

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 4, 2023

Arcadia, California, USA

Santa Anita Park

Michael Banahan

Bill Mott

Kelly Dorman

Junior Alvarado

Press Conference



that move that Junior made when he did, is that something you talked about earlier before the race?

BILL MOTT: No, I left that up to him. I didn't know where he was going to be positioned in the race. Last time he was a little closer. Today it looked like more of a repeat of the Breeders' Cup last year. Being a two-turn race, I don't know that that's really the best design for him. He's maybe a little better at one turn.

He started him running on the turn, and I thought I do need to see the rerun again. I haven't seen the rerun yet. But the fact that he split horses in the turn could have made the difference. I think, if he goes around, he loses another half length or so.

It was a great ride and a great run by the horse. It was a good effort. I believe what Junior's told me, once he got his head in front, he wasn't going to let that horse by at any point.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get to Junior now. Off of that, Junior, we just talked about the race. When you made the move with him, what made you decide to go at that time?

JUNIOR ALVARADO: I started picking it up. I could see some horses fading. For me, I couldn't go around. I didn't feel I had the luxury to go around the horses since these are Grade 1 horses.

He was helping me. I was like let me try to cut the corner a little bit, save some ground since it's moving forward. I did all that, and right when I tip him out, he was there for me.

Like I said, when I got to the other horse, at that point, I just kind of let him know, listen, my job is done right here. Just take me to the last part. Like I said, since I know him, I knew he wasn't going to let that other horse go by once he got in front.

THE MODERATOR: I want to get to you quickly, Kelly Dorman. This story has captured the hearts of everyone in racing, outside of racing. Just again, what this has meant to your family, the ride this horse has taken you on.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started. While we're waiting for trainer Bill Mott and jockey Junior Alvarado -- here comes Bill Mott now of the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, Cody's Wish, back-to-back wins in this race.

On the stage right now, Michael Banahan representing Godolphin, Kelly Dorman over in the corner on the far end. Bill Mott about to join us now as well.

I'll start with you, Michael. We talked about surviving an inquiry. This horse, what an amazing animal, an amazing story. You can expand on that.

MICHAEL BANAHAN: He's a phenomenal horse, has been since day one, when we had him training down in Florida, all the way up through his 2-year-old year with Bill. He's never let us down any time. He's a will to win.

He was on the muscle today. What a great ride by Junior. Fantastic training feed by Bill, keeping him in training, and having a back-to-back Breeders' Cup winner is special. There's not too many horses have done it, but he ranks up there with all the best of them to have done that as well, as a repeat winner.

We're so fortunate to have him and so fortunate to share the story with the Dorman family. We regret the run coming to an end. Hopefully there's going to be great opportunities for the Dorman family to come out and visit him at the stallion barn when he gets there, and hopefully there will be some babies down the road. If Bill is still training, if that happens, maybe we'll get some babies down the road as well, and we can do it again.

THE MODERATOR: To you, Bill. Watching the race live,

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KELLY DORMAN: It's a blessing I can't -- I don't even know if I could even start to describe. In a lot of ways, I think that horse probably saved Cody's life in a lot of ways. I know him and the horse has made a lot of lives better.

The people that we've got to meet during this process -- first and foremost, the blessing is today Cody's Wish put his head in Cody's lap. The next blessing is all the people we got to meet, like these guys sitting right here, the fans, the entire horse racing nation has been incredible to us. We're so thankful and grateful for that.

Q. This is for you, Bill. You've had some really amazing story lines in your career as a trainer. Does this one trump them all?

BILL MOTT: I think, if it's not the best, it's certainly a dead heat. It's probably one of the most memorable rides that we've all been on, and I think it's meant so much to so many different people.

Sometimes it's a small group that gets to enjoy the win, but I think this one's been for a lot of people. We're very thankful for the Make-a-Wish Foundation that brought everything together. Godolphin has been terrific. I mean, the team at Godolphin has been so giving and open, and they were all about it, about this whole story, and they made the story.

Q. Either Bill or Junior, the inquiry, talk about having to wait that out. Junior, did you think there was anything there at all?

JUNIOR ALVARADO: Right when I got next to National Treasure, I know he kind of came out and tried to meet with my horse. He start kind of like the brushing. I just think at that point where he's brushing my horse, I had the bigger horse and the mean horse, probably.

He was trying to go right after him. Trying to keep him straight, but like I said, at that point, I think my horse was feeling a little bit of a fight, and he tried to go right after the other horse.

But I knew it was nothing really to change the outcome. My horse was already in front, and like I said, he was never going to let that other horse go by again.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to let Junior stay and the other three go and celebrate and toast to Cody's Wish.

Any more questions for Junior taking us on the ride for this amazing horse? Back-to-back wins, Junior. Anything different today with this horse, coming to an end of his career for you?

JUNIOR ALVARADO: For me, it's been an unbelievable ride. I changed careers for me, and I've been very blessed just to be part of the team. I just think it had to be this way. We had to end up winning the last race for him. I'm just glad that we got it done today.

Q. What does it feel like to ride a horse like Cody's Wish?

JUNIOR ALVARADO: For me it's been an unbelievable experience, not like others. This is a whole different thing for me, first time ever, riding a horse like that with the story behind. It's been amazing, and I'm just glad to be a part of it.

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