in the next 48 hours. Prior to beginning with our first guest, I would like to introduce the President and CEO of the NTRA, Tom Rooney, for some opening remarks. Tom, please go ahead.

TOM ROONEY

Thanks, Jim. On behalf of the National Thoroughbred Racing Association, our board, and all of our members, I want to thank all of the media for joining us today. Let's talk to three of our top trainers in the sport. Kentucky Derby winning trainer Cherie DeVaux, Lemon Bay High School alum, Todd Pletcher, second place renegade in the Derby as well as Powershift, and then, of course, Brad Cox, Florida Derby winning Commandment for a very exciting Belmont up at Saratoga. We're all looking forward to coming up and seeing how this Triple Crown season wraps up. But without further ado, I'll turn it back over to Jim and our first guest.

JIM GLUCKSON

Thank you very much. Our first guest, of course, is Cherie DeVaux, trainer of Kentucky Derby winner Golden Tempo for the Phipps Stable and St. Elias Stable. As a note before we begin, Cherie has committed a portion of her Belmont Stakes Festival earnings to benefit the Thoroughbred Retirement Foundation.

Cherie, welcome. How are you today?

CHERIE DEVAUX

I'm doing well. Thank you.

JIM GLUCKSON

You're very good. But with all the attention that has come your way since winning the Derby, and, of course, with a stable to run on a daily basis, what have the last 25 days been like for you?

CHERIE DEVAUX

It's been a little hectic, but it's been exciting. It's been really fun connecting to a lot of different outlets, news outlets that aren't necessarily mainstream for horse racing, all the while still running our stable, as we said.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Well, regarding the horse specifically, there were six weeks between Louisiana Derby and the Kentucky Derby, and now there are five weeks between the Derby and the Belmont Stakes. Have your preparations for him between the two races been similar, or have you done anything different in getting him ready for the Belmont?

CHERIE DEVAUX

They've actually been quite similar. We just were one less work than we had for the Kentucky Derby. But he had a maintenance work, then he had a bit of a more intense work last week, and we'll do something a little bit easy on him this week. So about the same, and he's responding well in the same way from the Louisiana Derby to the Kentucky Derby and now on to the Belmont Stakes.

JIM GLUCKSON

Being from the area, what does it mean for you to have your very first starter for the Belmont Stakes at Saratoga?

CHERIE DEVAUX

Well, you know, my family is in the area. Actually, I was born in Saratoga, but I like to say my formidable years were spent in southwest Florida because I'm not a huge fan of wintertime in the area. But, you know, it's an amazing opportunity to get to spend with my family, the buildup in the week of getting to spend time with, you know, my family, the young ones that don't get to come to the races, but my nieces and nephews.

So, you know, I'm really looking forward to that opportunity to sharing, you know, what I do with them.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right, well, very good. All right, Cherie, let's see if we have some questions from the media who are on the line today. So, Ynnah, can you take us into that portion of the program, please?

OPERATOR

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, we will now begin the question-and-answer session. Should you have a question, please press the star followed by the one on your telephone keypad. You will hear a prompt that your hand has been raised, and should you wish to cancel your request, please press star followed by the two. I would like to advise everyone to have a limit of one question and one follow-up. And if you're using a speakerphone, please lift the handset before pressing any keys. One moment, please, for your first question. Thank you. And your first question comes from the line of Stephen Whyno from the Associated Press. Please go ahead.

STEPHEN WHYNO

Hi, Cherie. Just obviously winning the Kentucky Derby is a different sort of race with 19 horses than the Belmont. It is a mile and a quarter instead of a mile and a half. But what are the different challenges in this race than Golden Tempo faced five weeks earlier?

CHERIE DEVAUX

You know, it really is kind of the same setup. There will still be plenty of horses in the race. You know, we just have to hope that a pace materializes with his running style.

And if that does not happen, Jose is going to have to come up with plan B to where he just doesn't give himself so much to do in the later stages of the race.

STEPHEN WHYNO

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. Once again, that is star and one to ask a question. And your next question comes from the line of Andrew Gross from Newsday. Please go ahead.

ANDREW GROSS

Hi. Thanks for doing this. I was just curious. You know, like you said, you're from Saratoga. I was just wondering, you know, for the sport, what your impressions are of the three years or this is going to be three years racing the Belmont at Saratoga. And what, looking ahead, it's going to mean for the sport to get back to Belmont Park next year? And have you seen what they've done at Belmont Park yet?

