

# Breeders' Cup World Championships

Friday, November 6, 2020

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Keeneland Race Course



## Brad Cox Jimmy Bell Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations. Essential Quality takes the Breeders' Cup Juvenile. And I'll start with you first, Brad. You had said in the pre-race interview you wanted this horse to be close to the pace and then all of a sudden he's back in 8th. What were you thinking at that time?

BRAD COX: I was concerned (laughing.)

I was. No, I was a touch concerned going into the first turn. Luis asking him to run out of there and, yeah, I felt the horses were faster in the early part of the race. They just kind of got away from him. He took some dirt going into the turn and up the back side. And once again, he was sitting out wide and I think Luis was maybe trying to get him out away from the dirt. And I wasn't sure he was really carrying himself into the bottom, carrying himself. I was very concerned. And then, you know, I think I saw 45 and change from the half mile, and I could see Luis starting to pick up. And when he was started to pick off a couple horses, I thought this horse is going to come -- I don't know if he's going to get there, but he's going to make a run at them. And once they straightened up, it looked like the horses on the lead were getting a little leg weary and he just stayed on it. He's got a tremendous amount of stamina. I'm very proud of the horse.

THE MODERATOR: You've also said that he's really grown up a lot recently. He just seems to be improving all the time. Tapit, a homebred for Godolphin, they seem to have a little bit of quirkiness about them.

BRAD COX: No doubt. We've had several of these. Obviously, the best type of colt we have ever had and he's really been good since day one. He's just, he's got an amazing amount of talent and it's been on display in three starts. And just an amazing animal.

THE MODERATOR: To go from a win at Churchill three-quarters of a mile and then the decision to go right into the Breeders' Futurity. That was a big jump. He had just obviously shown you that much.

BRAD COX: Yeah, well, we ran three-quarters knowing that he was a two-turn horse, but he displayed enough talent, or I should say speed, of the mornings to give us enough confidence that he would make a good account of himself going short. He obviously did that, overcame some traffic trouble, split some horses, and really just gave us a lot of confidence. And I think it was a very sharp time of the day. I think it's definitely a quick track. It was on the under card of the Derby. But he's a very good colt.

THE MODERATOR: Jimmy, homebred for Godolphin as well. So special for you all to here in Kentucky, at Keeneland, kind of home base for Darley America. Just tell us a little bit about Essential Quality from day one.

JIMMY BELL: Well, it's the cherry on top. It's just so exciting to win any Breeders' Cup race, and then when you have a two-year-old colt that's a homebred and, again, I was just saying earlier how exciting it was to be there with, so much of the farm staff was able to come over in your own backyard. That's one of the joys is to be able to share this with as many of the people that put so much time, as you well know, into the behind the scenes of all this. And so it just made it so much more special to have the whole team over here. And, again, a tribute to Sheikh Mohammed and his overall breeding program globally. There's nothing more exciting than a two-year-old that looks like he might go a little further, going into two turns. And really a tip of the hat to Brad and his team and Brad in particular. He was saying something to me pretty early on. He says, when you take a colt, that he said, I think he's going to love two turns. We're going to run him short. I think he went nine and change that day, to show that kind of speed and yet to be able to handle these two turns, that's what he was looking for. And every time he works and runs, he goes, Jimmy, this horse isn't even breathing. He just loves the distance. So it's just been a great day for everyone. It's rare, so got to enjoy it.

THE MODERATOR: Well, you definitely segued into a

question here for you. Brad, do you allow yourself to even think about the Derby? You mentioned this horse will run all day. He has the stamina. He's already won at Churchill. You're now early favorite. You have to think somewhere down the road.

BRAD COX: Well, sure, I mean, it's the obvious thought or the dream, I guess you would say. And I know the Godolphin team is, first and foremost, put the horse first and will allow him to come out of the race and let the dust settle, see where we end up, see how he comes out of the race, and we'll knock out a plan this winter. But very excited about this horse next year in his three-year-old campaign.

THE MODERATOR: Same question to you, Jimmy. In the elusive Kentucky Derby, and I know Godolphin, it's everybody's dream. Last year at this time you had Maxfield and then having to scratch him, now coming back with a horse like this, with such a big outfit, but do you allow yourself to dream?

JIMMY BELL: Absolutely. If you didn't, you probably wouldn't be in this business. I think a lot of it is based on dreams, and those that are just lucky and fortunate enough to be able to actually live the dream, which we have done, certainly you dream. And again, Brad said all along, every indication has been about distance for this colt. He just does not get tired. And I think that we have asked a lot of a very young Baby, Baby Huey-type two-year-old to see him progress from his first start even -- I think Brad told me after the Breeders' Futurity, he said, He doesn't have a clue what he's doing yet. And yet since then to the day, he says, I'm telling you, he's beginning to figure things out. So to see him grow mentally, obviously develop physically, and to be able to handle this kind of competition, certainly makes you want to dream a little bit.

THE MODERATOR: And to do it under not necessarily his normal conditions the way the race set up.

Brad, another question from the press box, saying you were a bit unlucky with your three-year-old's this spring, so anything you take from that and possible changes with this horse or do you take it horse by horse?

BRAD COX: It's all horse by horse. We had a good spring with three different colts between Shared Sense and Mr. Monomoy and Wells Bayou. And all those horses, we got to their -- I should say Derby preps in different manners, so it's all individual basis. Obviously, this was an odd year given the circumstances with COVID-19. So it's an individual horse. This horse is obviously much more accomplished at this point in his career as opposed to those horses. But I think that another thing, a side note

here, I mean, this horse, this colt's three races, they were completely different. Obviously, one going three-quarters, one on the lead with a mile and a 16th, and one coming from out of it going a mile and a 16th, just it shows his versatility.

THE MODERATOR: It must give you a lot of confidence going forward that he is so versatile.

BRAD COX: Yes, for sure. Like we said for awhile, I do feel the sky's the limit for this horse, this colt.

THE MODERATOR: Jimmy, on another note, this was Luis Saez's first Breeders' Cup win and to win for you all, with Kiaran McLaughlin now his agent.

JIMMY BELL: It's very special and I certainly thought about Kiaran and Luis being his first one, it just makes it so much more enjoyable, the more you can share with people who have had a hand in the operation. Certainly Kiaran certainly has over the years and has been a great part of the team. And it was, it was funny because Luis said, when he got to the three-eighths pole, he said, I knew we were full of run and stuff like that, and I said, I wish you could have let us know that, because going down the back side I wasn't quite as confident as you were. But he said he felt the horse and when he asked him he responded very much. But so excited for Kiaran doing that, I know it's almost like being here himself. So very special, so far, so many different corners.

THE MODERATOR: Immediate plans for the horse right now? As far as what next plans with him and giving him some time off or, Brad, what's the plan?

BRAD COX: We'll talk it over with the Godolphin team and we'll come up with a plan. Nothing, we have not really sit and talked about anything in the next, over the next couple days, but just very fortunate. And he's a nice sound colt and keep our fingers crossed he stays that way and we'll work our way back, I would say from the first Saturday in May some how, some way and we'll figure it out.

THE MODERATOR: Well we didn't have you in here earlier for Aunt Pearl when she won so another victory. Quickly, about Aunt Pearl, her race, quick out of the gate, was that the plan to send her?

BRAD COX: Yes, it was. The more I thought about the closer we got to the race, I told Florent, I said, Look, she's fast, let her go, let her do her thing. I don't mean let her go, but just let her run her race, but don't crank her down. We felt like, I felt like she was the speed of the speed on paper and maybe off replays, just thought she would -- and given the post as well -- I think the other speedsters were to the

outside and to give her an opportunity to break, put herself in position to clear off of the first turn and that's exactly what she did. She's very special, Florent thinks a lot of her. He's said some, you know, terms, thrown some terms around about her that he normally doesn't use. I mean, she's freaky fast, so she's, she's exciting, I think we'll have a nice run with her next year, just very, very fortunate to have her.

THE MODERATOR: Do you allow yourself to celebrate tonight and also a big day tomorrow and what does the rest of the night entail for the Brad Cox gang?

BRAD COX: I'll stay here in Lexington and I won't do any partying at all.

THE MODERATOR: We'll put that question to Jimmy. What does this hold out at Godolphin tonight?

JIMMY BELL: We'll celebrate on behalf of Brad and everybody, I think they're already getting an early start at it, but this is a day to celebrate.

**Q. To the dream and stuff, not only is this an unbeaten two-year-old champion, but -- and there's probably a bar bet in here somewhere - he also has already won on Derby Day at Churchill Downs. There's a trivia answer in there somewhere. But definitely think about that, among the credentials, the fact that Churchill is his hometown track and he has already won there. I mean, just sort of put that in perspective here.**

BRAD COX: He's got experience at Churchill, he trained there a good bit of the summer and through out the fall. After he won the Breeders' Futurity here he went back to Churchill and prepared, had his three works for the Breeders' there at Churchill, so he obviously likes it there. He's done really well here at Keeneland the last four, five days, so I think this horse is something, for sure, moving forward.

**Q. You did talk about, you alluded to this, that he was green in his prior two races. Watching the race out there today did you see any signs of greenness? You talked about he's getting better and better, but maybe what are some of the things you like best about this race, outside of the win?**

BRAD COX: That he was able to set off the pace and overcome adversity I think was the biggest thing. Once again three races, three different scenarios. So I just, it just shows how much talent he has. He's not, he doesn't have to have it a certain way, he's a good colt.

THE MODERATOR: Jimmy, one last question for you, so

winning any race is special, winning a Breeders' Cup race at Keeneland, but winning with a two-year-old colt a home bred and everything's the future.

JIMMY BELL: It is and that's really speaks towards Sheikh Mohammed. This is where he gets his enjoyment. He loves his home bred, he loves his breeding operation, he loves the international stage, and he truly loves competing and racing here in America. And to have a colt of this caliber and talent that really he was, Godolphin was the breeder of, this is, this is, there's a lot of nice things in here.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations to you both, Brad congratulations earlier as well, best of luck tomorrow. And now Jimmy you can go enjoy and celebrate and Brad, get ready for tomorrow.

JIMMY BELL: Thank you.

BRAD COX: Thank you very much.

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