

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 7, 2020

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Keeneland Race Course



Ron Moquett

Sol Kumin

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Whitmore, dirty saddle towel all the way to victory in the Breeders' Cup Sprint. Congratulations, Sol, all your partners, Bob La Penta, unable to be here today, Ron, trainer but also owner on this horse.

And Ron I'm going to start with you first, just such an emotional victory with this horse, seven years old, four Breeders' Cup attempts, and third second and now the ultimate victory today.

RON MOQUETT: We're very proud. We give credit to the horse. I mean I take care of a lot of horses and none of them are as fast as Whitmore, so I can tell you the horse does matter. We do everything we can do to try to get the most out of him and to make his job easier to perform well. But we're so grateful that the horse found us.

THE MODERATOR: What has made him able to stay at this level for such a long period of time?

RON MOQUETT: Well, I'm joking around, but if I don't have owners that believe in me and have priority in the horse first, it don't work. I can tell you that if I call Bob La Penta, who is a gem, he's awesome, or if I call Sol and say, Hey, I want to skip a race. I don't get a, Oh, man, I really wanted to or Are you sure we can't? I get, Whatever you think. And that matters. That's the difference between doing the right thing and doing what you know and doing what somebody else wants you to do. So we think for the horse and my clients, my clients are just, they deserve all the credit for allowing me to do what I want to do and that's just, do what's best by him.

THE MODERATOR: Sol, you all kind of bought into this horse, a gelding, later on in his career. Obviously a testament to even you and your partners how much racing really means to you.

SOL KUMIN: Yeah, with this horse, it's always all racing. We obviously liked what we had seen. We didn't have any horses with Ron, so it was a chance for to us get to know him and get into his barn. And since then we have had a few others. And it's just an incredible win. You own lots of horses but very rarely do you find one that is a fighter like this guy, with so much heart. All the credit goes to Ron and his team and Whitmore because he's just, you know, he's a warrior and it was just amazing to see today.

THE MODERATOR: He is a warrior. 38 starts. Ron, that just kind of goes back, I mean, gelding or not, to old school style of horse and horsemanship.

RON MOQUETT: Well, we like to think that we do things the old school way, but we are also high tech. We do all the spas and all the vibrating plates and anything that we can do for therapy that makes his day better. I promise you there's some, probably a young girl back in my barn that can't wait to do it. So he's got, for a big old grumpy gelding, he's got a lot of girls wrapped around his finger.

THE MODERATOR: He is a true fan favorite and also a real family and house horse and a family organization. Your team and Laura, your wife, who I remember meeting when you brought him to the Derby and she has ridden him, and just tell us a little bit about the team behind team Whitmore.

RON MOQUETT: Well, we -- we have got a groom that's been with him since he was two and whenever we brought him into the barn, we had to geld him because he liked to argue a lot and he throws punches like Conor MacGregor. I mean, he kicks, he does everything to try to bully you around, so keeping the same people is very important. And we got the same therapy person, the same pony, the same everything. And we've allowed him to get his comfort and we don't break his spirit and tell him, That's bad or whatever. We just try to figure out a way to make it his idea to want to do what we need to do.

THE MODERATOR: And Sol, with this horse, so many good horses in your organization, but what makes him kind of special to you all?

SOL KUMIN: Well, I think that the fact that he's run as many times, as you said. I mean, every time they run you start to build a closer relationship with the horses and as you invest time as an owner really watching every race and getting ready for every race. I know how much he's meant to Ron and Laura and their barn and that's really what it's all about. Being part of horses like this that are so impactful in so many people's lives, I mean, it doesn't get much better. This is one of the first horses we owned with Bob La Penta, you know, real close with his manager, John Panagot, they do a terrific job. And just become really good friends with them and bought a bunch of horses with them since this horse and most of it had to do with Whitmore. But a lot of people together, again, truly a special talent and an unbelievable job by Ron.

THE MODERATOR: And Ron, I have some questions from the press box for you. This has been a challenging year, but two years ago you were fighting for your life with autoimmune disease, and during that time period you credited horses with the means of saving your life, and all accolades aside, what does Whitmore mean to that and to you at a personal level?

