

NBC Sports Group Media Conference

Tuesday, April 27, 2021

Rob Hyland
Jerry Bailey
Eddie Olczyk
Larry Collmus
Mike Tirico
Randy Moss
Steve Kornacki
Press Conference



watched shows of the season.

And super proud to work with Rob on the shows that he produces. I think all of us can tell you his work ethic on these shows is nothing short of complete and thorough -- I think our whole group was really proud with the difficulty of last year's show not being in Louisville to see it nominated for a Sports Emmy just talks about what the folks over the last 20 years, led by Rob and everyone else, have put into this show.

It's an honor to be part of it with an amazing group of analysts who you'll hear from in a minute. People often ask, do you get nervous before you go on TV? I've been doing this for 33 years or 34 years. So, the nerves are gone. But I was nervous on the first Saturday in May last year. There was no Derby as you know. We re-aired the Kentucky Derby from a few years before. And the Kentucky Derby trophy was in my house on the makeshift set in my office.

And I was never more nervous when they shipped the trophy to my house and I had the gloves -- you had to handle the trophy with the gloves and put it in place because we're all doing everything in work from home on our own.

I will be a lot less nervous this year on Derby day, first Saturday in May, I should say, than I was last year the first Saturday in May when I had the Kentucky Derby trophy under our roof and in my hands.

Needless to say, it's a thrill to be back in Louisville, to be back at the Derby. When you work with Randy Jerry and Edzo and Larry and the rest of our group, you just shut up and get out of the way. So it's a great day to be a point guard and pass it off to some of the best in the business. It's an honor to be part of the show one more time. And I guess, Randy, I'll let you go next.

RANDY MOSS: This is my -- let's do the math -- my 41st Kentucky Derby. I know I can't possibly be that old -- either with newspaper or television, my 11th with NBC. And it goes without saying that last year's Kentucky Derby, such as it was, not just from the TV end of it, but just in general, was unlike any other Kentucky Derby in the history of the sport.

THE MODERATOR: This marks the 20th anniversary of the Kentucky broadcast. Joining us today are Rob Hyland, who has worked on NBC's Kentucky Derby every year in that stretch. This is Rob's tenth year as the lead producer of the Kentucky Derby. We have host Mike Tirico; analyst Randy Moss; two-time Derby-winning analyst Jerry Bailey; handicapper Eddie Olczyk; Larry Collmus; and the newest member of our Derby team, from NBC News and MSNBC, Steve Kornacki.

I'll turn it over to Rob Hyland, our coordinating producer.

ROB HYLAND: Thanks, Dan. You make me sound old. 20 years ago I was part of NBC's first Kentucky Derby. I think I've said it before but it was about a two-hour show, with a small team of reporters, a couple of feature story elements, and that was the lead-up to the big race.

This year, we have more than a dozen announcers, a production staff of more than 200 and about 15 hours of coverage. And the big difference, last year we produced the show out of Stanford, Connecticut, our rural headquarters. This year we're back in Louisville and we're very happy to be back.

MIKE TIRICO: Good afternoon, everyone. Rob is a little bit older. It's his birthday today. But in all seriousness this is my fifth. I'm only around for a quarter of these 20 years. But I've always admired what NBC did from afar in raising the quality of the Kentucky Derby presentation to one of the most watched shows of the month, one of the most



So we're getting closer to normal for the 2021 Derby. Not quite fully normal yet. But at least the Kentucky Derby is back in its usual spot on the first Saturday in May. And that's a lot of progress right there. Jerry?

JERRY BAILEY: I'm just happy to be out of my bedroom doing these shows. I've only left my house twice, once for the Derby last year up in the studio and at the Breeders' Cup in Lexington last fall, so although the commute to the dinner table is only five minutes I'll miss that. It's so good to be around the crew again, the fans.

It's particularly hard, I thought, to get a sense of what Randy and Mike are thinking when I'm sitting all by myself with a camera on me. So back on the set we can kind of work off of each other. That's going to be a lot of fun being able to do that again. And what a Derby we have.

