

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Saturday, November 2, 2024

Del Mar, California, USA

Del Mar Fairgrounds

John Velazquez

Dan Blacker

Michael Behrens

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Straight No Chaser. John Velazquez, Michael Behrens, Dan Blacker. What a race. Johnny, I'm going to start with you. Broke brilliantly, but seemed like you just had the perfect stalking trip.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Yeah, that's what I was thinking. I know the two horses inside of me had a lot of speed. The horse on the outside, if I can break well, get a good position, if those two horses want to go. I didn't force my horse to do anything.

Dan give me a lot of confidence with him. If you don't lead, don't worry about it.

He gives me that confidence. Me knowing the horse, kind of let him do his own rhythm. He was perfect.

When those two horses win, I kind of let him do his own thing. I didn't have to grab him, push him to do anything. Three, four, squeeze him a little bit. I wait a little bit longer. I don't want to move too soon. We're running pretty fast.

Quarter pole, okay, let's go. Down the 3/16th pole, I knew he was going to get it. He was all there for me.

THE MODERATOR: Seemed like the perfect post position so that you kind of had the luxury of doing that. Almost push button, you could get him to relax, go. That's incredible for a sprinter.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: Like I said, I'm not pushing him to do anything. I'm not grabbing him. I wanted him to get his own rhythm. I don't grab him. I just hold myself to the main, let him do his own thing. I knew he was going to be very close to the lead. I knew the two horses inside, they have to go because they're forced to be there; otherwise, I would clear him out of there and throw some dirt in. Then

they be behind the dirt.

I was in a good position where I was. I was comfortable the way he was doing it. He was giving me the confidence we were in good shape.

THE MODERATOR: Dan, your first Grade I on the dirt here at Del Mar, a place that is kind of close to home. This horse has been a bit of a challenge and has tested everybody's patience. Lead us up to the race, everything you've gone through to get him to this point.

DAN BLACKER: You know what, my team has just done such a great job. The whole group just worked so hard with him. Ultimately, just being patient, taking each day as it comes, always doing the right thing by the horse.

Sometimes you just got to be patient and let them come around on their own. This guy, he's got his own agenda. You just kind of go along with the ride, try and guide him through his steps day by day, work by work.

I'm just really thankful that I got such a great ownership group of MyRacehorse. They've just been so patient and allowed the horse to come round on his own time. It's so important. I don't think they get enough credit. Big part of that is the feeling no pressure on my end. Really thankful to have the horse.

THE MODERATOR: You have paid your dues, phenomenal horseman. On the biggest stage here in California, to win a Breeders' Cup race with a horse like this.

DAN BLACKER: Obviously it's special for me and my family. He's just a talented horse. I'm lucky to have him in the barn, lucky to have somebody like Johnny to ride him. He gets on with him so well. He's not an easy horse to ride. He makes it look easy, but trust me, he's not an easy horse to ride.

Can you see how well Johnny gets on with him, gets him to settle. He showed a new dimension today. It's all down to him really.

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THE MODERATOR: Michael Behrens, CEO of MyRacehorse. We hear them out celebrating. How do you keep the patience leading up to a day like this?

MICHAEL BEHRENS: It's hard. We were very excited. This horse has taken us on a journey. We have a great group. There's a thousand partners. They completely entrust to the horseman, Dan Blacker, to do what he does with the horse. We got rewarded today.

There was patience, frustration, excitement. It all paid off today. You can hear the crowd right now. They're so excited.

It was unbelievable. He's way too humble. The reality is this horse had ton of challenges, idiosyncrasies, ups and downs. Dan has done a great job. He's truly a great horseman.

The race is set up difficult. As a handicapper, somebody who enjoys racing, the speed in the race... Johnny did such a good job. Just listening to them, the humility, it's pretty incredible. Extremely talented. We don't get here without them. We don't get here without the thousand partners. Super appreciative.

Kind of a nice culmination of a really great team.

THE MODERATOR: To MyRacehorse, what this kind of has meant to racing, to be able to bring these kind of people in at the level this is at the Breeders' Cup.

MICHAEL BEHRENS: I grew up here. I went to San Diego State. I lived about a mile away from the racetrack. I came here a lot. My desire was always to be in a room like this with you people, being part of this great day.

It wasn't really possible in the way it used to be. With MyRacehorse to come in and do what it's done, allow everybody to have a chance to compete at this stage. It's pretty darn incredible.

To be able to partner with the best horseman in the game, to win a Breeders' Cup race, I'm pretty excited.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, guys. Congratulations.

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