

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 5, 2022

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Keeneland Racecourse

Bill Mott

Junior Alvarado

Michael Banahan

Press Conference



Dirt Mile

THE MODERATOR: We have the connections in here of Cody's Wish, winner of the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile -- Michael Banahan, representing Godolphin, trainer Bill Mott and jockey Junior Alvarado. Junior, you're covered in a lot of dirt. You were far back early. Talk about your trip on Cody's Wish.

JUNIOR ALVARADO: I had a trip with it. To be honest, I wasn't expecting that. I was hoping being kind of close to the pace but you have to adapt to whatever situation happens.

He kind of missed a little bit at the break. Then I found myself in the back. I didn't want to rush him. I know him pretty well. He's a horse you cannot try to rush him; he'll get headstrong. I didn't want to do that.

I knew there was still plenty time to get it little by little. I bought my time, started picking it up little by little. By the 5 pole seems to me he kind of jumped in the bridle and letting me know that he was ready. And I kind of tipped him on the outside, put him in the clear and started picking it up little by little.

By the time we passed on the 3 pole, I knew I was going to be at least, be 1-2 in the race, the way he was traveling. Once we turned for home I just wanted to make sure he was keeping his attention, keep going forward.

But I knew he was going to get it done at that point. I could feel the aggression that he had, the will he has just to win the race.

THE MODERATOR: Seemed like a long, sustained run with him, which is very tough on a horse.

JUNIOR ALVARADO: Definitely, that's the thing with him. He's a big horse but he can carry that long speed for quite a while. That's why I wasn't worried when we started picking it up by the 3 poll.

THE MODERATOR: You had a lot of confidence down the stretch.

JUNIOR ALVARADO: Definitely, I was confident with him. After that happened, I didn't get panic or worried. I just trust him. Like I say, I know him pretty well. I know his ability. I knew we could overcome the bad break.

THE MODERATOR: And, Bill, over to you, what were you thinking at the break? Because this horse is usually a little bit closer up there.

BILL MOTT: Well, we felt just, looking at the race, it looked like there were a lot of horses cutting back in distance -- some horses coming from a mile and a eighth, mile and a 16th races. And it looked like there were two obvious speed horses in the race.

We thought we might be mid-pack or right in behind the speed. But they were flying out of there, and the one thing that we talked about before the race was the configuration of this race. Going a flat mile -- a mile out of a long shoot gives him a little more chance to kind of get his legs underneath him.

We were a little bit concerned about the two-turn race, going into the first turn and whether he would get shuffled back, maybe not have the same momentum the first quarter of a mile.

But he settled into a beautiful stride when he headed down the backside. And Junior, looked like he tipped him to the outside to be sure he was going to be clear.

This horse, he's got a massive stride. And just to watch him work in the mornings, I mean, you watch him go a half a mile, you think he's going in :51 and he goes in :48. You know what I mean?

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It's one of those things, his stride is just so beautiful that he's doing a lot more. He's covering a lot more ground than you think he is.

Boy, I tell you what when he left the half mile pole today he was doing some running. He extended his stride and he looked great.

THE MODERATOR: Michael, Billy used the word "beautiful," and it's an incredible and beautiful story, the story of Cody's Wish. And, again, also a home bred for Godolphin, but just tell us the story of cold code.

MICHAEL BANAHAN: It's a well-documented story, and it's been this unbelievable story from the get-go when Cody Dorman first met Cody's Wish as just a foal in the barn. And they developed this bond seemingly. And he saw him a year and a half later as or two years later as a yearling, as a 2-year-old, sorry, and we were worried about being a rambunctious, strong 2-year-old dealing with him at that stage. And the horse put his head down in his lap. We were all surprised about that.

And just seemed like they had this connection. And the Dormans came out last Wednesday, and Bill had the horse out with Cody Dorman as well. He got down, nosed at him as well. Seems like he knows who Cody Dorman is and to have this little relationship with each other -- and he's just been a special horse for the family, for us, and it's just like a Hollywood story. It's hard to script.

We thought the Forego was going to be our highlight for the year, but to come back Breeders' Cup and win that again -- and the horse trained to perfection by Bill and got another fantastic ride from Junior today as well, all came together.

To win that photo finish, I think, Cody Dorman must have been pushing him down there to make sure that that happened. But it was unbelievable.

We had a lot of people out here today. A lot of fans in general here from his story were rooting the horse home today. I think they would have been disappointed as we would have been if he didn't win the race.

THE MODERATOR: Junior, did you feel that you had a little bit of extra with you for your first Breeders' Cup win there with Cody?

JUNIOR ALVARADO: You know, I always have -- like I say, I was pretty excited. I was with two live mount today, so I was very excited. I don't try to think about it. I just think it's another race. I don't want to put myself pressure for no reason. I've just got to trust the horse. I know he's

been training well.

And I had to put that in the back of my mind. I knew it was the Breeders' Cup, but I just focused to do the job the right way.

Q. Junior, you mentioned having familiarity with the horse who obviously had a sustained stretch run there where you're in battle with Cyberknife. How important is that familiarity, and what kind of signals can you transfer to the horse to get him to the wire first?

JUNIOR ALVARADO: You know, he's a very good horse, to begin with. But he is a character horse. You need to -- I will have to say, I've been riding many horses, easy to ride, anyone can get along with. You can understand him a little bit. You've got to know him a little bit. He's a horse, he likes to do his own thing. You don't want to get in his way.

But at the same time, you have to like teach him, tell him which way to go, when to go. And he'll be there for you.

So, like I say, when we turned for home, I knew the way he was stretching there, he wanted it as bad as I did when we turned for home.

Q. Bill and Michael, I realize we're obviously just 15 minutes beyond this race, but have you all thought beyond today? Does he race next year? For example, he's now rattled off a couple of Grade I's. And secondly, if he does, Bill, does this open up options in the playbook, now you can go one turn, two turns? It would seem like he's got a whole world of stakes opportunities in front of him.

BILL MOTT: As a trainer, I'd love to keep him in training. His profile is starting to get pretty good right now. And I'm sure he would be an attractive stallion for many people to breed to. Any horse that can win a Breeders' Cup mile is going to be sought after.

The thing about it is he did get a late start in life. And he's only had really one season of hard racing. He's not over-raced. And he would be a horse that probably, you know, we can all see, he's just coming into his own these last two. He's risen into the stakes company and to the Grade I level, and he'd be a horse that, for me as a trainer, would be an interesting horse to take to a race like the Met Mile next year.

I don't know that we -- I'm sure if he stays in training we'd have the discussion about stretching him out to a longer distance, but I think right at the moment, I think we've probably -- we feel that he's probably best at seven furlongs in a mile.

Q. Michael, what are your thoughts for his future?

MICHAEL BANAHAN: I think we'll enjoy today. It was a fantastic result today. We'll probably sleep on it overnight and figure out what we want to do. And obviously he'll be a very attractive proposition when he does go to the stud barn.

And I think we'll just wait and see how he comes out of the race and assess what we want to do with him. And as you obviously said, there's a lot of options for him as well, either racing or going to the breeding shed. We'll figure it out in the next couple days. We'll just enjoy the big win today and enjoy the moment.

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