CHERIE DEVAUX

So I have not had the chance to get to Belmont Park and see the new grandstand. I very much look forward to that. Being at based in Belmont for eight years, exciting for the future ahead. It's been a nice little break to get to Saratoga a little bit earlier, kind of an appetizer to the Saratoga meet and having the Belmont there.

But, you know, there's in the Triple Crown series, the Belmont being a mile and a half with their big racetrack. I really kind of think that's a unique opportunity as a lot of these horses won't ever have to do that again in their career. So, you know, just like to get back to Belmont, you know, on Old Sandy and, you know, just that aspect of the series.

ANDREW GROSS

And I was just curious, it seems like, you know, increasingly over the years, this question comes up more and more about Triple Crown scheduling, you know, especially the last couple of years. I was just wondering, you know, for you as a trainer, what your optimal schedule would be, you know, to get a horse to run in all three races?

CHERIE DEVAUX

So, although we bypassed the Preakness, I actually admire and respect the Triple Crown the way that it is. You know, coming back, racing in two weeks and then coming back and running a mile and a half at Belmont, you know, it takes a special type of horse to do that. And, you know, and the horse has to kind of be there from the beginning, you know, winning the Derby. But I think prior, the horse has to kind of be there, as opposed to a horse like Golden Tempo, who's improved to get there.

So, you know, with that being said, I also understand that our sport, the Triple Crown Series is kind of where the lay fans are interested in. So, you know, maybe just give it a three week or, you know, three week into a three, four week, you know, just give them an opportunity to kind of get over the race, have a work, and then move on to the Preakness.

ANDREW GROSS

All right. Appreciate it.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes in the line of John Pricci from Horseraceinsider.com. Please go ahead.

JOHN PRICCI

Good afternoon, Cherie. Looking at your horse's fractions in the Derby, it seems like you 12 clipped the field, although you didn't do it in the usual fashion. But every quarter, I'm sorry, every eighth was, you know, done in 12 or 12 and change. And the reason I bring that up is, doesn't that mean that Golden Tempo will be closer to the pace this time, knowing that you have a little speed and you don't have to use it?

CHERIE DEVAUX

Yeah. So a lot of that just the optics of it. He's going to run his race. And where he is, the optics of it are what they're doing in front. So it's kind of just how the race unfolds in front of them and what Jose decides to do, you know, and as well as Golden Tempo.

We've never wanted to change his running style. However, it does leave him vulnerable to pace dynamics not working in his favor. You know, if there's not a contentious pace, he should be closer in theory.

JOHN PRICCI

Thanks, Cherie. Have a safe trip next Saturday.

CHERIE DEVAUX

Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes in the line of David Grening from Daily Racing Forum. Please go ahead.

DAVID GRENING

Hi. My question was kind of along the lines of how you just answered it, but I guess the way I'll phrase it is, is Golden Tempo equipped to go to a Plan B to be closer? And I guess

that was sort of the point of putting the blinkers on, which hadn't necessarily materialized in that fashion yet.

CHERIE DEVAUX

I think he is now. It's a two. Jose can either get him closer earlier or he needs to start his run earlier. So, you know, and that sustained run also is not ideal. So, you know, ideally, I would like Jose earlier in the race at some stage to get himself in a better position to make his run. You know, and that's going to have to be a game time decision that's left up to him. But, yes, I hope that if there's not the pace that we had in the derby, Jose can get him in a better spot early in the race just so he's not having to do so much in the later stages.

DAVID GRENING

Got it. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes in the line of Kaitlyn Hill from Paulick Report.

Please go ahead.

KAITLYN HILL

Hello, Cherie. I was wondering when you plan to ship Golden Tempo to Saratoga and if you have plans to work him over the track before the race or simply just galloping and driving?

CHERIE DEVAUX

We are going to finish our prep here in Kentucky. Weather kind of pushed us a little bit, so he will work on Saturday and ship on Sunday, arriving Monday morning to Saratoga.

KAITLYN HILL

Okay. Thank you.

OPERATOR

No question at this time. Please proceed.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Let's give it another minute here and see if there are any more questions that might emerge here. So let's just hang for a second.

OPERATOR

And your next question comes in the line of Andrew Gross from Newsday. Please go ahead.

ANDREW GROSS

Hey, I'm sorry. Just one more on going back to Belmont. What do you think having that fourth synthetic all-weather track will do for the park and for the horse racing industry? Thanks.

