

BELMONT STAKES

June 6, 2015

Bob Baffert

Victor Espinoza

Ahmed Zayat

Justin Zayat

ELMONT, NEW YORK

JIM MULVIHILL: All right, ladies and gentlemen, as we await the arrival of the owner and trainer, let's go ahead and welcome the winning jockey, of the Triple Crown, Victor Espinoza. Victor Espinoza. Congratulations Victor. Thank you.

All right. Ladies and gentlemen, we are delighted to be joined downstairs now by the winning connections of the Belmont Stakes, an American Racing Triple Crown, American Pharoah. We've got the winning connections up here and we'll have plenty of time for questions but we would like to welcome Chris Kay of the New York Racing Association. Chris, you have the floor.

CHRIS KAY: Thank you. Thank you all for being here today. When we put this day together back in February, we thought it would be great racing, great hospitality, we had no idea it would be one of the most fantastic days and racing history and I want to thank Mr. Zayat, Mr. Baffert and Victor for making it unbelievable. Congratulations to all of you.

JIM MULVIHILL: Thank you for that, Chris. Chris will be here if anyone has questions for him after we talk to the connections but now we would like to welcome from my left to the right, Justin Zayat is having a seat here, Ahmed Zayat, Trainer Bob Baffert and Jockey Victor Espinoza.

And Bob Baffert, I think I would like to start with you, maybe you can tell us what's going through your mind right now and the last half hour.

BOB BAFFERT: Well, before we came up here from the barn, somebody asked Bode if he was nervous and he said ten times for nervous than the Derby. And I asked him why, and he said because the race is really, really . We had the horse, we were hoping we had the horse, and once Victor got him in the clear, got him in that beautiful mode of the way he just goes over the ground, I just love every fraction, I love that, talking to Jill the whole way around there, hit the 37 and turning for home, I was prepared for somebody coming because I've gone through this so many times and I was just hoping for once, I could just tell by the eight ball that it was going to happen and all I did was just take in the crowd. The crowd was just -- it was thundering and I was just enjoying the call and the crowd, the noise, and everything happening. Thirty-seven years, I'm part of this but you know what, that little horse, he deserved it. He's a great horse. And the way he's been all winter and this spring is just like, you know, that's why everybody was just hoping. And I was here in town, I was listening to

every news station and people were saying, well, you know, it never happens and everybody gets up for it, but there's something about this horse that he just brought it every time and just enjoyment to be around. I wasn't really as nervous as I usually am before these because I really felt I had the horse and I felt confident when I saddled him, I could tell, I told Victor in the paddock, dude, he is ready, go ahead and ride him with confidence, and he did. And that's the only way, ride him with extreme confidence, put him on the lead, go for it. If he doesn't make it, don't worry about it, we tried. We had fun but he just kept rocking, rolling. What a feeling, still, it's probably going to take a few days to sink in because I had my kids here and everybody got to enjoy it. Savannah, she's here somewhere. I was holding her in my arms when she was four years old for Real Quiet and luckily she doesn't remember that.

But this is going to be the moment, I just, we'll never forget this. Bode, hopefully you'll never forget it. What was the best part of the racing thing?

BODE BAFFERT: Winning.

BOB BAFFERT: He is all his mother, Jill. But he said -- my phone -- he says he doesn't want to be a horse trainer.

What do you want to be?

BODE BAFFERT: Meteorologist.

BOB BAFFERT: It's a lot easier on the body.

JIM MULVIHILL: Thanks, Bob.

Mr. Zayat, I want to go to you next, tell us what you were feeling in the stretch and immediate aftermath of the race.

