

145th Preakness Stakes Media Conference

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Baltimore, Maryland, USA

Ken McPeek

Robby Albarado

Media Conference



THE MODERATOR: Pleased to be joined at the press conference now. Swiss Skydiver, winner of the 145th running of the Preakness Stakes, trainer Ken McPeek, and jockey Robby Albarado here with me now. And guys, I just have to start by saying a tremendous congratulations. First off, though, Secretariat, 1.53; Swiss Skydiver, 1.53.28; Curlin, 1.53.46. What do you have to say about that, Kenny?

KEN MCPEEK: I'm really proud. I bought Curlin too. But, no, it's awesome. She's just trained fantastic and she's just a really special filly to be around. And the job Robby did today was incredible.

THE MODERATOR: Robby, you rode Curlin to the Preakness win.

ROBBY ALBARADO: Three things you just said: Secretariat was the year I was born. And I got to ride Swiss Skydiver and Curlin, so there's something synonymous about all that.

THE MODERATOR: Kenny, we spoke before the race about how she's just been so durable this year. She's handled everything that's been thrown at her. Second in the Kentucky Oaks. What does it mean to step forward to the Preakness today?

KEN MCPEEK: You know, I would like a do-over in that Oaks. I thought she could have won that day. But anyway, just incredible. Horses tell you they're doing good. She always tells us she's doing good. I know there were those naysayers, Oh, why would you do that? That's worse thing you can do.

She is just a real bull. She loves what she does every day. She likes to go to work. She wants to go out early because she doesn't want to wait to go out. And Robby and I have had a great week here this week. We basically flew up together. We had breakfast, lunch, dinner. I think we were just, we were rowing in the same direction and the

mojo was good and it happened.

THE MODERATOR: It's a big risk to run a filly in a race like the Preakness. Were there some tensions beforehand and how relieved are you now?

KEN MCPEEK: I didn't feel that much tension really. I felt like we had her well prepared. The things, obviously -- and in any horse race things have to go your way. But every day she was happy. She was bright eyed. She was dragging me around the barn. She used to stop at every gap, and thank goodness because she was going to wear me out with marching around there because of her energy level. And she never misses an oat. I asked Chico, Did she leave anything? No, never. So those kind of things make it really easy for a horse trainer.

THE MODERATOR: You've been her hot walker this week. You've been with her through every step of it. What does she mean to you?

KEN MCPEEK: I've had a lot of special horses in my career, but she's definitely right there at the top right now and I don't see a long time until another one does something like that to me. We work hard every day. And it's a game of failures is the thing about it. I've had actually a streak for Peter that I wasn't proud of. It seemed like we went six or seven years and we really didn't have the kind of horses we wanted.

And then she shows up and maybe at a really good time with all the pandemic and then Peter's health issues that he's fought through. It's just a real blessing and a real special time.

THE MODERATOR: Owner Peter Callahan, of course, wish you could join us, I know he got to see her win the Alabama, which I'm sure was special. Did you speak to him? How is he feeling?

KEN MCPEEK: Yeah, I had a brief talk to him. I demanded he come down. I said, You got to come, you have to come. And I think they had scheduled to come



and with all the things going on with the virus, then he decided not to come.

And you know what, we are here, and I know he's here in spirit. He wished he was standing here right now more than anybody in the world.

Q. Robby, this was a last-minute pickup mount for you. What does it mean to win the Preakness?

ROBBY ALBARADO: Well, it's, I owe it all to Kenny. I mean, he believed in me still and, sorry, it's Kenny. It's all Kenny. I just, people started, um, thinking I can't do it anymore and Kenny was there, just when I needed someone.

THE MODERATOR: Kenny, you've had a long relationship with Robby and getting a chance to see him board your horse. He was her exercise rider this week too. You all were out there at the barn. I was there with you, so I know. I saw it firsthand at five o'clock every morning.

KEN MCPEEK: Yeah, you know, so Robby was working horses for us at Keeneland and I know he -- look, we all go through stages in our career where we struggle. And we all, to me, the key is better horses. And so he's been out breezing horses. And Mike says, Hey, Robby on this one, Robby on that one, Robby likes this is one, Robby's calling me telling me what's going on. So he was part of the team already. And I know that people weren't giving him the opportunities that they had previously. And actually I would like to be able to keep him more. He's going to get more opportunities again. I can tell you that right now. But he's ridden for me in the past. He's always done a good job, won the Alcibiades for me years back. We've won a lot of graded stakes together, for that matter. And it's a game you got to have the stock. And you know what, you give him the stock he gets it done.

THE MODERATOR: Robby, you mentioned your relationship with Kenny. He got you on Twitter this week too. I mean, it has to be really special.

ROBBY ALBARADO: Yeah, he said I've been under a rock, so he pulled me out from under the rock. It's been fun. It's been fun, an interesting week. Obviously I wasn't afraid of her with the crowd here, the cameras even on the wide, because she had a little incident this week where she got used to the cameras. The camera crew crossing the finish line, about ran over them. So it was a great experience this week. I had a lot of fun. I think the key was me getting on her every day. She gave me more and more confidence. And Kenny was just telling me to watch all her replays over and over again, so I had the audibles, this happened, that happened and it worked out well.