CHERIE DEVAUX

Well, the synthetic track is another option, especially where turf horses can be vulnerable to weather, interrupting their racing. And a lot of turf horses, you know, trainers are more comfortable with going to the all-weather track instead of running them on the dirt. So it hopefully can keep field sizes up.

It's also another great option for horses that might run at the lower level and be more effective on the turf. Again, not saying it always translates, but it's another option instead of going straight to the dirt. So, you know, it does have its value not in just being a surface, but also an alternative to keep field sizes together with nature, you know, with Mother Nature and in the wintertime, giving horses that so they can keep running throughout the year, especially in New York.

ANDREW GROSS

Thanks.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Jim Chairusmi from Wall Street Journal. Please go ahead.

JIM CHAIRUSMI

Hi, Cherie. I guess going back to your derby win, I think before or after you won the derby, you mentioned you had a stable of what, around 120 horses. Has winning the

derby, you know, like gotten more interest from other newer owners who perhaps want you to train their horses? And would you consider expanding that number?

CHERIE DEVAUX

120 is the number that I am comfortable with. I make a lot of effort going into the spring and the two-year-olds coming in to make room for that. I have had, you know, some new interest clients reach out. And if I feel it's a good fit to our program, you know, we'll try to make it work. You know, but really, I don't plan on getting much more above the number where we're at right now.

JIM CHAIRUSMI

And I guess related to that, you know, we see even the entries in the Belmont, we have super trainers who are entering multiple horses in the race. Do you think that you could compete with that?

CHERIE DEVAUX

I have so far. So, you know, I'm not a small stable. And we make it work.

And, you know, so I guess I would be proof that, you know, you don't have to have those numbers. Now, I admire trainers who do have those numbers and they do it at that level. But, you know, everybody has to do with what they're comfortable with. And like I said, I'm proof that you can be at a smaller, you don't have to be at the major numbers, but you can still win big races and compete at the highest level.

JIM CHAIRUSMI

Thank you. Good luck.

OPERATOR

Thank you. Thank you. No question at this time. Please proceed. All right.

JIM GLUCKSON

Well, Cherie, I wanted to thank you very much for joining us today on the call. And I appreciate the time. And good luck to you and to all your horses at the Belmont Stakes Festival next week.

CHERIE DEVAUX

Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

JIM GLUCKSON

We're going to try to bring in Todd here. Todd Fletcher is our next guest. But we're going to try and see if we can get a hold of him. Hold on one second, please.

OPERATOR

We have Todd Fletcher on the line.

JIM GLUCKSON

Todd, good afternoon. Jim Gluckson. How are you?

TODD PLETCHER

Good, Jim. How are you doing?

JIM GLUCKSON

Thanks. Great. Thanks for joining us today. Todd, of course, is our next guest. He's the eight-time Eclipse Award winning trainer and Hall of Famer. Todd will be entering two horses in this year's Belmont Stakes. Which is the most Belmont wins by any active trainer. Todd, I'd like to begin with you about the renegade and going back to the Kentucky Derby after being severely compromised at the start of the Derby. Can you comment on how well he came back in that race and how well he has progressed in preparation for the Belmont Stakes?

TODD PLETCHER

Overall, he came out of the race well. Like a lot of horses who run in the Derby, he was a little bit tired immediately after the race. But we gave him a few days to recover.

Shipped him to Saratoga with the idea that we would have two breezes prior to the Belmont. We had one last Thursday and probably going to have the final one tomorrow.

Kind of watching the weather. It looks like maybe some rain on Saturday, so we might go ahead and get it in tomorrow. We'll watch the weather overnight, but that's the current plan. Overall, we're very pleased with the way he's training.

JIM GLUCKSON

Very good. Power Shift also ran on that Derby part on May 2nd at Churchill and was impressive in breaking his maiden at 1.16 miles. What have you seen from him since then that gives you confidence that he's on prime for a big effort in the Belmont Stakes?

TODD PLETCHER

He bounced out of that race really well. He's a beautiful colt, carries plenty of condition, looks very well. He worked in company with the Renegade last week and held his own just fine. He's always been a very good workhorse and one that we've always had high hopes for. We kind of got off track a bit when we ran him in the Tampa Derby after being a very close second to the Louisiana Derby winner in a maiden race. I think we didn't have quite enough time to properly prepare for that. Afterwards, we decided to regroup and went for that maiden race on the Derby undercard. We thought that went well enough to consider taking a bigger step there.

