

# Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 4, 2023

Arcadia, California, USA

Santa Anita Park

**Rick Dutrow**

**Antonio Pagnano**

**Clint Cornett**

**Mark Cornett**

Press Conference



you could introduce by your name and then tell us a little bit about your relationship, the ownership of this horse, and what a day today's been.

ANTONIO PAGNANO: My name is Antonio Pagnano. I'm very happy. Today has been one of the best days of my life. I want to thank the trainer. I want to thank Mr. Clint, Mr. Mark. Most of all, I want to thank my partner, Carlos Perez. He has been with me since the beginning.

You know, I'm just happy. I'm speechless. I've got no words.

THE MODERATOR: This is definitely a very exciting day. Clint Cornett, if you could kind of talk about this partnership. You made a change sending him to Rick with the idea to race in New York. Just if you can kind of take us through that as well.

CLINT CORNETT: Absolutely. Mark saw White Abarrio first time out and contacted Carlos, and that's sort of how their relationship began with all of us. It's really been an unbelievable ride since we started in Florida with him as a late 2-year-old and then in his 3-year-old career.

I hope this horse after this race gets the respect it deserves, right? Because I think he has been a little overlooked throughout his 3-year-old career. But I'll tell everybody he's here at 4, and he's here to stay.

THE MODERATOR: Is he here to stay for 5?

ANTONIO PAGNANO: As of right now, yes.

THE MODERATOR: Mark, I'll kind of ask you the same question. The partnership here leading to this biggest stage in this race, Breeders' Cup Classic, there is nothing bigger in the state for a horse like this. What does it mean to this partnership?

MARK CORNETT: It means a lot. We've been through some tough decisions with this horse, management decisions. We were blocked a couple of times with things we really wanted to do with this horse. The horse is a good horse. He'll overcome just about anything.

THE MODERATOR: Let's go ahead and get started with the Breeders' Cup Classic and a big congratulations to White Abarrio. We have all the connections up here. We'll get started right away. First I will start with trainer Rick Dutrow. If you could speak closely into the mic, please. Welcome back to the Breeders' Cup. You won this race in 2005 with Saint Liam.

White Abarrio, you talked so much about this horse leading up to the Whitney and then bringing him out here early. Tell me about the plan and everything that went into making it to this race.

RICK DUTROW: I don't know that it was a plan. I think it was a reaction because right after the race, all I was saying is we've got to get him out there, we've got to get him out there.

So I found out when Santa Anita was reopening their track and he was there that day, I thought it was better for the horse to do that as opposed to just hanging back in New York where you could get stuck with weather and stuff like that.

When I was training Saint Liam for the Santa Anita Handicap, he was training like clockwork. We sent him there last minute and just didn't happen. He showed up the rest of the year.

It wasn't a plan. It was just a natural reaction. That's what I feel it was. We didn't have to think about it. It was just let's go.

THE MODERATOR: I want to get to and introduce all the owners that are up here. I'm going to start at the end. If

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When we had to make a decision going into the Met Mile, there happened to be a pretty good trainer available at the time named Rick Dutrow. So it wasn't too tough of a decision to send him up to New York to Rick. Sometimes things happen for a reason.

THE MODERATOR: I'll open it up to the press for questions.

**Q. Rick, it's been a long time since you've been up here at the Breeders' Cup at the post-race conference. You've been through a lot in between. Can you talk a little bit about your emotions being back at the top where you belong?**

RICK DUTROW: I don't feel that I am back at the top, but I feel that the white horse is. I'm just hanging around him. As soon as I get stables like Todd and Chad, then I'll feel like I'm back on the top.

Right now I just feel like I'm lucky to be around him. I feel he's on the top, and I love being around good horses like that. It just makes you feel like a good horseman, and that's always what I wanted to be.

**Q. Rick, what does this mean to you in your comeback? How much can this help your comeback?**

RICK DUTROW: Well, I don't know how much it helped my comeback because I came back seven months ago. Hopefully it helps me pick up nicer horses and more higher and quality clients and stuff because I want to be around good horses.

I'm very lucky to be around him right now. I don't have a stable packed with good horses, and that's really what I want, and I'm going to be striving for it. I'm going to be calling everybody tomorrow when I get done with Disneyland and say, hey, I am ready for some horses here. Can you guys send me some horses? Believe me.

**Q. For both of the Cornetts, why Rick? Was it timing? Take us through why you chose Rick to be the new trainer.**

MARK CORNETT: We're going to get very specific here. Churchill Downs, we had an issue where they scratched our horse. NYRA decided they weren't going to accept the entries, nominations, and I wanted to run in the Met Mile.

So I had to make a trainer switch. I've known Rick a long time. I know exactly what he's capable of. This horse was tailor made for him. The horse at the time, in the middle of May, had blossomed like a horse I'd never seen --

physically, girth, shoulder, hip -- everything came together for this horse. We cut him back to seven furlongs at Gulfstream, and that was the day he ran huge.

We wanted to get a little confidence in him. Get his feet under him, get his confidence back, and that's when we decided to make the call. It was a very, very short list of New York trainers, and I called and talked to Rick. We probably talked for 30 minutes, and I decided to pull the trigger.

So that's how that happened.

THE MODERATOR: Thank all of you. Congratulations to all the connections here of White Abarrio, Breeders' Cup Classic winner. Congratulations.

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