To me, in prior years we had a stand-out horse or two. It's not that way this year. There's three, at least three that I think have a really, really good chance, and not that far apart in talent. And there there's three or four or five right underneath those. So it's a wide open event. And it's a lot of talent -- three undefeateds, as was mentioned. I'm looking forward to a really good race. Thanks.

EDDIE OLCZYK: Great to be with everybody. Great to be on our way, some of us. Some are there. To be back together and with the leadership of Rob and his entire team behind the scenes and Mike being our captain on the set.

We're going to do it as well as we always do. And just looking forward to getting back and seeing some familiar faces, socially distanced, probably behind masks a lot of the time. But that's okay.

And last year I was in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in the bubble, doing the NHL playoffs for the NHL on NBC. And I was in an empty rink I think for about seven hours trying to pick the winners, and something I'll never forget. And our crew did an amazing job to even allow me to be a part of the show, but -- with all the moving parts last year trying to navigate through the pandemic.

Jerry touched on it from a handicapper's point of view, from a gambling point of view, with the way that the draw ended up today, there is value up and down the board. If you don't like the favorite, which will be Essential Quality, who is perfect in his career, you have an opportunity to make a lot of money if you're going to go against the favorite.

I'm certainly leaning that way. But that is what we call a tease in television. And you're going to have to tune in on Saturday to see my final pick. But I'm just really excited to be back with our team.

And usually at this time of year we're right in the middle of the NHL playoffs. And I'm missing a playoff game here or there. But with a 56-game season this year in divisional play, I'll be missing a couple of regular season games. But still the atmosphere and the points feel like playoff games because of the way the format is with the Northern Division and then the three divisions in the U.S.

So pucks and ponies in my life. There's nothing better. And I'm just looking forward to seeing everybody in Louisville here in the next 24 hours or so.

So I get to pass the puck. I know Larry is a big hockey fan. Larry, I'll pass the puck to you -- the voice of Triple Crown on NBC, the legendary Larry Collmus.

LARRY COLLMUS: I appreciate the introduction. It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since I got the unexpected phone call from NBC asking if I would be interested in calling the Kentucky Derby.

But here we are for the 11th time. And it's really exciting. I think I might have been the only one that was in my usual position for the Kentucky Derby last year, up on the seventh floor of Churchill Downs.

But it was a little bit different for me because when I looked outside my window there wasn't anybody there. The whole place was completely deserted. It was a pretty odd feeling to be calling the race and not seeing so many people with their hats and suits and different colors. But it will be back to that this year. I'm really excited about seeing everybody.

It's also a really intriguing Derby, three unbeaten horses for the first time in many, many years, and one of those is 50-to-1 on the morning line, which is Helium. I think that's pretty interesting considering he's undefeated.

Also it seems like it's a race where we're not going to be too sure who the early leader is. It's not that clear on paper. So there's a lot to look forward to. And I can't wait for Saturday. Very much excited for the Derby.

ROB HYLAND: Thanks, Larry. Newest member, Steve Kornacki.

STEVE KORNACKI: Yeah, I'm the newest member. It's a thrill to be on this call. I've been watching the Kentucky Derby just as a viewer, as a fan, really my whole life. Just to be out with Mike, Jerry, Randy, Eddie, Larry on this call and eventually on the broadcast is going to be a thrill.

You mentioned 20 years on NBC. I definitely watched every Derby, run-up to every Derby on NBC all these

years. I think the first one must have been 2001, I think Monarchos would have won. I would remember that one as Dollar Bill who was one of the many losers that I've picked in the Kentucky Derby over the years. If he didn't run dead last he came pretty close. And I've certainly picked more than my share of those.

But, yeah, I'm really looking forward to getting the chance to be in Louisville. I've never actually been to the Derby in person before. So I've only known this event as a television viewer. Really excited to get the chance to do that. And just to take a look at -- everybody's talking here about the opportunities for bettors with the morning line coming out today. Really curious to see where the money starts to move, who the public kind of gets behind here.

ROB HYLAND: Thanks very much, Steve. Questions?

Q. Question for Steve and Edzo, just wondering how the interplay will be between you two during the weekend? And for Edzo, do you see this as kind of, you're the old-style handicapper Daily Racing Form type guy, and maybe Steve might be more of a (inaudible) caller in the new age handicapper?