JIM GLUCKSON

Okay. All right. Let's see if we have some questions from the media online. So, Ynnah, can you please go to that section of the program, please?

OPERATOR

Thank you. Once again, should you have a question, please press star, fall by the one on your telephone keypad. Your first question comes from the line of Byron King for Blood Horse. Please go ahead.

BYRON KING

Hi, Todd. Thanks for taking time with us. Regarding Power Shift, he's a unique horse coming off just a maiden win. Through the years, we've seen most Belmont winners have either run in the Derby or run in the Peter Pan or perhaps the Sir Barton races like that. What gives you the confidence that he's ready to take this massive class hike into the Belmont? Does it being a mile and a quarter race, does that make it more manageable than, say, if it had been this traditional distance of a mile and a half?

TODD PLETCHER

He's a colt that we've always been very high on all the way back to last summer at Saratoga before we had to give him a little time. He's always trained at the top of the class. And, yeah, I think it does make a difference that the race is a mile and a quarter this year.

Being a little more lightly raced, a mile and a half might have been biting off a little too much, but we feel like he's got a very good foundation of races and he's run numbers that would be competitive with the field. And, like I said, we've always been very keen on the way he trains.

BYRON KING

At what point, Todd, did you think, boy, we really need to run him in the Belmont? Was it his sharp work the other day with Renegade or were you thinking about it even beforehand?

TODD PLETCHER

We were thinking about it immediately after his maiden race, but the good breeze gave us added confidence to go ahead and keep pointing in that direction.

BYRON KING

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Jay Posner from Los Angeles Times. Please go ahead.

JAY POSNER

Thank you. Hi, Todd. Along the lines of that question, Powershift is one of five forces in the field that has either one or zero wins out of a possible ten that are starting.

Everyone has their different reasons for jumping into the Belmont, but do you see this as a trend in a way that could catch on? And we've seen it a little bit in the Derby with really lightly raced or even less accomplished horses taking their shot in races like this.

TODD PLETCHER

I think it's definitely a trend that we're seeing more and more of, more lightly raced horses going into bigger races. Not unusual for horses to jump right out of the maiden race and do a graded stake or, in this case, a classic. I think it's probably a number of reasons why, but it definitely seems like a clear trend in the last few years that more and more people are willing to go ahead and step into the deep waters early on in their horses' careers.

JAY POSNER

As a follow-up, can you expand a little bit on what you think a couple of the reasons are?

TODD PLETCHER

Well, I think the pole crop, for one. Fewer horses out there. And then, with fewer horses out there, we're seeing less and less opportunities to run back and allowance races. A lot of times, we won't have enough entrants to fill the races, so it kind of sometimes will force your hand to go ahead and step up in class in order to have a race.

JAY POSNER

Great. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Chelsea Hackbarth from Paulick Report. Please go ahead.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

Hi, Todd. Thanks for doing this. I'm curious what the feedback from Johnny V was after the Tampa Bay Derby with Power Shift. Sort of what went wrong in that race? And then, if you could talk a little bit about what a maiden win sort of does for a horse's confidence from that perspective.

TODD PLETCHER

Yeah, I think Johnny was a little bit frustrated. Didn't get off to a great start in the race at Tampa, and that sort of took him out of the position we wanted him to be in. Sort of in behind horses and maybe taking a little more kickback than he did in his debut. So, it kind of didn't go right from the first step away from there. And, you know, we didn't feel like he performed nearly as well as he was capable of. Then, you know, I think any time you can win a race, it gives the horse some added confidence and certainly gives the connections confidence as well.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

Sure. Who will be on him for the Belmont? I'm sure it's written somewhere. I just haven't seen it yet.

TODD PLETCHER

Right now, it looks like Luis Saez.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

Okay. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Andrew Gross from The State. Please go ahead.

ANDREW GROSS

Hi, Todd. Thanks for doing this. I was just wondering, you know, as a horse racing historian, how do you think the three years at Saratoga are going to be viewed? And what is it going to mean for the sport and the industry to get back to Belmont Park in 27?

TODD PLETCHER

Yeah, I think it's interesting. You know, obviously, it would have been most interesting how historians would have viewed it had there actually been a triple crown winner. You know, that would have probably been one that people would have commented on as possibly being an asterisk type triple crown.

