

National Media Teleconference Friday, May 8, Previewing 151st Preakness Stakes

Transcript - 44:56

5/8/26

OPERATOR

Welcome to the National Media Teleconference, Friday, May 8th, previewing the 151st Preakness Stakes. Let me introduce our host, Mr. Jim Gluckson, please go ahead.

JIM GLUCKSON

Thank you very much, Ynnah, and good day, everyone, and welcome to the NTRA National Media Teleconference previewing the 151st Preakness Stakes taking place on Saturday, May 16th, at Laurel Park in Maryland. Joining us today will be trainers Chad Brown, Brittany Russell, and Whit Beckman to discuss their leading contenders for the Middle Jewel of Thoroughbred Racing's Triple Crown. This is the second of three Triple Crown media teleconferences that the NTRA will be hosting this year.

Our third teleconference is scheduled for Thursday, May 28, previewing the 158th Belmont Stakes. I want to remind everyone that today's call is being recorded, and a playback of the call and a transcript will be posted on NTRA.com in the next 48 hours. So, let's begin our call with our first guest, he is five-time Eclipse award-winning trainer Chad Brown.

Chad has won the Preakness twice in his career. The first time was with Cloud Computing in 2017, and he won it again in 2022 with Early Voting. Chad will be entering Gotham Stakes winner Iron Honor for St. Elias Stable, William Lawrence, and Glassman Racing. Chad, welcome. How are you today?

CHAD BROWN

Good. Thanks for having me.

JIM GLUCKSON

Great. Thanks, Chad, for joining us.

You worked Iron Honor at Belmont Park on April 18, and then you took him out of consideration for the Derby about three days later. What have you seen in his training that gives you great confidence here that he's heading in the right direction for the Preakness in 10 days?

CHAD BROWN

He's been training very consistent, very relaxed, but worse in his last race [Wood Memorial] he got bothered in the first turn from a bad post and started pulling down the backside corner and just never really relaxed, so we took the blinkers off the horse. We've given him a chance to get over that experience, and he seems to be in a good place right now training just the way we want him. Okay.

JIM GLUCKSON

Now, of course, we're at Laurel this year for the Preakness. It's a wider course, wider track than over at Pimlico. How do you feel this style, this configuration, does it matter at all, or does he fit it well, or do you have any comments on that, on the configuration at Laurel?

CHAD BROWN

I don't. I've run horses there sparingly. I don't have much experience with Laurel to weigh in there.

I'm hopeful that the horse can take his racetrack with him as long as he's training well, but that's certainly a question mark. Obviously, he had a much more experience going to Pimlico for this race. There's still a lot of people that have had success in it, but the change for this year isn't going to stop me from going and kind of seeing what happens.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. As far as for Iron on our workout schedule for the next few days?

CHAD BROWN

He's going to have his final work for the race tomorrow at Belmont Park, and then if he comes out of that in good shape, then beginning of the week at some point, he'll head down to Laurel.

JIM GLUCKSON

Very good. All right. Now, let's see if we have some questions on the line from the media.

So, Ynnah, can you take us to the next portion of our conference call, please?

OPERATOR

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, we will now begin the question-and-answer session. Should you have a question, please press 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. If you are using a speakerphone, please lift the handset first before pressing any keys. One moment, please, for your first question.

And your first question comes from the line of Byron King from Blood Horse.

Please go ahead.

BYRON KING

Hi, Chad. Thanks for taking time for us. I was hoping you could talk a little bit about your ownership, your partners that you've got with Iron Honor, St. Elias Stable, William Lawrence, Glassman Racing. I think it speaks to the quality of Vinny Viola Stable that here they win the Kentucky Derby with Golden Tempo, and even though they're sitting out the Preakness, they're represented with Iron Honor. Talk a little bit about the strength of his stable, and for that matter, teaming up with William Lawrence and Glassman Racing. Obviously, William Lawrence was associated with Cloud Computing, your first Preakness winner.

So, if you could talk about that, please.

CHAD BROWN

Yeah. Well, I'm very appreciative to be on the team with St. Elias. They have several trainers and spread really nice prospects out, and we're lucky to get a few of those in our barn.

