

# Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 7, 2020

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Keeneland Race Course



**Bob Baffert**

**Eric Gustavson**

**Michael Behrens**

**John Velazquez**

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started here with the press conference following the Breeders' Cup Classic win by Authentic. I have Eric Gustavson, president of Spendthrift and Michael Behrens, myracehorse.com. Congratulations. Was there enough room in the winner's circle for this ownership?

ERIC GUSTAVSON: No, no there wasn't. Speaking of partnerships, I feel bad. When I was giving my speech, my thoughts after the race with Brittany, I neglected to mention Starlight and Madaket, two of our amazing partners. And I hope Jack and Sol will forgive me, but that was a good afternoon on my part and I feel really bad.

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure with a victory like this they can quickly forgive that in the excitement afterwards. So let's talk a little bit about the ownership and the partnership of this horse, Authentic. The Kentucky Derby, now the Breeders' Cup Classic. And Eric, I'll let you go first, representing Spendthrift, just talk a little bit about what this ride's been like.

ERIC GUSTAVSON: Oh, man, it's such, it's in such an unbelievably surreal year. To say that it's a, that the horse has brought us a lot of light and excitement and distraction is an understatement. To have the off date Kentucky Derby and then the back to normal Breeders' Cup and to be able to win those both in one year and with a three-year-old, man, it's too much.

THE MODERATOR: Now, being a three-year-old, and are there plans right now to keep him in training and race him next year?

ERIC GUSTAVSON: The plan is we're going to get together with the team, I would say tomorrow, but probably starting tonight. Tomorrow, we have to make some decisions. We have to go over all the implications, talk to Sol and make plans for the future. But for tonight we're just going to enjoy.

THE MODERATOR: Okay, well, definitely enjoy indeed.

And Michael, what a ride for myracehorse.com, just talk a little bit about how all this came about and your initial investment into racing, and then Authentic.

MICHAEL BEHRENS: Yeah, well, I mean, this has been quite the ride. It's an amazing ride. I could never have imagined that it would end like this. I mean, this is the pinnacle of racing. And when we set out to do this a couple years ago the idea was to celebrate this sport with as many people as possible, and to have 5,314 people to have an ownership stake in Authentic, I couldn't have asked for anything better. And the partnership with Spendthrift and Eric and Mr. Hughes, it's been tremendous having this opportunity. And I just, I really can't believe this happened. I mean, I love racing and I want more and more people to be able to experience this and to have this happen? I don't know, it's crazy.

THE MODERATOR: Well, over 5,300 more people, including everybody else in the partnership, and in, as you mentioned, Eric, such a challenging year, both of you this question, and to do something like this in horse racing. Horse racing has been the sport that's been able to stay constant throughout the year, and what has that meant, first to you Michael, with all these new investors and partners in horse racing?

MICHAEL BEHRENS: Racing has been an amazing distraction for everything that's going on, for so many people going through so many hardships, with what we were dealing with, with the pandemic. And I love the fact that we were able to bring some joy, racing was able to continue, was able to thrive and do so well. And to have so many people to have this distraction is super important. It's a great form of entertainment. It's a great sport. And I'm so glad that we can just be a part of just helping people

through this difficult time.

THE MODERATOR: And Mr. Hughes has been such a support of the industry and had so many good horses and Spendthrift Farms. So what does this mean to Spendthrift and for Mr. Hughes with Authentic?

MICHAEL BEHRENS: This is like a pinnacle. We'd like to keep it going, don't get me wrong. But for Wayne, who has given so much to the game over the years. He's been in racing for 50 years and he bought Spendthrift in 2004 and made it into a business, and now to, with a lot of help from Johnny V. and Bob who are in the room here, to realize this dream, that sometimes it feels like you can only dream. It's really not quite attainable, which is what makes it like so sweet, it's unbelievable. But for Wayne, it's everything, for us, for the team at Spendthrift, that's the best part, that Wayne has reached the top of the mountain here and we get to celebrate with him.

THE MODERATOR: Well, congratulations to you all and all the partners on Authentic. I'll now bring in trainer Bob Baffert and John Velazquez, jockey. Thank you all and go celebrate. All right. Gentlemen, congratulations. Bob, I'll start with you. Now four Breeders' Cup Classic wins, 17 Breeders' Cup wins. Authentic, coming really on kind of a short turn around compared to your other Breeders' Cup Classic runners and winners. How did you make any adjustments with him after the Preakness?