But, you know, I think it's hugely important to get it back to Belmont. The opening of a new facility is something that, you know, can really give the industry a shot in the arm. You know, I just love getting back to the additional mile and a half. It's such a unique race and don't get the opportunity to run that far very often. And, you know, to do it at a facility like Belmont, where it's a once around oval, mile and a half oval, that's, to me, that's, you know, the ultimate race, especially when there's a triple crown on the line.

ANDREW GROSS

I know these questions come up frequently at this time of the year, but what do you see in the future with the triple crown schedule? Do you think ultimately there will be adjustments made and do you think adjustments have to be made?

TODD PLETCHER

I have traditionally been one that's in favor of, you know, keeping history in its place and trying to do it the same way. But I just think we're at a point in the industry where we have to make some changes. And I think, you know, if we could put ourselves in a position where the top 14 horses are running in all three legs of the triple crown or potentially doing that would certainly be more interesting than most horses shipping to Preakness and then, you know, some coming back into Belmont. So, I think, you know, it's time to make a change and, you know, we need to improve.

ANDREW GROSS

I'm sorry for a third question. Do you have a optimal, you know, duration or length between races that you think would work best? Thanks.

TODD PLETCHER

Yeah, I don't know that there's a perfect solution. And obviously, you know, each track, you know, want to do what's best for them. So, leaving the first leg, that's pretty easy. It's just working out the second two. So, is that a month and a month? I think that works.

I think that would give most horses a chance if you wanted to make it five weeks and five weeks or three weeks and four weeks or three weeks and five weeks. I mean, I think all those could make a difference, but I think probably the simplest solution is May, June, and July.

ANDREW GROSS

All right. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of David Grening from Daily Racing Forum. Please go ahead.

DAVID GRENING

Hey, Todd. How concerned, if at all, are you about the potential of lack of pace for Renegade? And then conversely, how much could a potential lack of pace help Powershift?

TODD PLETCHER

Yeah, I mean, I think, you know, the way it's stacking up, it doesn't appear to be a lot of pace. I think Powershift in that scenario would be forwardly placed. And I think they complement each other's racing styles. I think Renegade's, you know, tractable enough. If they're not going real fast, he can be a little closer than he has been. You know, we kind of, in the Arkansas Derby and the Kentucky Derby, felt like there was going to be enough pace to run at that Ired wanted to let him settle and make his run. But he's adaptable enough to adjust to really slow pace.

DAVID GRENING

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. No question at this time. Please proceed.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Well, I think we would like to thank Todd for his time this afternoon, for taking some questions here on the Belmont Stakes on his horses. Todd, again, best of luck to you for all your horses during the Belmont Festival next week.

TODD PLETCHER

Thank you, everyone. Appreciate it.

JIM GLUCKSON

Todd Pletcher, everyone. We're now going to bring in Brad Cox. Brad is our next guest. He is a two-time Eclipse Award winning trainer. Brad won the 2021 Belmont Stakes with essential quality. Brad currently leads all North American trainers in earnings this year so far with more than \$12 million. Brad, welcome. How are you today?

BRAD COX

Great, Jim. How are you?

JIM GLUCKSON

Great. Thanks for joining us. Brad, of course, he will be entering Watson Racing Commandment, winner of the Fountainview Stakes in the Florida Derby and was seventh in the Kentucky Derby. And speaking of the Derby, Brad, my first question is Commandment was really still in good position coming down the stretch in the Derby when Ocelli moved over and made contact with him, causing Commandment to look like news momentum. And can you comment on his overall performance in the Derby and the factors following that that led you to a decision to point him towards the Belmont?

BRAD COX

Well, I thought the performance in the Derby was decent. I thought he raced a little wide around both turns. You know, I thought the Derby was a race where, you know, if you were in the first half of the pack in the first quarter mile, it just didn't work out real well for most of those horses. And, you know, he laid, I guess, somewhere off, you know, right behind the mid-pack flight top, whatever, 12th, 13th. But it felt like, you know, we'd give him time after the Derby and see how he came out of it. And he's trained well since. So I feel like we're in a great spot with him.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. And can you give us an indication about his workout plans over the next couple of days, please?

BRAD COX

Yeah, we plan on breezing at Churchill on Saturday. And then if all's well, we will ship Sunday evening from Churchill to Saratoga.

JIM GLUCKSON

Alright, very good. Let's see if we have some questions now from the media that's online. So, Ynnah, can you go to that portion of the call, please?