And this particular horse, I was able to get involved with St. Elias, picking a horse out, his team, and asking me at the sale time if I had anybody that was looking to go in on a quarter of, you know, some of the yearlings as they look to partner and spread out a little bit. And Mr. William Lawrence, we obviously go way back with him with his association partnership with Klaravich Stable, and he got out just momentarily as owner of horses for a couple years. And when he came back in, he wanted to be involved with less horses, but in partnerships again with not too many partners, and he indicated to me if there was some opportunities for people asking for partners that were high-quality partners with high-quality prospects to let him know.

So, over the last couple of seasons, he's gone in on a couple of different yearling partnerships like this, and fortunately, this horse seems to have worked out.

BYRON KING

Yes, no doubt. Also, my follow-up question, I wanted to ask you about Emerging Market, how he's done in the days since the Derby, and if he's on target to run in the Belmont, or if you have another race in plan?

CHAD BROWN

Yeah, he initially emerged from the Derby missing his left front shoe. After talking it over with Flavien Prat, he feels confident in the first turn, he's kind of jockeying for position there, and got bumped and felt a little something, and then down the backside, the horse didn't feel quite as he had felt for him in the previous starts, and he sort of surmised that that horse probably lost his shoe, because he just didn't feel 100%. So nevertheless, after being sore for a few days, we got the shoe back on him when he finally got over that and was sound, and he's back to the track training at Saratoga.

My plan is to give him the opportunity to get to the Belmont. We'll see how he works in between now and then.

BYRON KING

Thank you.

OPERATOR

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

JAY POSNER

Hi, Chad. On the Preakness, I guess I'll just – there's been so much talk about moving it, and you talked about that last time, but I'm just curious, with only maybe one horse coming out of the Derby that people are familiar with, what would you tell people is the reason for the casual horse racing fan or just the casual sports fan to pay attention to the Preakness this year?

CHAD BROWN

Well, I'd say it's still obviously a very historic race. The Woodlawn Vase is one of the most valuable trophies in sports, so there's a lot of history associated with the event. And despite there being a lack of participation from Derby runners in recent times, the race still carries a lot of significance in the overall thoroughbred industry and the breed. It's a very challenging race to win, even if you have a rested horse. A lot of people run rested horses in here and don't win. So, it's a very challenging race.

I would say, lastly, that there's another batch of horses in here, three-year-olds, that could potentially have a say in other significant races as the year develops. It's not clear that the absolute best horses ran in the Derby. There's some really top horses that did, but not everyone could time that right and make the Derby.

So, who knows? Maybe there's another starter that's going to emerge from this race, and perhaps we'll be looking back at the Preakness in a few months saying, you know,

wow, this was the start of this particular horse campaign that ended up being one of the top horses. Just not sure.

That's not clear yet until we run the race.

JAY POSNER

Right. Have you had a chance to look at the perspective field at all to see who you would even consider at this point the horse or a couple of horses to beat?

CHAD BROWN

Yes and no. I looked over the probables a couple of days ago. It seems to be a fluid situation, so I didn't get too serious about it, because then there's going to be changes and I'm going to look at the field differently.

So, it looks like there's some up-and-comers in here that could at least have potential to be top three-year-olds, but they're not there yet. So, I don't think that'll be really clear until they draw the race.

JAY POSNER

Okay. Thanks, Chad.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Childs Walker from the Baltimore Banner. Please go ahead.

CHILDS WALKER

Yeah. Hi, Chad. Thanks for doing this.

Just to sort of follow up on the earlier question about the calendar and all the issues around that, you're a two-time Preakness winner. Do you feel that, to some degree, the prestige of this race has been damaged by the lack of overlap in the fields with the Derby? Do you think that the wider racing world is starting to look at this race differently than maybe it has traditionally?

CHAD BROWN

I don't know the answer to that, because I don't... It would just be an opinion, because I don't represent them, right? I mean, as far as I'm concerned, year-to-year, as a trainer of

a lot of nice horses, it's not clear to me that the Preakness is going to be an easy race year-to-year, just because of the dwindling participation from Derby runners.

I don't go into the season saying, as my three-year-olds are developing, wow, this horse is a cut below the Derby horses, let me focus on the Preakness. I've never... It hasn't gotten to that point, as a trainer, I can tell you.