BOB BAFFERT: Well, we got him back to the Preakness and actually he was, there was two races where he came back where he was really blowing hard. It was Santa Anita Derby and the Preakness. So that means he probably, maybe I didn't have him as sharp as I love and he just struggled that day. But we got him back and I've got a great team and we just tightened the screws on him, and coming in there were, all three of them were working really well, him, and Improbable. But Authentic, he's just matured. He's maturing right now and this is, I won it with three-year-olds, and -- because this is when, the time of the year they catch up. But for some reason I was sort of surprised at the tote board, that he was 5 to 1. I go, This guy's won the Kentucky Derby and, you know, it's not like he ran a horrible race in the Preakness. But all, it was a tough field, but I just, I told Johnny, I said, This is -- the horse you're riding this week is the horse that you rode in the Derby. You can ride him with confidence. You can be aggressive. You can do what you want. And he's just a really top horse. I mean, he's a horse that, he's getting better, he's getting better, and so and I'm just happy. Most important thing this, myracehorse.com has been such a boost for horse racing because we're getting so many owners involved, all my friends, family, they bought shares. It's something to get the word -- and Wayne Hughes is

behind this and Michael Behrens. But this myhorserace.com, we got Walker Buehler, he was here today and he just, he was, you know, he felt that family and that, and people can get involved in these horses at a very minimal, miniscule amount and have that feeling that we have. It's so hard to achieve. I mean, the excitement. And so I have to give up my hat off to them coming up with that idea about myracehorse.com.

THE MODERATOR: Especially in a year like this it's been a great way for people to have a distraction in racing.

And Johnny, this horse, Kentucky Derby win, and then back on him in the Preakness. So two rides before this. With the way the track was playing today, was this the plan just let him get out there and they would just have to catch him.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Absolutely. We talked about it and we know the track was playing pretty decent for horses and it wasn't a lot of speed on the race either. So we talked about it and tried to take advantage of it, tried to put him in the lead, get to the rail and let him come and get him. And I think he did everything that I wanted him to do. He would concentrate throughout the whole racetrack and when I asked him to do something he was there instantly and very proud of him. Thanks to Bob, who keep me alive here, and the other owners. Everyone who's given me the opportunity for me to ride this horse and believing in me. I'm getting older and it's just, it's, I think I appreciate it now. I know I appreciate it more now. And chasing this race for a long time. It is my first time I win it, so to get from that and to give thanks for Bob.

BOB BAFFERT: I do my best work with older riders. (Laughing.) You're not old. You're a veteran.

THE MODERATOR: Yes, the word veteran. Were you surprised though that you had really no, nobody breathing down your neck, that you were having really such an easy lead out there all day?

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Going back to same thing. I don't, looking at it, I didn't think it was that much speed in the race, other than the other horse that Bob had on outside. And I thought we were going to be quicker than him anyway and once we got in front and I passed the wire for the first time, I mean, it was pretty easy from there, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Very --

BOB BAFFERT: I don't even know what the fractions were because the board was, that I was looking at was -- does anybody know the fractions? I saw 17 pop up there all the way through.



THE MODERATOR: Definitely did not go the first quarter in 17. Fast but not that fast.

Bob, I've got some questions from the press box for you. It said that this horse yesterday in training had run off yesterday morning and was there any concern with the way he was so aggressive coming into this race.

BOB BAFFERT: That's news to me. I didn't know he ran off. I watched him. I didn't see him running off. But let me tell you about Authentic. He is spring-loaded. I felt bad, the owners wanted to lead him in. I said, I wouldn't lead him in. You're going to end up on your back if you lead him in. I'd stay away with him. But he was pretty good with the flowers today. He really was.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Yes, very proud.

THE MODERATOR: He's growing up.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Nothing flopping there. Like, they had, like, the thing they had in the Derby on the bottom part, that's probably what was really spooking him.

BOB BAFFERT: But the running off, he's just aggressive, but he was, he trained beautifully here. They all trained really well.

THE MODERATOR: You mentioned all of your horses were training so well leading up to the races today. Improbable, of course, runs a very good second behind Authentic today. You had said earlier when Gamine won that that race meant the most to you. Now is that still the case?

BOB BAFFERT: Well, I mean it was important for her to win because what she had been through and the negative things that happened to her, which were just, you know, just --

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Vindicated.