AHMED ZAYAT: As Bob just said, I don't think it sunk in yet. I'm feeling I'm in the company of a great race in my state, total gratifying but as Bob said before, I have been extremely confident all week. All week. And I looked at my wife in the post parade and I told her get ready to be the owner of the 12th Triple Crown winner. He looked unbelievable focused. Honest. Relaxed. Full of energy. The horse, just, it's not about any of us, and I can sit here for hours and praise the brilliant job that Bob, Victor, and team have done. I spoke about it through the whole trade, but at this juncture it's about the defining of the greatness of American Pharoah. I have been through the whole time saying he's a very good horse, he could be special but in order for you to come and win the Triple Crown, you have to define greatness, and as Bob said before, he does everything so easy. We all wanted it. We wanted for the sport. So I'm happy for the horse, for the fans, and for this man who have done -- you all know, in order to get a horse off an injury to come and compete and do what he does, everything have to go perfect but you have to be literally a magician. You have to be an incredible, incredible, incredible trainer. Jim Barnes, okay, have been with the horse in the road since March. Have not seen his family. That is the dedication of that team.

This man here, Victor, rode this horse like Bob always told him, you are sitting on a Ferrari. I mean, he moves like a Ferrari, he runs like a Ferrari. But, again, this is not about none of us, this is about American Pharoah and what does this mean to our beautiful sport.

JIM MULVIHILL: Very good. Well, it certainly all came together today.

Victor, now I would now like to go to you, if you could describe the trip and the decision to go straight in the lead out of the gate and tell us about the beginning and then the entire trip.

VICTOR ESPINOZA: He walked into the gate and amazing, he was ready today. You know what? I notice like when I finished, I sit in the saddle, so much power, so much energy this horse he has. Bob, he trained this horse just perfect. Unbelievable, today's race. He can't do better than any other times that I rode this horse. Perfect. That make my job more easy, sort of that confidence, and warming up, he was just class, all class. You know? He was just ready. Broke into the gate and he was just perfect. Another horse next to me, he move in, he moved back and as soon as he moved back, they opened the gate and he just kind of, you know, missed just a little, little touch but I send right away, my plan just open up, you know, out of the gate and hit one or two lengths and for that I can slow him down and let him just be happy and run the racetrack. It was just so nice to be on a horse like American Pharoah. I'm telling you on the first turn, that was the best feeling I ever had.

JIM MULVIHILL: And how about into the stretch, tell us about, as you heard the crowd erupt, can you hear that from the saddle and tell us about the final quarter mile.

VICTOR ESPINOZA: No, I was so concentrated on this horse. You know what? I've been here three times. It was not easy for me. I don't even get excited. I was excited the first time that I would be in the lead like one length, but turning for home, you know, this has not happened yet, I want to cross the wire. I just grabbed the reins and he just took off. It's just an amazing feeling that you have when it's like 20 yards out of the wire and you're like three or four lengths in front. It's unbelievable. At the wire, it was like, I can't believe I did. Nevertheless, I win the Triple Crown right now but I don't make any money because I'm donating all the money to City of Hope. (Applause).

JIM MULVIHILL: From this race?

VICTOR ESPINOZA: Yes. Everything, I donate. I don't -- the most important for me is just win this race because I benefit two times, I feel like a loser the last two times and then today, you know, for me today it was, the money, whatever I make I donate to people with cancer, whatever I can help, any young kids hopefully to get better, but, you know, it's just amazing that I come here, that I win already the Triple Crown. It's unbelievable. I looked at that trophy, I was excited and kind of angry because two times I can't get it until now.

JIM MULVIHILL: Well, you got this one.

VICTOR ESPINOZA: I want to thank everyone, Ahmed Zayat and his family and my family and Bob, too. Bob picked me to ride American Pharoah, that was all him.

JIM MULVIHILL: Very good. I know we have a lot of questions in the room and as we have them, give me a moment to relay the question so the folks in the press box can hear it. Questions in the room.

Q. When is your next race?

JIM MULVIHILL: The question was: When is the next race, but in all seriousness you said he'll race the rest of the year but now that you've won a Triple Crown, would you like to tell us whether we will see American Pharoah race again?

