

Breeders' Cup World Championships

Friday, October 31, 2025

Del Mar, California, USA

Del Mar Fairgrounds

Juvenile

John Velazquez

Todd Pletcher

Ned Toffey

Eric Gustavson

Press Conference



JOHN VELAZQUEZ: After that, when he reengaged he was back to his normal routine. It was just right before the wire, right before the wire, right before that shadow between the building and the A pole. After that it was pretty easy.

Q. Todd, you've had a lot of top 2-year-olds over the years. What does it take for a horse to start where he did, go through a year like this undefeated, ship across country, win a race like this? That's a lot to ask and he answered all the questions.

TODD PLETCHER: That was certainly a concern. We wanted to have enough experience. We wanted a two-turn race under his belt. We also wanted to be careful that we didn't overdo it. It seemed like every time we asked him to do something, he was there for us and stepped up and just kept improving.

He's got such a great temperament and disposition that it made it easy to make moves like going from Saratoga to Keeneland and then from Keeneland back to Saratoga to prepare to come here. And he settled in here like a 5-year-old that's been running forever, and took everything in stride.

So aside from his obvious natural talent and ability, he's got a terrific mind to go along with it that really helps.

Q. You and John have been winning races together for 30 years. How special is it at this point of your careers to be winning races of this significance?

TODD PLETCHER: It's terrific. It's a great feeling. When I got John Velazquez on board, I'm totally confident that we're going to give the horse the best opportunity that we can and total confidence in him all the time.

Q. Johnny, could you answer that, vis-a-vis, your relationship with Todd?

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: That's what I said. You can only take his advice. This business is a really tough business. Maybe you get a couple of years, three, four years, maybe

THE MODERATOR: From left to right, Todd Pletcher, John Velazquez and Eric Gustavson. Johnny, take us through the race, if you don't mind, on how everything unfolded with Brant being in front of you and how you reacted and all that.

JOHN VELAZQUEZ: We broke well, expected. He's done that every start. I was expecting for him to get a good start out of there. Door opens, he was gone.

Put my hands down, loose reins, keep him where he's happy. I had (indiscernible) in front of me. I thought it was the horse he beat. I was very confident that what he was doing (indiscernible) in the back stretch. And I was very close to Flavien. At the three pole, I made sure that I put a little bit of pressure up to him. And I got to him very easily.

I thought probably it was going to take me a little more that I needed to do. I didn't, though. Coming down the stretch he put half of him in front of the other horse. And between that and the shadow from the building and he started waiting.

You can see he idled -- more than idled, he went to a gallop basically. It scared me for a second. Once he passed the shadow and went up and re-engaged him, re-engaged right away. Then after that it was pretty easy. Just that little step there when he was passing that shadow, then he kind of idled a little bit.

Q. Looked like he was pretty willing coming to the wire and going out, wasn't he?



five years for the trainer and doing great, and all of a sudden that marriage kind of goes away.

Being together this long, though, is a blessing. It's trusting in one another. I trust him with all my heart. I can come back to Todd and say something, I think I messed this one up, or we can change this thing, or we can do a little better with this horse next time.

And having that trust with him, coming back and having the input from him -- and we are on the same line with one another.

Todd is one of the best trainers in the world. But not only is he the best trainer in the world, he's the best watching a race and coming back to talk to him. When you talk to a trainer, you come back and he sees everything, you cannot lie to him. You've got to tell him. It's as simple as that, though.

And it has worked for us. I think it's a blessing that we can come back and talk about it. And when he's mad at me, he doesn't say anything.

(Laughter)

When I'm mad at myself, because I made a mistake, I tell him. And (indiscernible) right when Todd comes back and says something that I made a mistake or something like that, and when it does, maybe once in 30 years, he'd shook me up one time. But that's about it.

Q. Eric, if you could take us back, you bought this horse as a yearling. What was it about him that you and your crew liked about him? And the man of the hour is to your left now, the famous Ned Toffey, AKA Ted Noffey?

ERIC GUSTAVSON: First, give credit to Ned and the guys, the buying team that identified Ted. He's by Into Mischief, our best sire. That's an easy one for us. I actually remember saying this to Ned: Do we really want a gray Into Mischief? And thankfully they said yes.

We just feel, Johnny talked about blessings. We just feel so blessed to have Ted, and the two hall of famers got all that God-given ability out of him and that we're sitting here today. What a thrill.

Q. Ned, what's it like having a horse named for you?

NED TOFFEY: I think the thing that has struck me about it is just the reaction from people, just all the well wishes and people seem to get a charge out of it. So that's fun. I think we're having fun with it. People are having fun with it. I

think that's a good thing for the sport.

Q. Todd, this looked like a carbon copy of his other races -- gets out there, stalks from second. As you're watching it, is that going through your mind at all, that I've seen this play before?

TODD PLETCHER: The race unfolded exactly the way we expected it to. Johnny and I talked before the race. And we both felt like Brant would be assertive and be the most likely pace setter. We were focused on hopefully continuing to break sharply like he has in every start, put himself in the race, get into the good rhythm that he has. It was one of those trips that was working out exactly the way you mapped it out beforehand.

The only concern I had was, it looked like he had complete control of the race. And I could tell that he was idling a little bit. I don't know if he was waiting on company. I could see the shadow across the track and maybe some marks from where the gate was. So I was just kind of hoping that he wasn't getting tired, that he was distracted, and I think he lost his focus for 60 or 70 yards there. Once he refocused and reengaged, then he started to draw away again and it looked like he got to where he was wanting to go around again.

But, yeah, there was other than that brief moment when it seemed like he idled a bit, it was perfect.

Q. You've talked about how complete of a horse he is. Did you see a little something more today than what you've seen in the past?

TODD PLETCHER: I can't say that we've seen more because he's been perfect so far. But what I think is impressive is, when you're shipping cross country and you're coming to Del Mar, running against Bob Baffert and his best colts, it's tough. It's a road game and you've got to have a really good horse to do that.

Q. Todd and the owners, what's the progression from yearling, you get him as a 2-year-old, is it, I think we've got a Saratoga Maiden winner here, maybe a Grade 1 winner, Breeders' Cup? What are the signals for you and your sort of progression of how good you think this horse is? As a trainer, how do you communicate that with these gentlemen to temper expectations, or do you like to get them excited?

TODD PLETCHER: I talk quite a bit because last year we had a couple of Into Mischief fillies that we liked and they didn't turn out to be as good as we expected them to. I kept telling them, we like a couple of these, but I'm not going to say too much until we get going.

Q. Is he good at poker?

ERIC GUSTAVSON: He's great at poker.

As Todd said, he and Ned do most of the communicating. But it's great to be able to have the confidence of both these guys because they're among the best ever to do what they do. So we're just thankful to have them and trust -- there's a big trust factor there.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports