

146th Preakness Stakes Media Conference

Saturday, May 15, 2021
Baltimore, Maryland, USA
Pimlico Race Course

Diane Fradkin

John Fradkin

Flavien Prat

Michael McCarthy

Media Conference



distance. I never really thought it was a question. Michael and I have thought he will handle the distance well. My only point was to get him to break and get him to relax at least the first part and then try to improve our position from there.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Flavien Prat?

Q. Can you compare your feelings right now actually winning this race versus what happened in the Kentucky Derby being elevated through disqualification?

FLAVIEN PRAT: Well, of course it's a lot different when you cross the wire first. You get that feeling where it's a lot of joy. It was a lot different, as you say, in the Derby, but I'm really proud of both races anyway.

Q. Can you describe what was happening with Rombauer before the race and if that was any concern for you heading to the gate?

FLAVIEN PRAT: Not really. He was really on his toes. But once I got with the pony and then we got away from the grandstand and the noise, he relaxed a lot better. He was fine in the gate. So I figured he would be fine.

THE MODERATOR: We'll say thank you to Flavien Prat. Big congratulations. We'll move now to winning trainer Michael McCarthy. Your first Preakness starter, your first Preakness win. What's the emotion like right now?

MICHAEL MCCARTHY: Just really surreal, all of it. I thought the horse would run well. Turning up the backside, I was a little concerned. He's usually a little bit farther back than that. It's kind of reminiscent of the Preakness here, laying a little bit closer to the lead.

Coming through the half mile pole, looked like the horse was still traveling well. I saw Chad's horse inside of us going to three-eighths pole, was starting to go up and down, looked at the horses behind us, didn't see anybody posing a threat behind us. Two horses in the lead, obviously carried each other through the quarter pole. When we wheeled out coming to the 3/16 pole the head of

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by winning jockey Flavien Prat. Your first ride in the Preakness Stakes. How does it feel to get this win?

FLAVIEN PRAT: It's awesome. I thought the horse would run a good race, and he did, so it's great.

THE MODERATOR: He was really revved up before the race. Tell me about trying to keep him calm and getting ready to head into the starting gate.

FLAVIEN PRAT: Yeah, as you say, he was pretty on his toes before the race. I thought the groom and the pony girl was with me, they did a good job and we tried to get him to relax, and it worked out well.

THE MODERATOR: Tell me about your trip as you had Midnight Bourbon and Medina Spirit in front of you. You were able to run them down. What were you feeling in the stretch?

FLAVIEN PRAT: Well, I had a great trip. We broke well. Never intend to rush him. Naturally down the backside he was traveling well and was passing horses one by one. So I was pretty confident going to the three-eighths pole, and then as you said, I was behind two -- some of the favorites in the race, and I was traveling well, and I thought, well, maybe if he switched it and give me a good kick, I might be able to run them down.

THE MODERATOR: When you have a horse that you're riding that's going a longer distance for the first time, what is your thought process early in the race as far as conserving?

FLAVIEN PRAT: Well, I never really thought about the



the lane, I started to get excited.

Watching live, going back to the Jumbotron, when he hit the front, I don't think I said a word. I certainly didn't root, at least I don't think I did. Just kind of watched the horse in a rhythm, him and Flavien.

Stunned is pretty -- stunned, not totally surprised, I guess. I don't know if that makes any sense. The horse had been touting himself here all week. His last two works were very, very good.

Just super proud of the effort that everybody has put forth that's not here today that's back in Barn 59 at Santa Anita. We'll get home and celebrate this with them.

A lot of teamwork today.

THE MODERATOR: Emotion is allowed.

MICHAEL McCARTHY: Yeah, and that's the thing. I was emotional earlier. Probably the biggest part of my team, my family, my wife and my daughter. It would have been nice to have them here today. We'll get them to New York. Actually, you know what, maybe we'd better not get them to New York. We don't want to jinx it. But no, obviously wishing they were here with me today.

I can't tell you the support I get from them. My wife was up at 3:00 this morning California time helping me out, doing some things. This trophy is as much my family's as it is mine. And again, I'm happy for the Fradkins. Believe me when I tell you we've had a different of opinion from time to time. Put those opinions aside, put those differences aside today. Just very happy for the horse, very happy for them. It worked out.