It's been more a timing issue with horses, pointed to the Preakness, not a quality issue. I feel like, certainly, there has to be some change in the perception of the race from at least a portion of certain groups, whether it's just the casual fan or industry insiders that have big stakeholders and such. Because of not a lot of horses, now you have two Derby winners in a row passing the race, so undoubtedly, there's got to be some view of that.

But for me, and like I said the last time I was asked about it, a little bit of it got taken out of context, but it wasn't inaccurate. What I said was, I've always been against changing the timeframe of the races, because I do believe there's a... The history of the sport, this is like one of the...

The Triple Crown is right at the top of the historical pieces, fabrics of the whole sport, so I've always been against it (changing the race dates). I've been more open to it in recent years, and I did say, down the road, it's probably not sustainable. It's not sustainable.

Now, probably it's not. It's just, I don't have a good timeframe on it. That's just an opinion.

I don't know within three years it's not sustainable, 10 years, 20 years, I don't know, but certainly you can't ignore the trend, and you can't ignore the fact that horses in all different categories and class levels seem to appreciate more time in between the races, for whatever the reasons are. That's the way we're headed, but at present time, the race, it's not going to be an easy race to win.

CHILDS WALKER

Yeah. And just as a follow-up, I mean, obviously you've experienced the Belmont days at Saratoga the last few years. We have a similar situation here this year, obviously, where the Preakness is displaced. How did that change the day for you, if at all, and I mean, can it create sort of an interesting vibe?

CHAD BROWN

I'm not sure I understand the question.

CHILDS WALKER

I guess just having the Preakness at a different track this year, I mean, you've experienced the Belmont being at a different place. Does it change the overall day for you, or from a horseman's standpoint, is it the same?

CHAD BROWN

I have no experience going to Laurel Park. I have no idea.

CHILDS WALKER

Right. Okay. Thank you.

CHAD BROWN

I have no idea what they had planned. I don't know what vibe or what the situation is going to be. I can tell you that historically at Pimlico, they've done a great job of hosting a really fun event, whether I've won the race or not, and I'm assuming a lot of the same team members are going to be hosting, even though it's a different venue, and I'm not sure what they have in store, but many times I've been to the Preakness, and win or lose, it's a very unique experience, both as an insider and as a fan.

So, I'm hopeful that that continues.

CHILDS WALKER

Gotcha. Appreciate it, Chad.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Elizabeth Madden from the Bloodhorse. Please go ahead.

ELIZABETH MADDEN

Hi, Chad. I just wanted to ask if you were planning on changing his approach for the race. I know normally he's sitting kind of just off the pace.

I know you'd probably have to wait to see how it draws, and he drew the 13 in the Wood, which wasn't ideal, but I was just curious, from what you've seen the race come up so far, if you plan on changing his approach or just having him run pretty much the same.

CHAD BROWN

Yeah. So, one part of that change of approach was the equipment change of taking the blinkers off. So, yes, certainly we're trying to get the horse to relax and not be maybe so aggressive early, and I'm hoping that there is some pace in the race where he could sit back just a little bit and track horses.

And yes, ideally, I'd prefer to be drawn, you know, middle to inside with this horse where he could maybe save some ground in this particular race and rate. So, yes, our plan A would be to have a slightly different approach here from a little bit off the pace if possible.

ELIZABETH MADDEN

Thank you so much.

OPERATOR

Thank you. There are no further questions at this time. Please proceed.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Well, Chad, I want to thank you very much for joining us today and answering questions, good luck to you with the Preakness.

All right. Let's move on now. Thanks to Chad.

We now would like to bring in our next guest. She is Brittany Russell, trainer of undefeated Taj Mahal, which includes, of course, an impressive eight-and-a-quarter-length victory in the April 18th Federico Tesio Stakes of Laurel, in which the son of Nyquist earned an automatic berth into the Preakness. Taj Mahal also won his two previous races at Laurel.

Brittany, welcome. How are you today?

BRITTANY RUSSELL

I'm good. Thank you. How are you?

JIM GLUCKSON

Great. I'm very good. Thank you for joining us today. Just wanted to talk about his great success so far with the three victories here. The Tesio was a very interesting race in that

he built up a 10-length lead through the first half mile, and then the pack closed on him around the far turn, only to see him turn it on again and pull away convincingly.

