

Whitney next after Macho Again's rousing victory in Foster

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By Phil Janack

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SARATOGA SPRINGS — After all the screaming and celebrating, Roger Locks was left speechless.

"My voice is just coming back. I'm serious," Locks said Tuesday morning, 2 1/2 days after Macho Again's upset victory in the Grade I \$660,000 Stephen Foster Handicap at Churchill Downs.

Locks and his wife, Joyce, of Saratoga Springs, co-own the 4-year-old Macho Uno colt through the West Point Thoroughbreds syndicate.

"I couldn't speak for two days," Locks said. "My wife was laughing at me like I'm an idiot. I'm just starting to get it back a little. It'll probably take another three or four days. "When he was coming down the stretch, I was screaming like a little kid. I was out of control. Nobody could tell I was out of control, because everybody else was screaming as loud as I was." Sixteen partners are involved with Macho Again, who represents the Lockses' first foray into horse ownership. Next on the agenda is the Grade I \$750,000 Whitney Handicap on Aug. 8 at Saratoga Race Course.

"They're really good. They're at everything and they're so excited," West Point founder and president Terry Finley said by phone Tuesday from his New Jersey office. "I'm so happy for all the partners. It's just great."

It is the second Foster victory in three years for West Point, which also won in 2007 with Flashy Bull. Niel and Carole Nielsen of Saratoga Springs were part of that ownership group. Winner of the Grade II Jim Dandy at Saratoga last summer and the Grade II New Orleans Handicap at Fair Grounds in March, Macho Again also gave West Point its sixth Grade I victory, and the Lockses their first.

What's more, it also gives Macho Again the cache of being a Grade I winner when he is eventually retired to stud.

"I was crying. I admit it," Locks said. "The reason I was in tears had nothing to do with winning the trophy. It was strictly because now the horse can stand in Kentucky. I could care less about the purse; now he's eligible to do it, which is what made me so happy."

As long as the horse is sound and happy, Finley would like to keep Macho Again racing in 2010. After the Whitney, the Jockey Club Gold Cup and Breeders' Cup Classic are on the radar. "You can never take away a Grade I from a horse like this," Finley said. "He beat a very, very legitimate group of horses. You look at some of the horses he's beaten over the last two years, he's not a one-hit wonder by any stretch."

Last in the early going under jockey Robby Albarado, Macho Again advanced steadily on the outside in the 1 1/8-mile Foster, picking off horses down the stretch to win by a length over Asiatic Boy.

"Robby rode a perfect race," Locks said. "He kept him out of trouble and took him wide as needed. Once he hits the top of the stretch, I don't care if he's 15-wide, if he's even with those horses, the race is over."

Based at Churchill Downs with trainer Dallas Stewart, Macho Again will remain in Louisville until the week of the Whitney, Finley said.

In his career, Macho Again has run three times at Saratoga. In addition to the Jim Dandy, he ran second in his race debut on Aug. 15, 2007, and was eighth of 12 in last year's \$1 million Travers, where he got bumped and clipped heels at the top of the stretch.

"I think a horse like this has got a good chance," Finley said. "We're very, very excited, and now we can't wait for Saratoga to get here. He loves Saratoga. He really seems to like the track up there."

"My wife and I were coming home on the plane, just looking at each other with big grins on our face," Locks said. "You're lying in bed just giggling to yourself, 'Holy crap, it really happened.'"

"I just hope on Aug. 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13, I can't speak at all."