RON MOQUETT: Oh, he's everything. You get a horse like this, and all horses, I mean, we drive across the country all the time just to see horses. But a horse like this that tries and fights and gives you everything consistently, you want to be there to make sure -- I'm not saying that even in one of these big barns that he wouldn't have performed beautifully and done just as well, but I am saying that Whitmore in a big outfit may not have received the exact attention that he needed to get there. So I was, I use that as motivation. If I'm not there to do my job, who is going to do it?

THE MODERATOR: Well, that was great motivation for you and certainly for your health. And how are you?

RON MOQUETT: I feel great.

THE MODERATOR: Nothing like a win in the Breeders' Cup race to help that too.

RON MOQUETT: Yeah, I know. Right after the race they come up and they want to do interviews, and for a little bit, for a guy that's lung compromised, I'm sitting over here trying to go, Okay, first you catch your breathe and then you can talk and then when you put these, what I call life restrictors on me, then it makes it that much harder to get air through there. So it's good.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned in the initial interview -- this is another question from the press box -- someone

who had recently passed. Can you clarify the name and elaborate on who that was and the relationship?

RON MOQUETT: So I came from Arkansas. Geographically it's not the spot to where you start a stable and you get a head start. There's somebody's kid right now that has decided that something else he didn't want to do or he wanted to do and he wasn't good at, he's going to come back and give it more of a shot than we were. But there was a guy that believed in me. He saw me, and he's like, The way you touch your horses, the way you talk about your horses, I want you. He stayed with me 21 years. Through good times, through nine percent years, through 22 percent years, and I give him a piece of this horse whenever a horse that we bought, a Malibu Moon colt turned out to have EPM and wasn't going to perform, I give him a piece of this horse before his first race. And he's ridden every race with me. And after the, after the Forego, I got a phone call from his wife, who we're friends with, obviously, like family, but told me that he had passed away. And I was like, you know, it's like losing a father, someone that believed in you and was there no matter what. You get your ass whooped, he comes back and goes, We'll get him next time. Don't worry about it. Where other people take their horses and leave. He stayed with me. So I'm very loyal. And I'm so happy that I did it for Sol, so happy that we do it for Bob, and I'm so happy that we did it for Mr. Fred.

THE MODERATOR: What's Fred's name?

RON MOQUETT: Fred Edick. He owned a piece of a bunch of horses, but he was just a, he was a dude, he was cool.

THE MODERATOR: Well, apparently you had someone up there riding along with Whitmore.

RON MOQUETT: I guarantee you, I guarantee you.

THE MODERATOR: And then lastly, seven years old, still going strong, do we stay in training?

SOL KUMIN: Absolutely. Absolutely. We'll let him tell us.

RON MOQUETT: I mean, I was brought up, where I'm from the border of Arkansas/Oklahoma there's a quarter horse track called Blue Ribbon Downs. And to be the fastest in the world you have to beat the fastest in the world. And today, today we're the fastest. Now there's others going to run faster times and going to get more accolades, but today this is the fastest horse in the world. And I see no reason, as long as Whitmore wants to do it, I see no reason to do anything but what he wants to do.

Q. The way the track played, you said with Phoenix that the speed, they have been tracking and you were hoping it would be. Were you all concerned going into this race feeling that he was able to come from behind?

RON MOQUETT: Yeah, I was, and it was all I could do to not say, Screw it, let's just see what he'll do up front. But, you know, it's hard to teach an old dog new tricks. And I knew that some of the favorites in here were favorites because of things that went their way. And I thought maybe if things would go a little bit, maybe we could out run the bias of the track and that's the whole thing is being able to out run -- and Irad, hats off to Irad, getting on a horse that's 15 to 1 and having some country guy go, Hey, we believe in this horse and just do this and don't worry about him kicking before he goes in the gate, that's a good thing. And don't worry about if he sees another horse and he tries to go to his right, he just wants to bite that horse. And me telling him all this, he's got to think, look at me like I got two heads. But instead, he listens to me, he listened to my wife, who is my assistant, he listened to Greta, he let us all tell him and he went out there and applied it. And it's like when someone sings a song the way you want, it just worked out and thank God and thank Whitmore.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Go enjoy. Congratulations.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports....