

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 2, 2024

Del Mar, California, USA

Del Mar Fairgrounds

Chad Brown

Peter Brant

Brook Smith

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We have trainer Chad Brown up here. 19 Breeders' Cup wins, but the Classic, with this horse who has been a bit of a challenge to you all year long.

CHAD BROWN: He certainly has been. I'm just so first proud of the horse. To lose the Kentucky Derby by a nose, for a trainer, horse connections, jockey, everyone involved, it's about as heartbreaking of a loss as you can have in this game of horse racing.

For him to come out of that race, the grueling Triple Crown trail, just show so much physical and mental constitution, consistency, soundness, to last the whole year, not only the races, but the workouts and such in between, a lot goes into it.

For him to be on the Derby trail since January, in the winner's circle today against some of the top horses in the world, nearly all the credit goes to the horse. He's just a remarkable horse in soundness and mind and raw talent.

My team did an unbelievable job working with this horse. That's two races in a row now you've seen that he runs nice and straight. That's just from patience, horsemanship, a good horse that's cooperative. Another word to describe him.

Great ownership group. This is an unbelievable horse. Really could have chose anyone to train him and he would have had a fine career because he's an outstanding-looking horse, well-bred horse.

Back to your original question, for him to have this moment, get over all the frustrations during the year, races that I went into thinking, Wow, I'm finally going to win the Derby or traverse with this horse. To walk away

unsaddling him without the win this, really makes up for it all.

THE MODERATOR: Peter Brant, one of the owners now joining us up here. To follow up with that, this horse has always shown this amazing talent, but the frustration, not quite getting there. To put it together on the big stage today with all your partners here as well...

PETER BRANT: Yeah, this is a great day, a great day. Of course, Chad always loved this horse. He always had faith in him. He always knew that maybe the next one would be the big one that he would win because he was in the game all the time, he was running against the best, and he was beating them, then they were beating him.

He liked most of the tracks you ran on. He just looked like a horse that was going to get better. Chad really trained him patiently, got him right for this day. He's a horse that I hope we see him run as a four-year-old because he's the kind of horse we want to look at racing in these big races.

THE MODERATOR: Finally put it all together at the right time. We'll turn it over to the press for some questions.

Q. Peter, you've had a lot of success with Chad, a lot of great turf horses. This horse obviously at the pinnacle of dirt racing. Talk about your association, branching out in a different direction than the great turf mares that you've owned.

PETER BRANT: We always loved the dirt races and the turf races. We participated in both. Then we've had great dirt horses that have had grass backgrounds.

Great horses are great horses. When you breed them together, you're liable to get one or the another. You need to do it because there's quality in Europe, there's quality here.

It wound up working for me in the past with Thunder Gulch who came out of a European mare who I'd bred. We just think that grass racing and dirt racing, they're both exciting and both needed in this country.

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THE MODERATOR: Also joining us, Brook Smith, one of the partners and owners. For this horse, with such a challenging year, a great year, but to put it all together today, what does that mean to you?

BROOK SMITH: Well, these moments would happen without the stuff before. As we all know, especially with horses, patience is your friend.

He let us know that he had ability that was extraordinary. To Chad and his team, he was driving us all a little crazy, but in a good way. Chad knows how to work with horses like this and not overdo it, let them be horses, let them grow up. He's a different horse than when he was running at Saratoga.

As I like to say, the best is yet to come.

THE MODERATOR: Thoughts on that? You mentioned it, Peter.

PETER BRANT: I'd like to say one of the guys that really helped us here, Paul Shanahan, was a really big part of convincing everybody about this horse. Chad and I, we all went together to want to get this horse. So I just wanted to give him some recognition because he's not here today.

Q. Chad, what does it mean to you to get a win in the Classic, being a dirt win?

CHAD BROWN: Yeah, it means a lot. I mean, there's only so many of these dirt races at the very, very highest level that can really make your career. You talk about the Breeders' Cup Classic, Kentucky Derby, right at the top of the list.

For this horse to nearly have won both of them, for me and my team to finally get this done, we haven't had that many starters in the Classic, we dabbled with it a little bit. To have the horse good enough to do it, the ownership that shared the same goal and vision, had the same patience to work backwards from this race. Really after the Kentucky Derby, we looked at the Classic more than any of the summer races.

For it to happen on a personal level just means a lot. You can never take for granted you're going to be up here again because this is one of the toughest races to win in the world.

Q. Chad, who is the three-year-old of the year?

CHAD BROWN: Well, I have a lot of respect for Fierceness. I just feel like today on this track that neither of 'em had run -- they both ran very well, down to the wire.

I think the narrow edge would go to our horse.

Fierceness is a great horse, runs in fast numbers. But I think our horse's body of work overall, the consistency of him. He didn't throw races in where he didn't get his way, he was way off the board or anything like that. Again, no disrespect to him. Our horse doesn't have that on his résumé.

It's all consistent runs. I think it's easier to make an excuse for a horse that's not quite cared for the track when they come up just short, but they still tried hard and they're still there, like at Saratoga with that horse.

For that, for me, I think know that I'm biased, but to answer as objectively as I can, it's hard for me to see that he's not the best three-year-old.

Q. What about Horse of the Year, as well, Thorpedo Anna, sure to get some score as well?

CHAD BROWN: She should.

I think Horse of the Year is a lot to ask. If our horse had gotten that nose down in it is Derby and such, I think he has a stronger case for that.

With that said, the Classic carries a lot of weight. But I have a lot of respect for Thorpedo Anna. The fact she actually took on males in the Travers and nearly won, I'd say she's the heavy favorite to get that.

If she were to get it, there would be no argument from me personally.

Q. Chad, you had Sierra Leone ready to peak for the Kentucky Derby and lost a heartbreaker. After the Derby, was it your goal to have him peak again for the Classic?

CHAD BROWN: Yeah, it really was. We started to work backwards from that. I mean, my long time dream is to win the Travers, that's no secret. I grew up just outside of Saratoga. To have a horse that nearly won the Kentucky Derby going into the Travers potentially, it was very exciting for me all summer.

After his first run at Saratoga, I must say Mr. Peter Brant told me right after the race, the more he dissected this race and watched it a zillion times, he said, Look, I know you want to win this race. I'm telling you he doesn't like Saratoga. I can just tell.

I said, Well, I want to keep going for this race. I don't see any other viable options. I don't want to ship the horse.

There's nothing lucrative enough for the horse.

In the end of the day, per usual, he was right. He's been doing this a long time. Not just his favorite track.

I think it says a lot about the horse that he was able to persevere and try, still was in the picture near the wire on a track he just doesn't like.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

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