Q. When you were speaking about the potential race setup early in the week, which was kind of what you had envisioned. Did things play out the way that you thought they might for your horse?

MICHAEL McCARTHY: Horse seemed like he was traveling awfully well. First time underneath the wire. Had a snug hold of Flavien, turned up the backside, and I thought he might have been doing a bit too much at that point. At the half mile pole he still looked comfortable.

The way the races have been run here on the dirt the last couple of days, it looked like laying close and being down on the inside were fortuitous places to be.

I think the one -- the hold card for this horse is his stamina and his smarts. He has both of those. He will, I think, run as far as they write races. But he has no quit in him. All

he knows to do is just run, and he lays it down every time.

He's made me look smart today. I don't know if he's -- actually I take that back. I don't know if he's made me look smart. Take a little bit more than a racehorse to make me look smart, but he's made me look good.

Q. Is it on to the Belmont Stakes now?

MICHAEL McCARTHY: You'd have to think so. See how he comes out of it, and we'll take a good look tomorrow.

Q. You talked about some differences in opinion; was there a difference in opinion as far as potentially running in the Kentucky Derby?

MICHAEL McCARTHY: I was bullish on running the horse in the Kentucky Derby. I had mentioned it a couple of times to John and Diane. They seemed to think that this was the better route. I just thought in the Derby, I thought he'd get a wonderful setup, tons of pace in there. I thought it would be over a racetrack that he would really like. Usually on Derby day, Churchill Downs is hard and fast, and I think that's what this horse has kind of been wanting all along.

You know, the Kentucky Derby is obviously the greatest two minutes in sports. Today I'm not sure how long it took us to get around there, but it was the greatest minute and 40 something seconds, 50 something seconds. I don't know. Yeah.

As I said, I would have liked to have run the horse in the Kentucky Derby. John made some valid points. As I had said to him earlier, we probably would have done the same thing two weeks earlier, but I'm glad we got it done today.

Q. You've mentioned often about how strongly you feel about the little guy in racing. The news of Bob Baffert and Zedan Racing this week, how important and meaningful is it to you to see a smaller trainer victorious in this race?

MICHAEL McCARTHY: That's what our game is built on. There's so much that goes into getting to the races, let alone a race like the Preakness. There are trainers that have a handful of horses that are just as well suited to train hundreds of horses.

The Fradkins have a small breeding operation. They're passionate about it. They make informed decisions, to say the least. They put a lot of time and effort into it. As John had told me one time: I have a lot more time to study this stuff than you do. He was right.

But just you never know where a good horse is going to come from. I'm glad this one landed up in our lap. We'll see where -- I don't think the journey is over. We'll see where it takes us.

Q. Can you describe how your relationship with the Fradkins came together in the first place?

MICHAEL McCARTHY: I had just started on my own training. I think I was probably in business less than a year, or about a year. And I cannot remember exactly how it came about. Do you guys? It had something -- I believe it was a referral of some sort from someone. I don't know what the rest of it is, but I'm glad they looked me up, glad I answered the phone. Sometimes I'm not so glad I answer the phone.

As I said, it's been -- a little horse like this, avenues you could go down, like the Kentucky Derby and things like that, and deciding to bypass it and come to a race like this, I've got to be honest with you, I'm going to give most of the credit to John because I would have preferred to have run two weeks ago. Had the result been the same, I really don't know. But we're here, it's in the history books, and we're very proud of it.

THE MODERATOR: We'll welcome in John and Diane Fradkin. Congratulations to both of you. John and Diane, thanks for joining us. We appreciate you being here, and a tremendous congratulations. Michael talked a little bit about being your call to wait for the Preakness and run here, a decision that seemed to turn out quite well I'd say.

JOHN FRADKIN: Yeah, well, I believe in running him in the easier spots if possible, and I didn't think that the Kentucky Derby really suited him. I thought there was a pretty good chance we would not hit the board just because of his running style.

So yeah, we did this against less competition, and I got lucky today.