OPERATOR

Thank you. If you wish to ask a question, please press star and one on your telephone keypad. Once again, that is star and one to ask a question. And if you're using a speakerphone, please lift the handset before pressing any keys.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Why are we – okay. Here we go.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your first question comes from the line of David Grening from Daily Racing Forum. Please go ahead.

DAVID GRENING

Brad, I was just wondering if you felt that this horse kind of seems to be a little bit of the forgotten horse, considering what he's accomplished, two graded stakes and a third stake win at Gulfstream, and yet he seems to fall a bit under the radar. Do you sense that or am I misreading that?

BRAD COX

No, maybe a little bit. I would agree with that. I do think horse racing is made up of what have you done lately. I think if you look at a lot of the polls with who's on top in the 3.0 division and not only that, but just the older horse division or the national rankings, I think a lot of it comes down to what you did in your last race. And obviously, that was

not the performance we were looking for in the derby, but I thought it was a good run, and I think he's a little bit forgotten. And I do think if you zero in on him and watch his race in the derby, I thought he actually ran pretty well, just obviously wasn't the result we were looking for.

DAVID GRENING

And do you think getting off maybe a tick slow and being out of position, being new to him, impacted him the way he ran? And if he gets away cleanly in a race that may not have as much space, he'll be within striking distance where he'll give you the run that he's given you in those other races?

BRAD COX

Yes, I do believe so. Obviously, you're not running against, I think it ended up being 18 other horses in the derby. Obviously, it's a shorter field, probably a little bit shorter run to the first turn as well. Obviously, a mile and a quarter of a mile and an eighth track, race probably won't be run as quick. And like you said, maybe he puts himself in a little bit more of a forward position. Looking back on the derby, I think we would have been fine if we would have just settled a little bit more as opposed to maybe asking for the position he got going into the first turn.

It's always easy to look back and second guess things. And obviously, how the race unfolded, I think he broke flat in the derby. But I would expect him to be maybe a little more forward in the Belmont, just like you said, based off who looks like signing up to run. And maybe I wouldn't use the word lack of pace, but maybe not quite as much pace in the Belmont as the derby.

DAVID GRENING

And then lastly, in hindsight, him having run two fast races on numbers in the Founder Youth and Florida Derby, could that have impacted him in the Kentucky Derby? And do you just think having these five weeks to recover from that has filled up the tank again?

BRAD COX

You know, I don't. I'm not going to go with he ran a flat race because of the two big runs in Florida. I think he may have just run a flat race because he was not really where he maybe needed to be. But a lot of where I mean, really, there was just one horse, maybe two horses in the derby that found themselves. And with three, I guess the top three finishers all were toward the back of the pack. And, you know, they just, you know, the dynamics just didn't set up for him that day. And, you know, I felt like he was ready to

run. And I thought he, like I said, ran well, just not maybe as a race and the greatest setup for him.

DAVID GRENING

Thank you. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Stephen Whyno from the Associated Press. Please go ahead.

STEPHEN WHYNO

You just mentioned that sort of the pace difference. How do you think or expect this race at the Belmont to shape up differently than the derby?

BRAD COX

I don't think there'll be as much pace. And I just think it's just a race where there's not as much pressure on the jockeys, the horses. I'm not certain we get in. I mean, listen, I

think it's important to break well, regardless the race, whatever race, whether it's, you know, it's always important to break well. I just, you know, I think the derby is its own thing in regards to, you know, the adrenaline, the jockeys feel, the horses feel, the importance on getting away well. More horses.

So I just think, you know, most all races are run with just not as much pressure from the jockeys, the horses and everything that goes into it. So I think it'll probably be a little bit more comfortable race for all the horses, or we're certainly hoping it will be. And I think it's probably a more fair run race, clean run race. The derby just comes down to the horse that gets the best trip most of the time. And, you know, that's the way I see it.

STEPHEN WHYNO

Thank you.

OPERATOR

And your next question comes from the line of Jay Posner from Los Angeles Times.

Please go ahead.

JAY POSNER

Thanks, Brad. Commandments had three different jockeys in his last three races. And what went into the decision to make it four for four this time with bringing Johnny B aboard?

BRAD COX

Well, we found out he was open. The Walkdown team reached out to me about who was available, you know, a couple weeks ago. And we felt like Johnny Velasquez was what we felt like, you know, one of the top guys open, obviously had a tremendous amount of success throughout the world, but especially on the Naira circuit, you know, Saratoga as well as anyone, and just felt like, you know, it would be a good fit.