BOB BAFFERT: Yeah, vindicated. The thing about it is she's a great, brilliant mare. And when she won that and it was just, because she was, she's a brilliant racehorse and, but Authentic -- and I really wanted, I thought I was looking at Maximum Security, I thought he would run better than that. I'm surprised that -- I really thought 1, 2, 3, I felt that. But Improbable, I thought he was going to run up there, but this, Authentic, he's just getting really, really good. But.

THE MODERATOR: Well speaking to that then I had those two representative partners in here and asked them about a decision being made for him to race next year,

which they said obviously that would be a big decision that they all have to get together and discuss. I'm sure, obviously, you would love to see this horse back in the barn next year as a four year old. As you said, he's just getting better.

BOB BAFFERT: Yeah, I mean it would be nice, I would love it, I would love to have him back, I would love to have all three of them back. But we know -- but that's something that I don't, unfortunately, I don't get a vote in that, and so there's a lot of, I just hope they, we get more horses like this. And we got horses coming up too. Just enjoy them while you have them, but he's been a, I mean he's been a savior, that horse. I mean, to, you know, with going through 2020 with the COVID and all that and then the Derby being postponed, and then we win the Derby, one of the greatest rides, I mean he --

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Thank you.

BOB BAFFERT: -- and then he comes back, Preakness, bad little -- still ran a great race, but it was a great race. I think you got to give the mare filly credit. It was a great race. And we come back and we seal the deal. It was not a fluke. These are the best horses in America today and so that's why I love horse racing, it's settled on the racetrack.

THE MODERATOR: Speaking of that, another question from the press box. What are Authentic's chances for Horse of the Year, champion three-year-olds?

BOB BAFFERT: You know what, I don't get a vote. If I had a vote I would give you --

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: You have my vote.

BOB BAFFERT: Well it's one of those things where I think somebody yesterday, how did they state it? I said they decide today. Today there was a lot on the line. There's a lot of championships on the line today and so I'm biased, of course, but what he did today was pretty amazing. I mean, yeah, I don't even know how fast they went.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: I don't even know.

BOB BAFFERT: Does anybody know?

THE MODERATOR: The timer didn't -- they usually have somebody to hand time.

BOB BAFFERT: Because I thought Pharoah's record might go down today.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: I have to step out because I have

people waiting for me.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Thank you very much. Bob, thank you and I'll see you later.

BOB BAFFERT: Okay. I'll see you later.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Johnny. I guess to wrap up, Bob, another very successful Breeders' Cup for you and your entire team and just really kind of sum up racing and what it's meant to everybody in the industry to be able to keep this going this year with the COVID pandemic, and how difficult some of the challenges have been, but that racing being able to stay up and running.

BOB BAFFERT: Well, it's very fortunate. I'm just glad that the Kentucky governor let us run, kept us open. Horse racing is so vital to this state and these breeders and racing, trainers, we got everybody, we got to keep working. And it was a great day today, it was a beautiful day. I can't believe the beautiful weather. So to come here and ship in here and win these races, I mean, Breeders' Cup's, they're tough, they're tough to win. I know I've won, believe me, I've run so many horses and I know and I really appreciate every one I've ever won. But these are special, especially when you win the Breeders' Cup Classic. I had trouble, I couldn't win the Breeders' Cup Classic when I first got in, I had some nice horses, kept running second, so Silver Charm, all these things, but I just feel fortunate I'm in this position.

THE MODERATOR: What time will you be back coming back in the morning to the barn? From anyone who wants to answer.

BOB BAFFERT: Yeah, we'll get there around 7, 7, 8, 9, we'll be hanging around there, you know, so -- might sleep in until 6:30.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Anything else you would like to say in closing?

BOB BAFFERT: Just I want to thank my -- my team was here, Jimmy Barnes, Pascal Riviera, my exercise boy, everybody in the barn that works so hard, I know they're back home excited, but I got some great people that work for me and I'm so happy, I look at their faces, they're so excited about it and, but I'm just fortunate for the clientele that I have. They're good people and they trust me with their horses and they know that they don't have to worry. We work hard at it. My wife Jill has, she makes a lot of sacrifices for me, dealing with me. It's a seven days a week job, you know, but it's moments like this that we say

this is why we do it. Because we love, at the end of the day, we love these horses and that's why we do it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Bob, and congratulations.

BOB BAFFERT: Thank you.

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