ROB HYLAND: This is Rob. Steve will be integrated throughout the show with trends, history says what about the Kentucky Derby as we look at the field. Edzo will handicap every race throughout the five hours on NBC. And Steve and Edzo will be together for specific topics, i.e., long shots in this year's field. Or bias if you're a late closer in the Derby.

So I think Steve will have more of a big-picture lens looking at the trends of the Derby, what history tells us, where the money's moving. Edzo will be a little more granular to each race and his selection, but the two will interact. So I'll set that as sort of the context and Edzo and Steve can take it away.

EDDIE OLCZYK: I think as far as my, whatever, my philosophy or my handicapping tools are, I think I've become much more aware of how the track is playing -- is weather involved whether it's the day of, the day before, whether it's the turf course or the dirt.

Having an idea on all the races of who I like going in. But you could like your own agenda going into this morning about 9:55 Central Time and then all of a sudden he gets the number one post position even though it's a new starting gate and then go, okay, is that going to change my thoughts.

So, I think for me, yeah, I am old, first off. I'm not as old as Rob, I know that. And second of all, I do rely on the video

and just the feel of how the race is going to play out, and getting the chance to talk to Randy and Jerry as good as they are as analyst in our game in our sport and just pick their brain. And how do you see this playing out? This is what I see. Tell me that I'm crazy or that I'm wrong and that's some of the best stuff.

I wish we had a camera going on in the trailer and, again, to be able to see the dialogue and the questions that are asked because I think that's where you really get an opportunity to kind of talk to the best, learn from the best. And then it's up to you as a handicapper to apply it, agree with it, disagree with it, how do you see it. And the money management part becomes the biggest thing, because you can like a couple of horses, but how do you play it? How do you wager it?

And I say all the time, you don't have to wager a whole heck of a lot to make a lot of money when it comes to Derby weekend with the Oaks and the Derby on Saturday.

But I'm old school when it comes to handicapping and I'm pretty damn proud of it.

STEVE KORNACKI: I guess to pick up on what Rob was saying there, I think for me the parallel I kind of see here to what I do with elections and with political numbers kind of in general really does have to do with watching the odds change, watching where the odds are moving during the course of the day and the run-up to the race. Who suddenly is getting a lot of support. Who looked like one of the favorites early on, but the public maybe is backing away from.

I think it's kind of looking at the trends, looking at the movement that way. Looking at the historical view of it. How the favorite's done before, how horses have come in with strong closing times and prep races, things like that, just looking at some of the bigger historical trends.

I think there's a bit of a parallel there to maybe the kind of stuff we're doing with politics and elections. In terms of handicapping, I'll happily defer to Eddie on that. I love racing. I love to go to the track. I love to bet on the races, but there's nothing sophisticated about what I do.

I've got my uncle's system from Suffolk Downs from the 1960s. It's a lot of hunches and mysticism and just completely illogical stuff. So, I'll happily defer to Eddie on that.

>> Hey, Steve, you've got a 13 horse in the race, too, with King Fury, right?

STEVE KORNACKI: There he is. I was hoping he'd be

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

more than 20-1, but there's a 13-system horse. This was -- the 13 system -- this is my uncle's system from Suffolk Downs; when I say unsophisticated, take the last three horses that the horse has run, add up how he finished -- 10th place, second place, first place -- if it adds up to 13, bet the horse. And guess what? King Fury is at 13. So that's the level I'm at.

Q. Larry, I know in years past, when we've spoken, you have a set preparation for how you call a race. But I'm wondering this year, in terms of anticipating, last year you called it without noise. And this year you'll call it with sound. And I just wonder from, just taking a guess how you think sound will impact your call of the Derby this year?

LARRY COLLMUS: I remember last year that it seemed odd, especially the lead-up to the race to not hear all the noise from underneath. And it almost made the Derby a little bit easier to call, I think, last year, because a lot of times all that noise you hear can accelerate your heart rate a little bit, make you a little more hyped up.

And without that noise, all of a sudden your heart rate slows down a little bit and maybe you're able to see more during the call than you would not normally have been able to see.

I think it does play a role. This year's sound won't be quite like the ones from 2019 and the years before that because we won't have the full house. We'll have about a third of the normal audience. So, that certainly plays a role there.