From your point of view, he just seems like he's handled everything that's been thrown at him so far. Can you comment on how impressed you are with him?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Yeah. I mean, visually watching the race, I was questioning a few things, because like you said, they kind of came back to him. But [jockey] Sheldon [Russell] just kind of gave him a breather because he seemed to not know what was underneath him.

I mean, I think it was impressive. And for us to kind of move on to the Preakness, it's kind of how you would want to see a horse do it, right? I think it was a dominant effort.

JIM GLUCKSON

Interesting. This being your first Preakness, can you comment on the excitement it means to you?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Oh, yeah. It's really exciting. And I mean, obviously, Preakness is here at home at Laurel, so this is where we are every single day.

It makes it a little easier on us, too. So, it's kind of cool. We have kind of the home horse, and he gets to run right on into his backyard.

JIM GLUCKSON

Now, just to back up a second regarding Taj Mahal, you received him from the Bob Baffert stable from California. Early on, did you see a great potential in Taj Mahal when you started working with him?

BRITTANY RUSSELL

I mean, honestly, no. Like, when he first showed up, it took some time for him to come around. And that's honestly why he was sent my way, as a lot of those, you know, it's the team, right?

So, if horses aren't progressing or need a change of scenery, luckily for me, it's kind of become their place to send them. And it took some time. He did take some time to come around.

And I can't say the first time I worked him that I think he was, going to be a star. No, it took some time, but he developed and he progressed, and that's what we've seen.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Can you tell us at all any plans for a workout schedule or any training in the next few days?

BRITTANY RUSSELL

We plan to breeze him tomorrow morning, so as long as all goes well there and he comes out of it in good shape, we'll move forward to next weekend.

JIM GLUCKSON

Excellent. All right. Well, let's see if we have some questions on the line from the media.

Ynnah, can you take over that portion of the program for us, please?

OPERATOR

Once again, should you have a question, please press star followed by the one on your telephone keypad and star two to cancel your request. And if you're using a speakerphone, please lift the handset first before pressing any keys. One moment for your first question.

Your first question comes on the line of David Grening from Daily Racing Forum.

Please go ahead.

DAVID GRENING

Hi, Brittany. I was just wondering about, you're the only horse to have run, let alone won at Laurel. How much of an advantage is that in particular for this year?

BRITTANY RUSSELL

I mean, I think it could be a major advantage because, you know, how the track is playing and, you know, just the fact that he trains over the surface every day. I think it could be a major advantage.

DAVID GRENING

And what about the, I guess they say it's the short, the first wire for the finish line here.

Does that benefit a speed horse like yours?

BRITTANY RUSSELL

Yeah, exactly. I mean, that's definitely in our favor. And he just won there going a mile and an eighth, obviously.

We're adding a touch of distance. But way he ran last time, you know, I was kind of waiting for Monday, right, to see the post positions and how things might unfold. But I'd like to think it's beneficial that he's had a good two-turn run over it.

DAVID GRENING

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. Once again, should you have a question, please press star followed by the one on your telephone keypad. And please lift your handset before pressing any keys.

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

Please go ahead.

JAY POSNER

Hi, Brittany. I was just wondering what it's like to have your husband ride for you and what sort of issues does that create or maybe not create?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

You know, 99% of the time I have a lot of confidence in Sheldon. He obviously is in the barn. He does a lot of work with these horses. He sits on them. He knows them. He knows what I like.

He knows what we're trying to accomplish. So, you know, most of the time it's great.

Now, look, does everything go to plan? Is everything always perfect? No. And it can be a little tricky, but you know what, at the end of the day it's horse racing and some things are out of our control.

So, in this particular instance, I think it's great. He knows the horse. He's won on it three times. He knows the racetrack better than anybody. You know, I think it's a good thing.

JAY POSNER

I'd imagine when you have a problem or another jockey maybe gives the horse a bad ride, sometimes you can vent to Sheldon in the case that he might, on a rare occasion, not do what you were hoping to. Is there someone else you can vent to sort of keep peace at home?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Well, I think I'm usually pretty fair and level-headed about things, but to be honest with you he hears all of it. And, constructive criticism, right? He needs to know, what I think. And he might come back and say, well, look, this is what you think, but this is how I read it or this is what I thought. So, you know, I guess you kind of look at it as you put it together and fix it for the next time.

JAY POSNER

All right. Thanks very much.

BRITTANY RUSSELL

You're welcome.

