

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Friday, November 4, 2022

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Keeneland Racecourse

Mike Repole

Press Conference



Juvenile

THE MODERATOR: Mike, you've won this race before with Uncle Mo. So very special being back here in Kentucky. Tell us about Forte, your partners on this horse and where you expect to see him in the future.

MIKE REPOLE: First I gotta shout out, because I was so focused on Teresa, Todd Pletcher, who is the most unbelievable trainer, incredible person, to walk in with my wife and my daughter. And to have Todd walk in with Tracy and his three kids and Rory, obviously for Vinnie and Teresa, it was really, really special.

And these trainers have tough jobs. And what Todd does as far as balancing being the greatest trainer out there and great husband, great son -- he's got two parents alive, his father JJ is here, and three kids, it's pretty special. And I wanted to make sure that, I think, you guys can hear it here first, I think one day he's going to make the hall of fame. I really think he's going to make the hall of fame.

I didn't really give Irad the proper shout out. Irad is an Eclipse Award-winning jockey this year. He's so good right now. There's such incredible talented jockey pool. But you almost have Irad here. And two to 12 is like nose to finish. But Irad, he's got five lengths on the field right now.

So I want to give him a great shout out. He's been part of this amazing ride and very blessed. And the last one is Vinnie and Teresa, Rory, Monique, team St. Elias -- I'd say that, Vinnie and Teresa aren't here. Vinnie had surgery on his back, I think people know that. He's doing well.

They have a little hockey team in Florida they have to manage. And it's probably one of the best teams in the league.

But having Vinnie and Teresa as partners, it's extended family. Winning a race with them is always more fun. And

Rory does an amazing, amazing job for them, just like Ed Rosen and Jim Martin, Danielle Bricker and Jake West. We're very blessed.

THE MODERATOR: Todd Pletcher and Irad Ortiz, they're both running in the next race. That's the reason they're not here for this press conference.

Mike, additionally with this horse, I know you're a very good handicapper as well, and going into this race, Cave Rock obviously was going to be the short priced favorite, but Forte having had a race over this track, do you think that gave him a bit of advantage?

MIKE REPOLE: I think that's one of the reasons why we ran here instead of there. Not only did it give him an advantage, the way the race played out where he was -- he had to fight the whole down with the wire with that horse Loggins, I think it helped him for when he got alongside Cave Rock.

Cave Rock's numbers are incredible. But one thing we saw was all West Coast races, first time he's really shipped halfway across the country. I would also say -- Baffert is an amazing trainer, but when he has four horses out of seven in the race, okay, you go first, you go second, you go third. They don't go four across the track.

Whoever owns that one, I thought he would go since he was coming out of two 6-for-1 races. He was 70-to-1. I should buy that guy dinner tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Rory is representing Vinnie and Teresa, have been partners with Mike Repole and the family for a long time. Tell us what their reaction was to this win.

RORY BABICH: Needless to say, the phone was ringing off the hook just as the nose was touching the finish line. I couldn't answer fast enough.

It's a special feeling. And it's not even fair to call it a partnership, that St. Elias and Repole has, because as Mike correctly described it's extended family. And it's just such a special feeling to be there, celebrating it together.

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And it really is a family feeling.

And Vinnie and Teresa are so passionate about this sport, have been their whole lives. And to have this happen at the Breeders' Cup -- it's a special feeling to have a horse just make the Breeders' Cup. And to win and win at Keeneland. We had Liam's Map win here last time, and it's just an absolutely unbelievable feeling.

And as Mike described, it's such a team effort from the breeder who bred an unbelievable horse to the team that picks out the horse, to the O'Farrells at Ocala Stud who broke the horse, Todd and his team, Irad and then just everything about it. It's a team effort, and it's so rewarding when it works.

And it was an unbelievable field. And Forte just ran such an unbelievable race. And to beat a field like that, it's an incredible feeling.

THE MODERATOR: You're the favorite for the Kentucky Derby at this point and for the year-end championships.

Q. Mike, Forte means strength. And that colt certainly showed it in abundance today to pick up the way he did. I'm not familiar with him. I'm English, but is that his racing style?

MIKE REPOLE: You know, Todd, part of the team picked him out. Todd was very involved. He looks like violence, big horse. And Vinnie and I and Teresa have had some good luck with some Italian names like Vino Rosso. He did okay. And Forte, meaning strong. And I got my little pod of espresso. It says Forte. Forte brand. I have that, too. I'm going to have one of these right after the race.

But strong. And it's just a strong word, "forte." It's a great name. When it's given to a horse, it becomes a great name.

Q. The fractions were remarkably similar to the last race here. Other than the half. I think the quarter, three-quarter were the same. Did you see similarities in the way the race was run beyond just the clock?

MIKE REPOLE: I mean, if you look at the first couple of races on the Derby, you would think it would just be favorite. And I don't know what they did when they went to turf. I don't know if they went over it, whatever.

But the way the horse that won the race actually was in the lead wire to wire came from way back. But she did stay on the rail the whole time.

Irak knew that the 1 and the 3 would probably go out and

he was going to get to the rail. He got to the rail. Looked like he wanted to get out earlier and he couldn't.

But Forte did that last time. And again, that's why Irak is Irak. Some jockeys would just try to make a six-wide move, and he's going to sit there. But you know what, the loss has to let him sit there.

The experience he got in Sanford, when he got behind horses, couldn't get through; the hopeful, when he came up the rail, and his last race here where he kind of went four-wide, this horse has been winning in, honestly, mile-and-a-quarter performance, and looks like he's looking to get better and better.

THE MODERATOR: Where do you go from here?

MIKE REPOLE: 2-year-old championships, Eclipse awards, Palm Beach, wherever they're having it this year.

Listen, it started here for me 12 years ago. I won a little race here called the Breeders' Cup with Juvenile Uncle Mo. I think that's the first time people heard of Repole Stable.

And I love racing. I used to bring my grandmother to the track. She passed away about two and a half years ago. She used to always have the Repole Stable hat, come down to the Winner's Circle. She passed away about two years ago and seven years ago I got this -- what's your name again?

(Laughter.)

GIOIA REPOLE: Gioia.

MIKE REPOLE: Gioia. I got my daughter Gioia. My grandma had a big personality. I think I have a little bit of a big personality. She's right behind both of us. I wanted a girl with my wife's personality. I only got half of it.

But now to have -- it kind of goes full circle from Uncle Mo, to Forte, to my 93-year-old grandma, to my seven-year-old daughter Gioia.

I don't know, it's hard for me to express, since the Belmont Stakes, what's happening. My whole family thinks you just show up and you win a Grade 1 and that that's normal. I think it's eight now, eight Grade 1s since June. People don't win eight Grade 1s in their lifetime. People don't win eight Grade 1s ever.

I'm not fooled about how blessed I am that this is happening. And I don't see how this could ever happen again. I'm just being honest with you, even though I did buy 100 yearlings but that's another story.

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