AHMED ZAYAT: Are you kidding me? Obviously, those decisions are made by Bob. Bob is unbelievable caretaker. The horse will come first. We have to see how he comes out of the race. But knowing Bob, knowing how competitive he is, we would like to enjoy him as long as we can but he have to come up, he have a very, very long campaign. I personally made a promise to my family and to the fans more than anybody else. We need to enjoy our stars and race them as long as we possibly good.

Now, saying that, I will not say things I can't deliver. The stud he have been sold. He will probably retire at the end of this year. Can this change? Possibly, I can't promise. I don't make that decision. But as long as Bob is telling me that he's healthy and he has it in him, I would like to enjoy him as much as I have him.

JIM MULVIHILL: Other questions from the room.

Q. As you're sitting here watching the replay as it came in?

JIM MULVIHILL: The question was what was Victor thinking watching the replay as we were waiting here.

VICTOR ESPINOZA: I want to see at the gate, he kind of snapped back a little bit, that was good. He got his weight behind and push it, so much power there. Just two jumps, I was right in the lead. I mean, I was just right there, I don't know what pole it is, half mile, five-eighths, I was having fun.

Q. Bob, earlier in the week you downplayed getting a Triple Crown but now that it's happened, what does it mean to you?

BOB BAFFERT: Well, I mean, I really, I wanted to see it happen but to me I really don't, I don't look at it as, I think the Triple Crown is about the horse. I really think American Pharoah, the name American Pharoah will always be remembered. It was about him because he's the one that did it. I mean, we were just basically passengers. This horse could have ended up in anybody's barn and he raised him and we just, you know, I have a great team and I was so fortunate to have a horse like that, that, you know, Jill and I, we're going to make also -- you're not the only one giving to charity, we are giving 50,000 to thoroughbred aftercare, CARMA of California, Old Friends 50,000 and 50,000 for the permanently disabled jockeys in memory of Bobby Adair, one of the greatest jockeys ever. I want to share this, I want to make sure that those horses that we really love, that we have to take care of them and I just want to give back. So win, lose, or draw I was going to do it and, you know, Jill and I, we just really enjoy this game and I'm enjoying this game more so than I ever have because, you know, I can just tell it's brought so much joy, just with everything. And this horse, he's a dream come true.

You know, I don't know if I'll ever have another horse like that. I've had some great horses. I'm just going to enjoy this one. And next time you see him, believe me, I will have him ready.

AHMED ZAYAT: Hold on, I want to add to this man. He said anybody can have this horse in his barn. No. Yes, nobody can make a horse, a slow horse a fast horse, nobody can, but it's a trainer who cares, who can develop a horse. A trainer who cares knows when to stop a horse, when we're all tempted to run him before the Breeder's Cup. We scratched him on Tuesday on the race on Saturday. Everybody in California will tell you that this horse was breezy and working honestly like people are saying like Seattle Slew. There's no way, if this horse will have been beaten but for him to care so much and to know that this horse, it's the right time to do right by him and stop him, then not to lose any condition of this horse being off for 60 days and coming back and literally going like clock-wise every day, not to miss a beat in order for him to come and go -- you know what? This horse is six time Grade One winner already when we are already in June. It takes a special trainer. It takes a special team. And I want to salute him and thank him, I'm grateful to you, Bob, for giving the pride for my family and everybody. More importantly, for the sport that needed it.

Thank you so much.

(Applause)

Q. Bob, can you talk about how emotional this is for you?

BOB BAFFERT: It's very emotional for me because, you know, Jill carries a lot of the weight in the house because she knows how disappointed being a horse trainer can be. The highs and lows and she keeps me going. And Bode, who is so much like Jill, the passion, and I could tell, he's around it, I could tell just the last couple of days, just by the way Jill and Bode were a little bit on edge. We knew something was coming up big and, you know, Bode was prepared. You have to prepare yourself for disappointment, otherwise it will wear on you. And all I could think about today, it didn't dawn on me we started walking up, I forgot to take my heart medication this morning. I thought, oh, man. So I had to keep cool.