OPERATOR

And your next question comes from the line of Nicole Russo from the Daily Racing Form.

Please go ahead.

NICOLE RUSSO

Hey, Brittany, thank you for making the time to join us today. I actually wanted to ask you about, with it obviously being a big weekend locally, about a couple of horses you had nominated to the undercard stakes. You know, Falcon Jet, who you had nominated in the Chick Lang, if he's going to run, obviously came in recently for that same ownership group you talked about and obviously took right to the East Coast.

Can you talk about getting to know him and how he might be coming into his next start?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Yeah, Falcon Jet, he's been a pretty cool horse, pretty laid back, so he was kind of hard to get a gauge on, which the California team told me. He was kind of like that. He kind of just does what you ask him to do.

Look, I think he ran well the first time we ran him, and we might have picked his head up a little bit. He seems happy. He's training forwardly.

And we're actually looking at the Sir Barton with him. We're looking to stretch him out.

Sheldon thinks that's going to be a help. So that's sort of the plan with him.

NICOLE RUSSO

Okay, terrific.

And Bosserati, I was going to ask, is going to be a testament in the number one. <audio glitch>

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Sorry, you were just cutting out a little bit.

NICOLE RUSSO

I think you had Bosserati in the very one. Is that right?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Correct. She's unfortunately not going to make the race. That was our plan, but we are actually going to sit on her.

She's not going to run, and Lost and Found is actually going to run in that race.

NICOLE RUSSO

And she's coming in about some nice efforts, so she would look like an able representative there.

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Yep, yep, nice filly. And Will Walden obviously had her. We bought her through a digital sale, you know, kind of before the last win, actually.

That's what's kind of cool about those digital sales. But anyway, she was great with Will.

She's come to us.

She's been straightforward. She's trained really well. And look, the next step would be to get some black type on her page, and I think she's very capable.

NICOLE RUSSO

Thank you, Brittany. I appreciate the updates. Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes from the line of Childs Walker from the Baltimore Banner. Please go ahead.

CHILDS WALKER

Hey, Brittany. You said it earlier. I mean, the Preakness has always been kind of the biggest race in Maryland, but there has been so much talk about the calendar and only the two weeks between the Derby and the Preakness.

From your perspective, do you think the prestige of the race has been affected at all by the fact that we're not getting as many Derby horses in the field?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

It is unfortunate, right, because it's hard for trainers to wheel a horse back in two weeks now. It's different, and they're protecting their horses, and because everybody would have loved to have seen the Derby winner. I mean, there's no doubt about that.

But moving forward, I don't know what's going to happen, but I think times have changed a little bit, and it's unfortunate because, you look back and we have had Triple Crown winners. It feels like fairly recently anyway. So, it's a tricky subject, right?

CHILDS WALKER

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

OPERATOR

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

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

Hi, Brittany. Thanks for doing this. I'm just curious. No female trainer has ever won the Preakness Stakes, and I feel like you're probably going to get this question a lot this week, but what would it mean to you to sort of complete the female trainer Triple Crown, so to speak?

BRITTANY RUSSELL

I mean, it would sort of feel like, probably a little fairytale-like, right? I mean, Jenna [Antonucci] opened the door just a couple years ago with Arcangelo. Cherie [DeVaux], getting it done in the Kentucky Derby. So, the fact that I feel like I have a live one in the Preakness here, there's some pressure, and I certainly hope we could do it, but it would mean an awful lot.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

Is it more meaningful because it's Maryland and at home?

BRITTANY RUSSEL

Yeah, 100%. I mean, it's a special year. I mean, don't get me wrong, if the Preakness was at Pimlico this year, it would be just as special.

But Laurel has kind of given us everything, right? Like it's got my business, my career going, and the fact that my first Preakness runner is going to be here the year it is, it's pretty cool.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

All right, thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. No further questions at this time. Please proceed.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right, very good. Well, Brittany, thanks so much for joining us today and answering the questions from the media here. I know you've been very busy. All the attention is greatly appreciated, your time that you've devoted. And good luck to you in the Preakness and to all your horses for next week.

BRITTANY RUSSELL

All right, thank you very much. I appreciate it.

JIM GLUCKSON

You got it. Thank you, Brittany Russell, everyone.

BRITTANY RUSSEL

All right. Bye-bye.

JIM GLUCKSON

Let's move to our third guest, if we can. We'd like to bring on Whit Beckman. Of course, Whit has Ashley Durr, Anthony Tate, and Front Page Equestrian's Ocelli, who was the third-place finisher in the Kentucky Derby, just finishing a length behind Golden Tempo, now turning right around here and heading to Laurel for the Preakness Stakes.

Whit, Jim Gluckson here. Thanks for joining us today.

WHIT BECKMAN

Thank you, Jim.

JIM GLUCKSON

Great to have you. Whit, Ocelli gave us a tremendous performance in the Derby, gave you a tremendous performance in the Derby. And there was a quick flash inside the 16th pole where Ocelli actually took the lead until, he wound up finishing third.

Can you take us through the Derby and evaluate his performance for us?

WHIT BECKMAN

Well, he's always trained like a horse that had a tremendous amount of potential. And, just with some trips and some circumstances, I think that was a little unrecognized through some of the preps. But the way the horse trained and, the way he was training up here at Churchill (Downs) that week of was just tremendous.

So, the way that race set up early, my only instructions to Tyler [Gaffalione] were kind of like just get a clean run in that first turn, and he did a fantastic job to kind of get him back out of the gate and not get caught up in the crashes that ensue usually in the Derby. So, when he kind of got in the first turn and they were moving pretty quickly on the front end, I knew between him, Jose [Ortiz] and Irad [Ortiz] you had three of the top jockeys in the country in the back, that we were probably in a good spot. The pace continued on, and Tyler kind of read it, and decided around the just kind of past half mile point, it was time to start moving forward.

And I thought he did a fantastic job just to pick it up gradually, which we had a little trouble in some of his early starts with him kind of hitting the button at the right time. Was passing horses beautifully on the turn. Had to come pretty wide around the turn, but from there continued to inch forward.

To say he did make the lead at the 16th pole or just inside of it and gave us a little bit of a thrill there. You know, he had to cover a lot of ground to do it, but at that point everything kind of went blank, thinking, this horse is moving easy enough, he might get there. But, you know, obviously there was also some benefactors from the pace coming a little bit outside of us and just in the last couple jumps got there.

But it was just tremendous race, huge move forward, showed what we always thought he had.

JIM GLUCKSON

Now, of course, in the last five days, what have you seen in him coming out of the Derby, his recuperation that gave you confidence to say, let's turn around and go to Laurel for the Preakness?

WHIT BECKMAN

Yeah, I mean, with these horses is you kind of campaign and see what they're made of, from race to race. I've had horses that I've run in races like the Derby or the Derby in particular that you put them back in the stall and it takes them a couple weeks to get over. They don't really come to the front of the stall; they don't really show that enthusiasm to get back out the next day or two. But as soon as we put him back in, he was a bright alert the next morning.

He was just on edge, just feeling great. Got him out to the track last couple days and his energy level is just unbelievable for, having run such a hard race. So, you know, as I gauge these horses, the two-week turnaround is quick. It's not a general thing we do, but I've done it before and we've had success with it.

I think sometimes coming off one powerful race like that into another can be an advantage. So, every indication at this point shows us that he's ready to go back out and do it again. You know, when you got the Derby, the Preakness and the Triple Crown are kind of included, or the Preakness and the Belmont are kind of included that for me, you know, it's kind of one series.

So, I've always said if I had a horse that wanted to do it, I would absolutely do it.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right, very good. Let's see if we have some questions from the media on the line.

Let's just stand by for a second.

And Ynnah, if you take us through to that portion of the program, please.

OPERATOR

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, once again, should you have a question, please press star followed by the one on your telephone keypad. And should you wish to cancel your request, please press star followed by the two.

If you're using a speakerphone, please lift the handset first before pressing any keys.

Once again, that is star and one to ask a question.

JIM GLUCKSON

While we're waiting, I just wanted to ask you, Whit, about running in your very first Preakness.

WHIT BECKMAN

No, it's a tremendous honor. It's just one of those races that's for growing up in Louisville. You know, the Derby was the first, and in the Preakness, I've never missed one, and it's just, you know, I can't believe, we have a horse that can take us to both of them. I'm just thrilled to be here, you know, be in this division, have these types of horses. It's a tremendous honor.

