

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Friday, November 6, 2020

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Keeneland Race Course

Michael Maker

Kirk Wycoff

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Fire At Will takes the Juvenile Turf. And I'll start with you first, owner Kirk Wycoff, Three Diamonds Farm, you've been in this business for awhile, but first Breeders' Cup win with this colt.

KIRK WYCOFF: Yeah, we were second last year with Chimney Rock. We have been slowly working our way up fifth, second, today was the day. We're very happy.

THE MODERATOR: And this horse, extremely versatile. He's won on the turf. He's won on the dirt, short and long. So heading into today just what were your kind of expectations and the build-up to such a big day as the Breeders' Cup?

KIRK WYCOFF: Well, look, we brought the whole family here. We love Kentucky. We love buying and selling and breeding horses. It was great to be in this race because Mike Maker wanted to enter him in the Dirt Juvenile, so we had that wrestling match about three weeks ago.

But he's a lovely horse. He's good on both surfaces as we saw at Saratoga.

THE MODERATOR: Well, we see who won the wrestling match then. And you all have had two really strong years in stable. Who can you kind of credit some of that to? I know you've all worked it.

KIRK WYCOFF: Sure. Well, we'll start with the trainers, Mike Maker and Mike Trombetta and Todd Pletcher do a great job with the horses. They would all tell you we're very active. We like to give the horses time off particularly the turf horses. My wife and daughter do show jumping, so they want to do the retired race horses. It's all about the horse for us. The rest of the team in Florida is Wavertree Stables of Ciaran Dunne, grassroots farm in Woodford. They break our two-year-olds. We have about 40 or 50 a

year. And John Gleason at Woodford knew this horse was a standout six months ago. And I remember in July Mike Maker calling me and saying, This horse worked good today. I said, Good, send me the video. He said, I'll send you the video, but you can't see any of the other horses in the work and that's when we knew.

THE MODERATOR: That's when you knew. Well, nobody else seemed to have been paying attention today, 30 to 1.

KIRK WYCOFF: You know, look, the Pilgrim, Kendrick Carmouche did great job for us there, did exactly what he should. He took advantage of a slow pace. But everyone else in that race ran slow also and they didn't make up any ground. I know Chad and Public Sector, that's a great horse, but we came home in sub-23 and then sub-6 seconds. We thought he was the fastest horse going into this race.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Certainly ran a huge race. And speaking of Ricardo Santana, Mike, this horse has had a different rider every start, but a testament really to the horse that just seems anybody fits him well.

MICHAEL MAKER: The horse is very professional, easy going. If you can't ride him, you can't, shouldn't have a license. That's number one. But Ricardo gave him -- nothing taken away from Ricardo, but, he rode a fabulous race, but all the credit goes to the horse.

THE MODERATOR: He really couldn't have asked for a better set up the way the race, leaving the gate, everything, it seemed like he had what would be the perfect trip.

MICHAEL MAKER: Yes, he did. Shaved off the ground and he angled them out to his room and fired home.

THE MODERATOR: And this, your third Breeders' Cup win and I know a lot of success here at Keeneland, so must be extra special to be a Breeders' Cup win here in Kentucky.

MICHAEL MAKER: Yes, always love to win at home. Only thing I'm worried about is about an hour when Kirk's on my butt for not having 50 wins yet for this year.

KIRK WYCOFF: Well he has a budget. Can we just say thank you to Ricardo, he rode a beautiful race, but he knew that you needed to be a little more forwardly placed than maybe the horse wanted to be and when you watched the first eighth of a mile he looked to his right, he was very careful, but he didn't stop after he got the horse out of the gate, he got to great position and that's a credit to him. Good horse, good ride.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to ask up at the press box right now if anyone up there has some questions they would like to send down here to either Mr. Wycoff or for Mike Maker. Any questions about while we're waiting to hear about that, Mike, kind of what are the plans next with this horse now four starts and, again, he just seems so versatile.

MICHAEL MAKER: He is. Talk it over with the connections, but I'm going to say he's going to head to Bluewater here for a couple of weeks and go from there. But good thing with a good horse, you have plenty of options.

THE MODERATOR: You brought something up earlier about the wrestling match, turf/dirt. He's won on the dirt, that Derby word pops in with a colt like this.

MICHAEL MAKER: All I can say is you can't always believe everything Kirk says (laughing.)

KIRK WYCOFF: Well, I would tell you, if he didn't finish in the top-3 here he would have probably gone to the Kentucky Jockey Club to figure that out, but we have done such a great job in this country giving purses and races and the Belmont series, for turf horses, he clearly, I don't know how fast he run -- I don't even know how fast, how much he won by yet, because I was jumping up-and-down on the fourth floor.

THE MODERATOR: I had 1:35 and four I believe was the final time on the good turf.

KIRK WYCOFF: So I mean that will be Mike's decision and when Meg Levy sends him back some time in December or January, Mike will make those calls. In reality, we do listen to the experts.

THE MODERATOR: So no wrestling match maybe.

KIRK WYCOFF: No wrestling match. Well congratulations again. Anything anybody -- we have a question. So, Mike, you had so much success with long distance turf horses, so it must be very rewarding to have a win like this and with a younger horse as well.

MICHAEL MAKER: It is. Last year we were unlucky to lose with Chimney Rock and Fire At Will made us forget all about it, but especially a horse that we started off extra fond of, yes.

THE MODERATOR: And this horse you've had him from the get-go, so he's sort of been in the barn awhile and as you said you've been able to bring him along to this point today.

MICHAEL MAKER: Yes. And also more gratifying to give Three Diamond Farms their first Breeders' Cup win.

THE MODERATOR: That must be very exciting. I know I've seen you all in the Breeders' Cup before and second last year as you said, you just keep moving up now and just have to keep going win after win.

KIRK WYCOFF: Mike asked for 20 more two-year-olds this year. I said, since he's gotten so good this year, I think he's had his best year training ever, because lots of owners are giving him good stock, it's kind of crazy, he's been a great trainer for a long time, but now everybody knows it. Unfortunate for us, but good for Mike. (Laughing.)

THE MODERATOR: I would say 20 two-year-olds looks pretty good and congratulations to both of you and especially congratulations on a first Breeders' Cup win. Very special day.

KIRK WYCOFF: Thank you so much. Glad to be here, wish the fans were back and hope they're back next year.

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