But I'm glad that, Victor, it was a smooth trip for him but it's one of those days that I'm really enjoying it, really enjoying the moment and I have a great team. Jimmy Barnes, the staff, Mike Marlow, Los Alamitos, he had him at Los Alamitos first. You can't do it without a great team because you need everybody there and it was like, you know, our barn runs really smoothly and everything has -- to get to this point, we were really lucky. This horse got us here. He had what it takes. Not only you have to be a good horse, but you have to be able to take the constant, the turnaround. And this horse, I have never in my life had a horse that you could ship him this many times and still, he's amazing. I'm telling you, I've never seen -- he's -- there's something about him that you measure his heart or do whatever, everybody, every genius will come out and say he's got the biggest heart. I don't know. God put him in my hands and it's like he is just an incredible animal and so I owe it all to him. I mean, this was American Pharoah. And when we sent him in, we knew he was a good horse. I saw the video. But you got to admit, that is a great name they gave him. You know, we would have liked to have seen BodeMister go through this but unfortunately...

JIM MULVIHILL: Hey, Bob, we had a few follow-ups from upstairs. Can you clarify for the record your mom's name?

BOB BAFFERT: Ellie and Bill Baffert, Eleanor.

JIM MULVIHILL: There was also a question upstairs about the aluminum pad today, can you talk about the equipment?

BOB BAFFERT: I'm going to put that pad on Ebay.

Q. Bob, what do you mean this means for the game for now and for the next few years, will it give it a boost? Will Pharoah transcend sports?

BOB BAFFERT: I don't think anyone was really thinking about that. We're always thinking what's he going to do. I think we just, we get to share, I think what the Triple Crown is about, we get to share somebody great, greatness, with everybody. Everybody got to see it.

I remember watching Secretariat, I was watching it with my dad at the lodge on a little TV, I just remember that and so I was talking to Penny Chenery today, she's such a sweetheart, and she's been coming, poor thing, for the last 37 years and finally getting it done and she's just a sweetheart but it's one of those things where I think everybody in the industry, it makes us feel really good about our sport, like anything in a championship game. I remember watching Zenyatta win the Breeder's Cup Classic, I felt so good about our sport. We need something like that. And I think just watching him run today, everybody came to see something great.

JIM MULVIHILL: Mr. Zayat, that's come up a lot this week, can we get your opinion, what does the Triple Crown mean for racing going forward?

JUSTIN ZAYAT: I'm hoping it will bring a lot of young new fans into the game, a lot of owners and I hope every time I come to this track it will be as packed as it is today.

JIM MULVIHILL: Justin, you've had a lot of emotional reactions throughout the Triple Crown. Tell us after the race for you.

JUSTIN ZAYAT: I cried today. I didn't throw up this time. It was a little more emotional but I'm just so thankful to have a horse like American Pharoah to be the 12th Triple Crown winner, a dream come true for all racing. I'm thankful for Bob Baffert, he gave us our first Derby and I'm happy we could give him a Triple Crown.

Q. Ahmed, how did you spend the day and did you end up on your long-shot specialty?

AHMED ZAYAT: In the morning, I start talking to Lydia, I start getting really, really nervous. I get a text message from a keen handicap person, it's raining and they're sealing the track and Bob would know, I became very, very nervous. We knew that he's coming in as best as horse can come to a race, we been saying that all week and everybody was seeing that. Certain things are out of your hand, variable, track. We know he doesn't take his track where he goes. We know that he can run on a fast track, he can run in a monsoon, literally storm. But one thing from my experience in this game is that a tired track is probably the worst surface that any thoroughbred could run, American Pharoah or anybody else. It's too demanding. A lot of them are too young, going the first time a mile-and-a-half, so I start getting really nervous. So literally now to answer your question, all the day I've been watching the bias on every single race, I'm sorry, Chris, not a single bet all day, and I was really trying to figure, you know, it was all long-shot every day. Ten-to-one, ten-to-one, seven to -- I said, holy, like sometimes when the trend go this way, you start getting nervous. That's -- I was trying to get distracted, enjoying the fans, talking about -- a fun day actually.