I know we're at Laurel this year, but, you know, there's history all around, so I'm just excited to be a part of it.

JIM GLUCKSON

Excellent. Well, I think we have some callers on the line. Let's just hang back here.

OPERATOR

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

DAVID GRENING

Whit, this horse cost \$12,000. What did other people miss?

WHIT BECKMAN

You know, I think he went through the sale. It was the Fasig-Tipton October sale, which, it's not the Keeneland marquis sale, and I think he went through the ring on the last day. Travis (Durr) and them were sitting in the back ring, and I do believe this horse had some vet issues.

So, I mean, from a physical standpoint, I don't know if anybody missed anything, but I do believe there wasn't quite the interest in him. And, I mean, like sometimes you've got to kind of look through, you know, the pass and the fail situation to what a horse could possibly be. I mean, there's a huge risk involved.

You could obviously miss on horses like this, and I know they have in the past. But I don't know if anybody missed anything. They just took a risk. They took a gamble.

DAVID GRENING

And he's run seven times, once a month basically since November at one, two, three, four, maybe five different racetracks here. What is it about his constitution that enables him to do all this, run a race like he has in the Kentucky Derby, and then it sounds like take you to the Preakness?

WHIT BECKMAN

Yeah, I mean, like I kind of said earlier, once you run this horse you just don't seem to take it out of him. I have horses I run, say six furlongs, and it takes them a week or two to get over it. He just seems to, with everything, just get I think a little bit smarter with the experiences.

He's never dropped any weight. He's never, I mean, and I say this confidently, never missed an oat, which for us as trainers is a big indicator. You know, as they start backing out of their feed, you start to kind of look at things and decide why they're not eating.

But this horse has just always been extremely enthusiastic about his training. There's never been a breeze I've had to miss. I had one little throat issue after the Sam Davis (Stakes at Tampa Bay Downs), but it's the only knock I got against this horse.

So, I mean, he's just kind of one of those throwback iron horses. He's never had any inflammation pill or like I said anything that's had us backing up with him. So, when I have horses like this that want more, if you can give it to them and they handle it in stride, we're going to keep on with it.

DAVID GRENING

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, Whit. Technically, he's a maiden, but he did actually win one of the little two-furlong trial races down at Aiken [South Carolina], I found out. So, I wonder if you could share a little bit about that. It's the maiden that's not a maiden.

WHIT BECKMAN

Yeah. At an unrecognized racetrack and race meet, he is indeed a winner. So, he knows how to put his head across the line first.

Yeah. So, Travis and those guys down there, you know, a lot of horses they buy, they'll run in the Aiken Trials. They used to be pretty popular back in the day when I worked for Todd, Dogwood, and we'd have plenty of horses that come through those.

And, you know, they're just great little preps for horses. They just give them the opportunity to kind of get into that race scenario before they actually make it to the track. You know, and I think we've always had luck with those types of horses.

So maybe it gave him a little bit of, you know, idea what he was going to be getting into.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

It's got to be impressive to have a horse win a two-furlong race from the pole and then go on to run third in a mile and a quarter grade one. That's something we don't hear every day, I imagine.

WHIT BECKMAN

Oh, I would say probably I would have to go back and look horses that won the Aiken Trials that came back and, you know, ran the real classic race type distance. But, yeah, he's shown every step of the way that he's capable of much more than meets the eye.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

And it looks like from the pictures that Joe Sharp was up in that race. Do you have any knowledge about that?

WHIT BECKMAN

I can confirm Joe rode him. After one of his races in New Orleans, his second start, I did not have blinkers on at the time, and Joe was like, man, you got to put blinkers on that horse. So, yeah, he gave me a little professional advice, you know, especially as one of the top trainers in the country and having been on his back before.

So, yeah, Joe did ride him.

CHELSEA HACKBARTH

That's so cool. All right. Thanks, Whit. I appreciate it.

WHIT BECKMAN

Yep.

OPERATOR

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

STEPHEN WHYNO

Hey, Whit, you mentioned that the two-week turnaround is not a normal thing. I'm just wondering philosophically, like D. Wayne Lukas always said that and Bob Baffert said that, where the horse is tuned up from the Derby for the Preakness. Is there something that you think makes other trainers so hesitant about this?

Is it just because the normal pace is usually five, six weeks?