But when the race runs, I don't really -- I guess subconsciously, like I said, my heart rate went down a little bit because of the crowd, but I don't really notice.

I have myself kind of cranked in the headset so I don't hear the track announcer outside and I don't hear too many noises around me. So that all seems to help. But I guess we'll see what happens this year. But last year was definitely different, that's for sure.

Q. Jerry, in your estimation, what does Hot Rod Charlie need to do to win this race?

JERRY BAILEY: I guess the short answer is that he has to run faster than everybody else to the wire. But that's tongue in cheek.

To me, he's one of the most, if not the most improving horse in the race. He was second last year in the Breeders' Cup Juvenile to Essential Quality, who is the favorite. He wasn't beaten far.

And his first race this year was a good race. He was only beat by a neck, although he was a third. But he was also in between horses; he was sandwiched down the stretch, which to me is a pretty good effort because it's hard for young horses to take that -- fighting on either side and still running well.

And of course he inherited the lead in the Louisiana Derby and won, so he's versatile. And Luis, he was three or four or five lengths off the lead, then he led.

I would expect that he's going to be in a stalking position. I think he's got to avoid anything worse than a three-wide trip on either turn because even though he might be best, he's not good enough to go wide on both turns and still win, in my opinion.

So, he's going to be forward. I think if he can avoid wide trips, no more than two, three wide at tops, but preferably two wide on the first turn and then the second turn, then I think he's got an excellent chance to win. Randy?

RANDY MOSS: Like Edzo said earlier, we won't necessarily give away the store before the show on Saturday. But just suffice to say that both Jerry and I have Hot Rod Charlie picked, let's say, in our top three. A lot of respect for him.

MIKE TIRICO: I'm going to jump in for a second, not on the analyst side of it. But I was out in Southern California -- I'll tell you why in a moment -- and had a chance to visit with Doug O'Neill and see Hot Rod Charlie last week in the barn, great disposition. Doug is so excited about this horse and the path to get here.

There's a lot to like about Hot Rod Charlie in so many different ways, including the story of the nephew or Doug's nephew, Patrick, and he and his four Brown football teammates being a part of this.

There's a lot of energy and enthusiasm around the horse, which I think is really going to help tell one of the stories in the lead-up to the Derby that people will get attached to.

I just wanted to point out that trip out to California was to do an interview with Bob Baffert that will air on our show. In addition to that we have a three-way interview with me, Bob Baffert and Bill Belichick. Baffert is going for his seventh Kentucky Derby as a trainer. No one has won as many as he has. He's tied with Ben Jones, six all time. Baffert has won six Kentucky Derby's, the Super Bowl of this sport. And Belichick has won six Super Bowls as a head coach.

We got the two of them to chat. They know each other a



little bit. And the conversation was fascinating. I left completely jealous of Baffert because he got answers out of Belichick than any of us in the media have for the last 15, 20 years.

It was a fun chat. Hopefully people will enjoy the two six-time champions in the biggest event in their sport talking with each other about horse racing and football and preparing athletes, or in Bob's case equine athletes, for the big game.

Q. Randy, I'm writing a story, in 2020, a year where seemingly everybody had money for both recreational activities as well as investments. We saw the sale of thoroughbred horses decline 26 percent year after year. We saw people buying digital horses and breeding digital horses. Why the decline in thoroughbreds?

RANDY MOSS: There's really two primary reasons for that. First of all is that when horse owners purchase horses at auctions, they rely heavily on bloodstock advisors who like to examine the horses in the flesh.

Every sales company this year had a virtual element where people could actually look at horses and bid on horses online. But so much of picking out a young race horse and gauging his future ability has to do with these bloodstock agents -- boots on the ground, examining the horses in person. A lot of times they can't necessarily tell you what they're looking for, but they know it when they see it. And the pandemic took away all of that in-person element to looking at horses prior to sales. That's one part of it.

The second element of it is that horse ownership is, by and large, a money-losing proposition. And the reason why so many people enjoy owning racehorses is the experience that goes along with it -- being able to go to the barn, watch your horse train in the morning, feed him peppermints, show up to the race in the afternoon, the excitement of the race with all your friends at the racetrack, maybe getting your picture made in the winner's circle if your horse wins.

All of that went away during the pandemic. And I think a lot of owners sort of felt like, hey, if I can't enjoy that aspect of horse ownership, I'm just going to sit out until I know when it's going to come back.

Q. Rob, saw you guys are going to be using a drone this year and a couple of live writer cams. Could you tell us a little more about that and how you and Drew are going to utilize them in the broadcast?

ROB HYLAND: Sure. Every year we walk away from the Derby and we'll review as a production team the coverage

from the last year and say to ourselves, how can we enhance the viewer's experience.

And we thought about a live drone in '20, but then obviously the Derby got pushed and re-imagine as a production.

And so the idea of a live drone came up a couple of years ago. But for the first time we'll have a live drone that our director, Drew Esocoff, can utilize and really take you places that we haven't before with our traditional cameras, specifically wrapping around the twin spires going between the twin spires to the paddock, from the paddock back to the front side, around the track, back to the chute where the mile chute is, where it's hard to get cameras, a very narrow area.

We believe this camera perspective will be a great, call it, magic carpet ride for the Derby viewer of five hours of our telecast.

Then something that's not new to horse racing and especially over in Europe, there will be two RF jockey cam systems, something we've done before on the Breeders' Cup World Championships. But we're bringing over the vendor from England, Jockey Cam. And for the races throughout all of our broadcast windows we'll effort to have two live cameras on jockeys in every race that we are televising.

And we think it will be a really cool replay for both the turf races and dirt races. And, again, an effort to bring the viewers closer to the action and give them a sense of the speed and the decision-making that goes on in each race. And how fast it is. So we're really excited about these two new additions.

And we are bringing back a camera that we have had in the past. We debuted back cam in 2018, which is a two-point rail cam system suspended about 20 feet in the air, and it covers the entire back stretch of Churchill Downs. So that will be part of the complement as well.

And Drew and Kaare Numme, our MSNBC director, are very excited about the new toys we'll be playing with on Friday and Saturday.

Q. Jerry, I guess part one about Essential Quality, do you regard him as maybe an unusually vulnerable favorite based on some of the speed figures? And the second one is about his trainer, Brad Cox, an incredible rise to the top of the sport in the past year. What strikes you as what Brad's been able to do?

JERRY BAILEY: Let's go to the horse first. Essential



Quality, I believe, Randy, if I'm not mistaken, on the sheets number he might be the fastest. He's not the Beyer's, from the Daily Racing Form, which I subscribe to most often.

But even if he is or isn't, it's not much between the top three horses. It's really not -- maybe very little. But he's got so many intangibles that he has already been through.

He's had trouble, here at Churchill Downs, still won. He's been close to the pace. He's been far off the pace. Depending on the pace, if it's fast he can be farther back. He's not pace dependent.

I think the biggest obstacle Essential Quality might have is loss of ground on both turns from his post. But that's with any come-from-behind horse. He'll be a come-from-behind horse in the Derby. It's just according to the pace how far back he'll be.

RANDY MOSS: He's very solid, as Jerry pointed out. Not that many weaknesses on paper. He hasn't run that fast for a Kentucky Derby favorite historically. I would say he's solid but not spectacular. He's slightly below-average, I would say, for a Kentucky Derby favorite historically.

Now, looking at the other horses on paper, this year that might be good enough to win. But if there are any other horses in the race that are capable of jumping up and running an above-average Kentucky Derby, then they'll probably beat him. But he'll be right there plugging away. He's a very, very consistent horse that doesn't have to have things his own way.

Now, we'll transition to the trainer part, Brad Cox has made a meteoric rise. I think I just heard a stat that he's one of two trainers in history that have won an Eclipse Award as champion trainer of the year before they even had their first Kentucky Derby starter.

Allen Jerkins I and now Brad Cox II, last year's champion trainer.

Most of the owners that deal with Brad Cox on a regular basis attribute his success to his all-consuming approach to training horses. They say that's almost all he thinks about, all day, all night; he's a walking encyclopedia when it comes to the history of the sport.