THE MODERATOR: Tell me about your trip because you moved pretty early, got on the rail, and she never let Authentic go by.

ROBBY ALBARADO: I had to make a conscious decision in the middle of the back side, because I felt like on his horse, Brian's horse was, it seemed like he was there, but he kind of started receding at that point and that was my chance. I jumped in there and from the -- I knew Authentic usually stays off the fence a bit, he drifts maybe turning for home, but my plan was to stay inside of him. It was a sprint from the race pole home and she was determined to be in front of him and wasn't letting him pass. So just a heart of gold. She has a heart of gold. A true champion, yes.

THE MODERATOR: She really all showed it all today. And Kenny, I have to imagine she's got to be in the talk. I mean, I know there's still some more racing but has to be in the talk for Horse of the Year after her campaign.

KEN MCPEEK: I've only made one mistake I didn't run her in April. I run her January, February, March, May, June, July, August, September, October. I mean she's hickory. I mean anybody that says that she hasn't entertained this country this year any more than any other horse, I mean they weren't watching because she was doing it everywhere.

THE MODERATOR: She's been so fun to watch. We have some media upstairs in the press box, any questions we can feed either jockey Robby Albarado or trainer Ken McPeek?

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: I can keep talking to you. Robby, going back to the start of the race as I'm sure this will be a conversation as well, tell me where you were settled early on in the race and what the thought process was at that point.

ROBBY ALBARADO: Well she left exceptionally well. She usually does in all her starts. And today she broke really well and she wanted to see who was going to go and who wasn't. So when I was laying third right behind I was really comfortable with my position. Bob's two horses were front there and when the horse started coming back to me I had to make, I had to make a kind of decision to either go sit there and wait on them or just go on. But I feel like she done it so within herself that when she eased up to the champion and I just feel like, if she's going to beat him, here's our chance and she did. I just was a good passenger from that point on.

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THE MODERATOR: Huge performance from her. So now we'll take some questions from the press box, please.

(Pause.)

THE MODERATOR: Still not hearing anything from upstairs we'll stay here. I'm getting a test. This is 2020, after all, right, and this is what it is. I think this is 2020 in a nutshell. Okay.

(Pause.)

Q. Kenny, you had said that if there was a three-year-old filly race around this time that you thought suited, you would have opted for that. What was the ultimate decision in putting her into the Preakness?

KEN MCPEEK: Well, we had plenty of time to run against older horses and I just felt like that the added 16th of a mile was going to be ideal for her. Her best race I thought for me was in the Alabama where she went on and when she gets in nice rhythm the distance isn't a problem. I mean, you could have run her another half mile and she would have kept going.

But straight three-year-old's versus going against older fillies and mares -- it actually was a tough call. We looked at the numbers, if Tiz the Law had run here today I probably wouldn't have come and I waited a long time to figure out whether he was coming or not and that was one of the reasons we came.

Q. You have the win and you're in for Breeders' Cup Classic, where do you think we might see Swiss Skydiver next?

KEN MCPEEK: Oh, wow, that's a good question. We can look at both races, I suppose. We got in for the Distaff after the Alabama, but I would say right now we would probably lean towards the older fillies and mares. But nothing set in stone and we don't have to make a decision today, I don't think.

Q. What time will you be at the barns tomorrow?

KEN MCPEEK: Oh, wow, we have got a flight scheduled, but we might delay it, I'm not sure. We'll see. Probably 7ish.

Q. Sleeping in tomorrow?

KEN MCPEEK: Yeah, we did today. We gave her an easy morning. We've been normally getting out right at first set

when the track opened. But I'm going to guess 7. I don't know if I'm going to stay or not, I might work the Fasig sale. I've always got orders to buy horses and I enjoy doing that and I'm going to convince my wife to stay for another day, but we got a daughter at home and she's probably going to dictate what we're doing.

Q. When Swiss Skydiver was duelling with Authentic did you expect her to hold on at that point?

KEN MCPEEK: Oh, I was a little worried when they got to about the 16th pole, I thought it looked like Authentic got his head in front a little bit and then she fought right back. There's no guarantees in this game and I've been, I have had some tough beats, second in the Derby, been second in a bunch of Breeders' Cup races, third here in the Preakness years back, but I'm just thrilled she fought on.

Q. Robby, same question for you, what were you feeling, what kind of heat were you feeling from Authentic in the stretch?

ROBBY ALBARADO: Obviously he was a Derby champ, so you got to give him respect. But I felt, on the filly, really I was really late in the stretch before I even uncocked my stick and I maybe hit her once lightly on her left hand, but she's, all indications was that she was determined to stay in front and I let him pass her. So we got a bunch of inside jokes at the barn this week, I told them how Authentic kept staring at her, uh-oh, every time she walked by and he got a good look at her today though.

THE MODERATOR: That he did. That's all from the press box. Ken McPeek Robby Albarado, thank you so much and a world of congratulations to you both on a very, very special filly.

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