JAY POSNER

Were you looking to make a change anyway? Or is it more that he was available?

BRAD COX

I think that he was available at the time. And, you know, we had obviously, you know, kind of made some phone calls to see who was taken, who was planning on running.

And like I said, Johnny was open and felt like we needed to lock him up before maybe someone else did. And I think, you know, I'm hopeful it's – I mean, listen, you can't go wrong when you lug him up on a horse. And I think, you know, it'll be a good matchup.

JAY POSNER

Great. Thank you. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes to the line of Lillian Davis from Paulick Report.

Please go ahead.

LILLIAN DAVIS

Hi, Brad. I was wondering, you know, it's a smaller field, but what post would be ideal for him?

BRAD COX

I'd say four or five, something like that. You know, maybe not too far out. Probably always never really want the one hole or the two. But, you know, I feel, you know, somewhere in the middle would be fine, I'd say.

LILLIAN DAVIS

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Andrew Gross from Newsday.

Please go ahead.

ANDREW GROSS

Hi, Brad. Thanks for doing this. Obviously, Saratoga is beautiful and it's, you know, historic course. But what's the anticipation for getting back to Belmont next year? And just as a trainer, are there any differences that you've noticed in prepping, you know, in prepping for the two courses?

BRAD COX

I wouldn't say the prep is any different or the training. And listen, yeah, I think, what is this, the third year of the Belmont being at Saratoga. So, yeah, I don't think that the prepping or the training is any different. I am anticipating or looking forward to going back to Belmont. I think that's going to be a world-class facility from what little I've seen so far. And, you know, look, Saratoga is great, but Belmont is meant to be on Long Island at Belmont.

And the Travers is obviously the Midsomer Derby and that's meant to be at Saratoga. So, I'm looking forward to getting back to Belmont. That's always a great weekend of racing with all the stakes from the Acorn, the Ogden FIPS, and all those great, great ones and undercard races.

And, you know, from our experience in the past with that weekend, it's, you know, it's, I think it's good for Belmont. And then, obviously, you know, Saratoga is always held its own, and I don't necessarily think they need the Belmont to keep the history and stuff going there at Saratoga. So, I'm looking forward to it going back to Belmont.

ANDREW GROSS

All right. And just, you know, going into the future, what are your thoughts on what happens with the Triple Crown schedule and how quickly, if anything, might something happen?

BRAD COX

Well, I have no clue how quick something will happen. I do think it does need to change. I've said that for a few years just with, you know, I mean, look, I'm all for history and all the great horses that have won the Triple Crown, but it's definitely a different time and era and horses, you know, it just needs to change. Two weeks is definitely not enough for a turnaround from the Derby to the Preakness and then to think you follow that up in three weeks. And, you know, a lot of these horses, I mean, obviously, they're free, they're still young. And, you know, perfect example is we don't prep for the Breeders' Cup anywhere two weeks.

People don't even like prepping for the Breeders' Cup sometimes four weeks prior to the Breeders' Cup. So, you know, obviously the Triple Crown is our main stage, I think, in horse racing and those three races mean a tremendous amount to racing here and all over the world, really. And I think that, you know, it would help the animal a tremendous amount and the longevity of their careers if we could space those races a bit. And once again, I don't know when it would happen and if it will. I do think it'll happen someday, just not sure when.

ANDREW GROSS

All right. I appreciate it. Thanks.

BRAD COX

No problem.

OPERATOR

Thank you. No question at this time. Please proceed.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right, then. Brad, I want to thank you for taking the time today to answer questions from the media here about Commandments. And I wanted to wish you good luck in the Belmont Stakes Festival for him and for all your horses. And again, thanks again for joining us and have a good day.

BRAD COX

Thanks, Jim. Talk to you guys soon. Thank you.

Jim Gluckson

Thank you, Brad. I wanted to thank everyone for joining the call today. And I wanted to appreciate – InterApe appreciates all your participation this year on the Triple Crown conference call. I wanted to remind everyone that in the next 48 hours there will be a transcript of this call and an audio playback. And finally, I want to make a special thanks to the Wish Group for providing their conferencing services and for the production of these calls throughout the Triple Crown. Thanks again, everyone, and have a good day.

OPERATOR

Thank you, and this concludes today's call. Thank you for participating. You may all disconnect.