He just puts so much time and effort into all the little details surrounding his horses that it's really impressed the owners that he works with. And, so, consequently he's getting better and better horses to train.

ROB HYLAND: We have a camera crew outside of his house in Louisville just a few blocks away from the track

(indiscernible) establishers for a story we'll have on Saturday.

Q. I want to ask everybody, this is the last question, for everybody I want to know what's the longest shot you have to hit the board or hit the superfecta. That's the question is for everyone. For Mr. Steve Kornacki, I want to ask you about how are you going to break this down and what is it going to look like compared to what you do for the election? Are you going to have a big board? You mentioned that you're going to look at the odds, how the odds change. And I know from watching your other work that you have tons of data. And I want to get an idea, what kind of data are you looking at. Are you looking at post position, speed figures, percentage of time the favorite wins? I'm really interested to learn how are you going to work this?

ROB HYLAND: I'll begin. Steve joined us on the Triplecast Telecast that we're a part of at the beginning of April, featuring the Wood Memorial, the Bluegrass Stakes and the Santa Anita Derby. He'll have plenty of data.

He'll have a big board. It will look a lot like his presentation on either NBC News or MSNBC. I'll let Steve take it from there, but he'll be equipped with his big board and plenty of data.

STEVE KORNACKI: I mean I think I was mentioning earlier, parallels that I kind of see to what I do with elections and what we can and will be doing here.

And I think one of the things in the political horse race that we're looking at, in sort of the run-up to the election is trying to use historical data to put polling data in context.

So we might look at a poll that shows a candidate leading by five points two weeks before the election. We would look to historical data to put that into context. OK, how many other candidates have had a lead like this this close to election? How many went on to win? How many lost? How many won going away? How many won in squeakers?

I think we're constantly looking to use historical data as a way of providing context for what's in front of us right now. That's the approach I take here in the run-up to an election night.

And I think that's sort of the parallel that I see to what I think what we can do here in the run-up to the Derby on Saturday.

And so I think what you're mentioning there, actually a lot

of those things are things on our mind here, where you talk about, look, obviously movement on the board itself, movement in the betting.

I see what's his name, the mattress guy is throwing what, two, \$3 million on Essential Quality. Curious to see how that moves the odds. That's a big chunk, potentially, of the win pool right there. I'd be curious to look at that piece of it alone.

I think it's everything you're saying about the history of favorites in the Kentucky Derby. And more recently the favorites have been doing well. You take a step back about two decades, they couldn't win for years.

But looking at the historical trends when it comes to favorites, when it comes to horses running near the front of the pack, the speed in the Derby, how that's been doing better lately than it had been 10, 15, 20 years ago.

So, I think it's just trying to find historical trends, historical data that will provide context for understanding what we're kind of all building towards and anticipating here.

And I think if election night is the parallel to the Kentucky Derby, that's kind of how I'm thinking about it.

ROB HYLAND: We worked closely with our data provider, Sports Media, to be able to take snapshots of money movements throughout the day, which is a feature we've never really had in the past. Steve will be able to track money that's coming on any of the individual horses in the race on Derby night, and we'll be able to take snapshots of that and explain it to the public.

RANDY MOSS: First of all, Steve has already demonstrated his passion for the history of the sport, with his reference to Dollar Bill.

This is the 21st anniversary -- the 20th anniversary of Dollar Bill, who is the only horse in Derby history that can get in trouble in a two-horse race.

Secondly, maybe Jim McIngvale, Mattress Mack, will have as much success with his bet on Essential Quality, as he did with his seven-figure bet on Tom Brady and the Tampa Bay Bucs to win the Super Bowl against the Chiefs. So mattress Mack has shown some ability to do that.

Finally, to answer your question, Jerry and I, superfecta, I really, really like a long shot to hit the board potentially in the superfecta. His name is Dynamic One, trained by Todd Pletcher, who was beaten in a photo finish in a very weak Wood Memorial; but he probably was four, five lengths the best horse in that race. And he's looking really good in

Churchill Downs in the run-up to the Derby.

JERRY BAILEY: After Randy explained to me what a superfecta is, I've landed on King Fury, the winner of the Lexington Stakes. He's in form. What's he got to win, fourth or better. It will be a photo. But he'll be right there, Liz.

Q. Eddie, aren't you the best handicapper there? Who is your --

EDDIE OLCZYK: That's Randy and Jerry. That's their cup of tea. I'm still trying to figure that out. I'm still trying to figure that out. Unfortunately, I think what I need to do is teach Jerry what an exacta is, trifecta, superfecta. (Inaudible) and if I get that accomplished then it was well worth the 300-mile drive from Chicago to Louisville later today.

MIKE TIRICO: If I ever own a horse, I'll name him Illusive Edzo, because that's what he is when you ask him around this time, what do you think, what do you think? He saves it all for Saturday.

I'm going to throw my hat in the ring with Midnight Bourbon, 21-1 morning line odds, when I was in California, speaking with Mike Schmitz, he really likes him. How can you go wrong in a state that produces 95 percent of the world's bourbon, want to have some fun, throw a horse in there that's been in the money all seven starts, second in the Louisiana Derby. Midnight Bourbon. It's a great country when you can say "the mattress guy" and "the pillow guy" and a lot of people know who we're talking about.

Q. Jerry, you know a little bit about trips. If you were on Rock Your World, what do you think?

JERRY BAILEY: What do I think, how would I ride him? I would ride him just like John Velazquez rode Authentic last year. Be very careful with him the first quarter of a mile. He's got the outside post, there's that, and let your speed take over as you approach the turn.

Q. I'm curious your thoughts on Kendrick Carmouche as a rider, he's the first Black jockey in this race since Kevin Krigger in 2013, the only fourth in the past century. Your thoughts on Kendrick and his ability to aspire as a young rider?

JERRY BAILEY: I don't know Kendrick well, but I met him several times. Had some discussions with him. He's a very likable guy. Really likable. And some would say cocky, I would just say he's confident. He's very confident in himself and his ability.

And he's a very aggressive rider. Whether he means to or not, he intimidates a lot of guys out there just by his self-confidence and aggressiveness. I think he's tailor-made for this race, but he's got his work cut out for him because Bourbonic is going to be a very, very long shot. But it's good to have him here.

RANDY MOSS: For anybody out there that doesn't know the history of Black jockeys in the Kentucky Derby, it's phenomenal. Obviously there haven't been many in recent decades. But you go back to the early years of the Derby, the late 1800s, early 1900s, Black jockeys dominated the Kentucky Derby.

Guys like Isaac Murphy, Jimmy Winkfield, if anybody is interested in reading about that, there are two fantastic books on the topic, both written by the late Ed Hotaling, one is called "Great Black Jockeys" and the other one is "Wink," the story about Jimmy Winkfield, should have been made into a major motion picture a long time ago.

Q. Rob, using the 20-horse gate with a 20-horse field in the Derby, I'm wondering how much better is it going to be for the inside horses, for instance, No. 1, Known Agenda, and how are you going to show it?

ROB HYLAND: Good question. We saw this gate a year ago in the Kentucky Derby. I'll let Jerry speak to how a rider would get out of the gate quickly. But we will have a camera isolated on stalls 1 through 10. A second camera isolated on stalls 11 through 20.

The 14-horse will be isolated out of the gate, your favorite, Essential Quality. And we always have the full field covered out of the gate, and the overhead will always show the start of the race and any movement a horse makes from overhead to try to avoid that rail if that is in fact an issue.

JERRY BAILEY: You know, but many on this call may not know, that with a double gate that they had prior in past years, to make it fit on the track itself, the 1 post had to essentially be looking at the inside rails. If you were in stall 1 on a horse, if you ran straight, you would run right into the rails. You had to do a little bit of maneuvering as you broke and ran the first hundred yards.

But that's pretty much typical with any race; you do a little maneuvering once you leave the gate. The benefit of one gate, it's deeply placed into the track. So as the number one horse looks down the track, he won't be looking at the inside rail; he'll be looking at a running lane.

But honestly, I don't think it's going to be that much different in how the races are run.

ROB HYLAND: I've got two things to add to that. Number one, the notion that the No. 1 post position is a huge disadvantage and horses get buried down on the rail and they've got no chance because they draw the 1 hole.