Q. For both of you, I think your story is so interesting in that you also bred this horse and it was one that you had initially planned to sell, but with everything that happened with the pandemic last year didn't end up doing that. Tell me about how fate played a role in you racing Rombauer?

JOHN FRADKIN: Well, fate did play a role. We intend to sell all our horses. They're all aimed for either yearling sale or two-year-old sale. We have had better luck at two-year-old sales. This horse was in Ocala with Eddie Woods, and he was being aimed for the April OBS two-year-old sale. And Eddie told me that he didn't have

confidence that that sale was going to come off, and this was probably in March.

So he suggested maybe just run this one and try and win early at the track and maybe sell him at the track. So that's what we did. It was Eddie's call, and I went along with it, and we shipped him off to Michael McCarthy.

It is an early family. We have done this with his half brother that's two years older, three years older, maybe, and he had won in his second start, and then there's another half brother, Treasure Trove, who ran yesterday here, he won his first start.

So the family has a history of winning early. Thought it was a pretty good plan, so we did ship him to Michael and got him going.

I've got to tell you the first reports weren't positive. I was hearing he had no speed, and that's really not what you want to hear when you want to win early with a two-year-old. Michael thought he would do well in one of the early route races, so we ran him July 25th in I believe it was the first -- made the special weight, one mile on turf at Del Mar. And he won really impressively.

I thought actually that right after that race there would be some big offers on him and we might sell him, but there weren't any.

Part of that reason was because the time of the race was rather poor. It was 138 and 3, and it resulted in an initial buyer number of 48. Nobody pays big money for a horse that won and received a 48 buyer.

That didn't happen, and two weeks later we found out that the times were actually off at Del Mar racetrack. They had installed a new timing system, and it wasn't working properly and all the times were off.

That was another lucky break because if the real time was given to the horse, he probably would have sold. We probably would have sold him in that time period.

Q. John, could you please describe Michael's reaction to the decision to not run in the Kentucky Derby?

JOHN FRADKIN: We had a pretty heated discussion about that. Let's just leave it at that.

You know, I can understand why Michael wanted him to run, but I think he can understand why I didn't want him to run. So I think Michael and I are actually a really good team. I think there's going to be some clash at times because I come at it from a total handicapping angle, and

I'm not a horseman, as you could tell when I walked that horse to the Winner's Circle, didn't know what I was doing.

And Michael is the consummate horseman. He's focused on the horses and getting them to be their best. Where we disagree is usually just a handicapping thing.

I think as with any relationship, it evolves, and I think we've got a good relationship, and we're not done here. That horse is going to do some more good, and I think he's going to be pretty darned good on turf, too.

Q. Diane, what's this journey been like with this horse, all the ups and downs and keeping him and running him here?

DIANE FRADKIN: Well, it's really been exciting. When we went out to visit him in Kentucky of his yearling year, he just had a special look, look of eagles about him. He was attentive. He was showing off in the paddock. He just had that look.

And I remember thinking that day, wow, this horse is something special. And here we are. It just kind of all worked out.

But knowing that I think makes it even more special.

Q. Having a horse that you bred to win a race that's part of the Triple Crown, how meaningful is that?

JOHN FRADKIN: It's very meaningful. It's pretty special. It's a pedigree update that'll be there for a long time for a lot of broodmares. Yeah, we're very proud.

Q. John, what are your thoughts on running in the Belmont?

JOHN FRADKIN: Well, I think we'll have to see how he's doing after this race. That was the intent. I mean, all along I actually thought that was our best chance of a race to win, was actually the Belmont, because I think he's going to like the distance.

But now that we've won this one, it kind of takes the pressure off to do that, and that race is only three weeks out, and the spacing isn't superb to go into a mile-and-a-half race with just three weeks of rest.

I know Michael is a disciple of Todd Pletcher. They don't like running on three weeks' rest.

I'm not going to make it -- we're not going to make a decision on that tonight, but I'd say it's a possibility, but it's probably a little less of a possibility than if we had run like a

good third or something.

Q. Is there any second-guessing not having run in the Derby?

JOHN FRADKIN: None whatsoever.

DIANE FRADKIN: We won the El Camino Real Derby. That was our Derby.

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