WHIT BECKMAN

Yeah, I just think as far as the culture has gone over the years, you know, people get to putting their races more, four to five weeks, just more distance between them. But it's not that the horses can't do it. I think a lot of times with the condition books and the way things are written nowadays, you're really kind of forced into waiting four to five weeks.

It's not necessarily a matter of the horse is incapable of doing it. I mean, in my opinion, horses that run, they do run very well, when they run back into Preakness, or any horse, if you have an opportunity, to run them back quick. Like, you know, training is one thing and you can get them to a certain level, but if you can keep them in that race progress,

like I said, these are very durable, resilient animals, when they're fit, when they're happy, when they're healthy.

So, it's not necessarily a matter of they can't do it, it's just a matter of the opportunities nowadays just don't seem to arise like this.

STEPHEN WHYNO

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. And your next question comes in the line of Dave Johnson from Sirius XM Radio. Please go ahead.

DAVE JOHNSON

Hi, Whit, thanks for joining us. We were wondering about the human side of your decision when Tyler Gaffalione became available and his horse scratched. And when you had to make the decision, how did you talk to the two guys, Joe Ramos and Tyler, and how did that all come about?

WHIT BECKMAN

Well, when I got the call, Dave Grening actually called me that morning and said Fulleffort scratched. And I wasn't really thinking about it at the time, like right when it happened, we were just excited to have drawn into the Derby. So, you know, kind of we calmed down and settled after that.

I just took a look at who was riding Fulleffort just to see. And I saw it was Tyler. And Tyler being a local rider here at Churchill, you know, being the top rider here at Churchill for many years now, and winning these type races, classics, and just, having a ton of experience in these type races.

We just felt like he would fit this horse very well. Now, Joe Ramos has done nothing wrong. I think Joe, he is a huge part of our team.

He's ridden a lot of races for us. He rode the Breeders' Cup for me last year on Regaled, finished third [Longines Breeders' Cup Distaff]. And he is a very good young rider, and I think he's got a tremendous future ahead of him.

But as he understood, you know, kind of like you just sometimes, you know, in the big play you just can't leave the guy that's got the resume of results on the bench.

DAVE JOHNSON

Got it. Thanks, Whit.

WHIT BECKMAN

Yep.

OPERATOR

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

JOHN PRICCI

Good afternoon, Whit. Traditionally, the Preakness has been kind to position horses, front runners and the like, and now you're going into Laurel this time where the configuration is different, the turns are tighter, the stretch will be among the shortest with a triple crown for sure. Would you like to see him be more forward in this race?

Would you, you know, would you tell the rider to be conscious about that?

WHIT BECKMAN

Well, I would kind of leave most of those up to Tyler and just the pace scenario as they break away from there. I think the horse does like targets. I find his best races are coming from behind.

You know, he got pretty keen in (the) Virginia (Derby) going down the backside, and I would rather the horse settle and kind of work out a trip as the pace develops.

Obviously, the pace is slow and he finds himself closer. I think Tyler needs to recognize that.

But for me, any time I tell my riders anything, I just want them in a comfortable rhythm.

You know, wherever that is in the field, I'm fine as long as the horse is not necessarily being held off something or pushed into something. So, I think a lot of that will kind of develop on race day.

JOHN PRICCI

Thanks a lot, Whit. Have a safe trip on Saturday.

WHIT BECKMAN

Thank you.

OPERATOR

Thank you. No further questions at this time. Please proceed.

JIM GLUCKSON

All right. Let's just wait a second here if anyone else wants to jump in here and give it another 30 seconds or so. All right then.

Whit, I wanted to thank you for joining us today to take questions for us about Ocelli, and I wanted to wish you good luck in the Preakness next week. All the best to you.

WHIT BECKMAN

Thanks, Jim.

JIM GLUCKSON

Thank you. Whit Beckman, everyone.

That concludes our conference call for today. As a reminder, we wanted to say that within the next 48 hours we'll have a transcript and a replay, a recording of the conference call for you that will be available on ntra.com, so you can check on ntra.com. And we'll have another call, of course, previewing the Belmont Stakes on the 28th of May.

And, again, thanks for everyone joining us today, and best of luck to you all this weekend and at the Preakness.

OPERATOR

This concludes today's call. Thank you for participating. You may all disconnect.