Even with the old starting gate, it's a bunch of malarkey. It defies geometry. Some people think you get to the Kentucky Derby and suddenly geometry doesn't matter.

Data proves that. And the new starting gate will only help that. And the other thing I have to add... and down the stretch they come!

[LAUGHTER]

Q. For the analysts, looking past the Derby, looking to the Oaks and other big stakes on Friday and Saturday, who are some of the horses you're looking forward to watching or horses you think might make for some good value in some of those stakes?

JERRY BAILEY: Let's start with the Oaks. You've got the first four favorites are the winners of all the major preps. It's a pretty good race in itself. The Derby you have, in my opinion, three pretty closely group. I think you have almost four pretty closely grouped in the Oaks. The winner of the Fair Grounds Oaks; the winner of the Ashland, Malathaat; the Fantasy, Pauline's Pearl; and then the Gazelle winner, Search Results.

Malathaat is the favorite but I think Search Results, she could have some value.

The Eight Belles is a terrific race. The Turf Sprint is a terrific race. Randy and I just looked over Friday's card and almost every race is a great value race to bet and a lot of talent.

RANDY MOSS: The great thing about the Kentucky Derby is that with 20 horses, now 20 different betting interests since the early 1990s, it's not difficult at all to find good value on a horse that you like, that you think has a chance in the Derby. I mean, the challenge is just picking the right horse, which is a challenge that Jerry and I and everybody else have from year to year.

But you can go down the line and you can look at Dynamic One, a horse that I mentioned that should be a good price. O Besos, who has just beaten Ahead [phonetic] for second money in the Louisiana Derby. Midnight Bourbon, the horse that beat him for second, he's going to be a good price. All sorts of value everywhere in the Kentucky Derby and fantastic undercard races all weekend.

JERRY BAILEY: Some of the headliners on Friday, (indiscernible) you have the Oaks winner from a couple years ago Shedaresthedevil. On Saturday you have Charlatan. In the Sprint Race, you have Gamine, last year's Filly and Mare Sprint champion. There's some big names out there this weekend other than the Derby and the Oaks.

EDDIE OLCZYK: Friday's card is -- I'm looking at it. You can go three and four deep in the majority of the cards, but specifically in the Eight Belles, you're asking for a specific horse, which is just a tremendous race.

I like Li'l Tootsie, with Flavien Prat for Tom Amoss, gonna be a nice square price. Going to be using that horse up and down and hoping to pad the bankroll for a bit later in the day for Oaks and into the Oaks/Derby Double. A lot of my plays on Friday will be in Race 9 with Li'l Tootsie.

Q. Rob, on the use of the drone. Do you plan to actually use it in the race? Is there a wind restriction? And I assume it's in addition to the blimp rather than replacing?

ROB HYLAND: It is in addition to the blimp. And we'll be doing rehearsals with the vendor tomorrow afternoon and Thursday after training and just establish our comfort level, Greg, with the camera. It's a new toy but not the only camera we have. Churchill Downs has been great in working with us. And the vendor has been great. Our number one priority is safety.

We were worried about the back cam years ago. Horses have never noticed it in a race. So I'm hoping that we will effort a shot of the race or each race from the drone from the infield. Sort of mimicking what the back cam does in the back stretch, perhaps the drone handles on the front stretch. That will be determined over the next 48 hours of testing.

Q. Mike, what has been your favorite memory with covering the Derby all these years that you have covered it?

MIKE TIRICO: Well, it's only five years for me. So I'm new compared to everybody else. But certainly the 20-some-odd minutes we all sat there with maximum security in country house. There have been 146 Derbys to this point and there's never been an end to the race quite like that. That time was I think the best of what you hope for when you're involved in live television.

Tremendous job by our producer, Rob, and our director. The best in Randy and Jerry walking us through a situation we hadn't had happen before; the foresight of our group to

have a camera with the stewards and watching them agonize over this decision that eventually changed the course of history -- and for one horse, a Kentucky Derby winner; one horse has the biggest asterisk you'll have in Derby history. Of the four, that's the one that sticks out for me for the moment.

And the joy of live TV is that what we saw this year, we'll have no idea what will happen, and we hope we'll handle it the best we possibly can.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