Q. Victor, I'm curious, not just the Triple Crown but what does it feel like to be on a Grade One winner, three times in eight weeks?

How does that happen?

VICTOR ESPINOZA: Wow, it was amazing. But I want to say one thing, I want to thank Martin Garcia for working this horse.

(Applause)

VICTOR ESPINOZA: He work, he did an unbelievable job for getting him ready for the race.

What was the question? I forgot.

Q. What does it feel like to be on a Grade One winner four times in eight weeks on four different tracks?

VICTOR ESPINOZA: Amazing, it's like you're driving fast cars comparing to slow ones, but just a special horse since the first time I rode him. I rode him the first time not even know who is American Pharoah and when I rode him, I send out of the gate and it was just unbelievable. The only thing I can say is just, wow. After the ride, it's just, wow. I don't want to jinx myself but I think I have a Kentucky Derby winner. Who knows what's going to happen. Triple Crown, it's just amazing. That was the best.

JIM MULVIHILL: Another one from upstairs for you is, Mr. Zayat, what does it do for Pioneer of the Nile?

AHMED ZAYAT: This whole line have been nothing but a blessing in my life, in our life, in our family. Talking about this horse what he done at stables. It's just mindbogglingly. I'm usually very attached to our horses and, you know, sometimes better lucky than smart and at this juncture markets were really soft and we typically when we syndicate or we sell our stallion, I think stay around 25 percent, actually this guy for this guy I stay for 75 percent. So we became very attached to the horse. Obviously Bob trained him. In my opinion, he was the most underestimated -- he won everything. He literally won everything yet he didn't have the wow effect that Pioneer -- that, for example, American Pharoah has. It's just because he was a horse -- getting the job done was outwowing him so we did the stallion, he is a very good stallion, the sign of a good stallion, Littleprincessemma, she got injured, we know she was a very nice horse but he moved everything, it's all the stallion.

JIM MULVIHILL: We have time for a few more, Bob. Jennie Reese would like to know the shipping plans, going back to Churchill Downs?

BOB BAFFERT: Yes, he's going to Churchill Downs. He'll go back there and let him freshen up. He likes the stable where he was born and grew up. Get some bluegrass.

Q. When is he going back to Churchill?

BOB BAFFERT: I believe tomorrow.

Q. What time will you be at the barn?

What time does he leave?

BOB BAFFERT: He was supposed to leave Monday but they changed the flight, so I'm not sure what time the plane leaves. They keep changing.

Q. Will it be in the morning?

BOB BAFFERT: I probably won't be there in the morning. I'm going to sleep in. Jill says we'll be there.

Q. Thank you, Jill. We love you?

JIM MULVIHILL: Last question, in the room.

Q. Bob, were you surprised, I mean, obviously you went wire-to-wire and you knew in the paddock he was ready to go. Were you surprised in the manner in which he won?

JIM MULVIHILL: Was Bob surprised about the manner in which he won?

BOB BAFFERT: Well, you're always hoping. I thought that, you know, you're always worried about the mile-and-a-half and so -- and the track was getting a little bit deeper, the day was drawing out, but, I don't know, he just, I could tell by Victor's body language that he was really down the backside, in the far turn, turn for home, I was watching Victor because, like in the Derby, he just didn't bring his A game that day and just like I said lost it, in the paddock. In the Derby we were just lucky to get by that one and the rest of these races were so much easier on him. So, you know, he needed one stiff race, it was the Derby so we were lucky that we won the Derby though.

JIM MULVIHILL: Gentlemen, thank you for your time. Congratulations again to the Belmont Stakes winner American Pharoah.

AHMED ZAYAT: Triple Crown winner.

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