

Transcript: Terry Finley's call with the National Thoroughbred Racing Association

(August 12, 2008)

Eric Wing: Welcome in the founder and President of West Point Thoroughbreds, Terry Finley.

Terry, it's Eric Wing in New York, how are you?

Terry Finley: I'm doing great. How's everybody? And it's great to be on. Thank you.

Eric Wing: Thanks, and Terry, the 73rd running of the Longacres Mile at Emerald is coming up on Saturday, excuse me on Sunday, and it's a Grade three \$300,000 event. Also it's a Breeders' Cup Challenge Win And You're In event for the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile. You've got the possible favorite for that race in Tropic Storm. He's faced some tough opponents going up against the likes of Street Boss and Rebellion and Benny the Bull this year but those races against those top horses were for the most part around one turn, how do think Tropic Storm will do stretching back out to two turns and a one mile distance?

Terry Finley: You know we feel pretty confident that I don't think that we're going to run against the same caliber of horse up there so I think that should help us do a little bit better around two turns. I always say most horses can get two turns it's the competition that they're up against that really dictates how successful they are.

Eric Wing: And Terry, there's a lot to like about the Longacres Mile, it's got such a great tradition, it's got the graded status, the big purse, it's a conventional dirt surface which isn't all that common anymore out west, a possible guaranteed starting berth in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, which one or which ones of those were most persuasive in the you and Craig Dollase deciding to ship Tropic Storm up to Washington state for the race?

Terry Finley: Eric, I think it was probably two fold. One is we really would like to get to the Breeders' Cup with a colt like this and when you take a look at it and you take a look at all the horses across the country that are not quite in the mix to go to the classic and would go to the Dirt Mile, I think it probably will be an overflow field in there and they'll be some horses on the outside looking in. So we really thought if we get lucky up there and we run as well as we think, we can secure that spot. So I think this spot more than a lot of the other spots.

Ginger Punch really doesn't need to win a Win And You're In race, she's already in but a horse like this, where we might be in the bottom tier in terms of graded earnings and the like I think the fact that we can go in to September first if we win up there knowing that we have a spot in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile field, I think that's a big plus and that could really help us in our next spot because we know that we're not going to have to go all out and we're not going to have to pick a spot that is really going to put us in a position to go to the other Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile. And the other thing is just to pick up the purse money. Obviously when you're running against the Street Bosses of the world, he could be the champion sprinter and it's tough, we have a horse that runs hard every week, or every time we run him and he's been second or third. So we really think it's time to try to get this dude in the winner's circle.

Tom Pedulla: Yes, hey, Terry, how are you?

Terry Finley: I'm doing great, Tom. Good talking to you.

Tom Pedulla: Hey, on a different subject than your horse if I might, Jess Jackson was on this call last week and was talking his desire for a league that would feature older horses. I know that's difficult to put together but do you think it's important for the sport that something be worked out in that way?

Terry Finley: I would think it would help but I'm not going to be a hypocrite, Tom. I'll give you an example. Macho Again, he won the Jim Dandy and there were during the sales week up at Saratoga there were probably five or six of the stallion guys that were there to take a look at him and almost every one of them if they bought in to him or they bought him would not run him as a four year old. And a horse that really is starting to come in to his own, so it does, it comes down to the economics of the business. So I think in essence we are all seeing a drawback in the prices at the sale and I think you're going to see a tougher time with the stallion owners and everything is really going through a revision. And so that might be the impetus for us to really take a look and see that unless you're the absolute top one or two three year olds in the land, it's not, it's going to be a toss up.

And if it's a toss up in terms of the economics you know if you're the third, fourth, or fifth best three year old, you're going to have a shot to stay around. I think that would be a big help to everybody because we see the excitement of the Curlins of the world and what they bring to the races. I think it would be a big help. It's not going to be exact, it's not going to be perfect because we're still a lot of money in the business with the Arabs and the other interests that are looking for the good young stallions so yes, I am in favor of anything and everything we can do to try to keep our three year olds around for their four year old year.

Tom Pedulla: Thank you.

Operator: And we'll go next to Joe Withee I believe it is at Emerald Downs. Please go ahead.

Joe Withee: Thank you. Hi, Terry. Hey thanks for the push on Macho Again before the Jim Dandy. A lot of Emerald Downs heard you on the radio up here and went with your good advice. So congratulations on that victory. And about Tropic Storm, could you tell you a little bit about him as an individual? How he might ship? He's got to ship up here, doesn't look like he's shipped too much so far in his career, and we're going to have a pretty big field up here. Does he have any quirks? About running inside or outside? Just you know maybe some stuff about him as an individual.

Terry Finley: Yes, well, the good thing Joe, is that he's been on the – we're going to fly him up on Thursday morning, and he's been on the plane twice now. We bought him in Ocala as a two year old and we flew him out to California that summer and then we flew him back to Gulfstream for the Sunshine Millions where he was a good fourth against Benny the Bull so we're not really concerned at all. A nice horse like this, a mature horse, he's a four year old, we're not concerned about him shipping. And really I think the key to the race is that Aaron's going to have a shot to get him to settle down. I would think, I think coming out of a sprint, all the sprints that he's come out of, I think he's going to either on or near the lead and we just got to get him to drop his head and relax for the first three quarters of a mile.

He's had a tendency to kind of be a little anxious the first part of the run, of his last couple starts, and as

a result I don't think he's had quite the closing kick that he could've had if he would've settled a little bit more and of course when you're running against a yellow horse like Street Boss you need everything to go the right way to beat a horse like that. So I think that's going to be key if we go in to the first turn and we get good position and he's able to just drop his head and just relax the first part of it and not run off and be a little bit tough for Aaron to handle, I think that will be good for us.

Joe Withee: Fair enough, thank you.

Operator: And we'll go next Alicia Wincze at the Lexington Herald-Leader.

Alicia Wincze: Hey, Terry, how's it going?

Terry Finley: Hi, Alicia.

Alicia Wincze: Good to hear from you, as always. Just wanted to switch gears again and just again ask a little bit more of a follow-up with Macho Again. How is he progressing coming in to the Traverse? And was there anything that maybe he showed you guys in the Jim Dandy that you hadn't seen from him before?

Terry Finley: I will say we're very happy the way he's coming in but you know everybody you talk to, you're getting ready for the Travers, you're going to be optimistic. And I've talked to three or four people that are running in the Traverse and they all say their horse is doing well, our colt is going well, well for us, and really for Dallas who worked him last Friday morning at Saratoga and a lot of the partners, a lot of the press was out, and he's a little bit of a ham, he walks to the race track and he's all serious but then when he gets back to the barn and he sees that the cameras are on him, he's acting the ham. So really happy.

I mean he's not a big strapping horse you know he's kind of an average sized horse. So one of the things we've been concerned about all spring is really keeping the weight on him and actually Dallas has done that and he's done a very good job and his team, so all in all, we think that we're bringing a very happy, and a healthy horse to the Traverse. And what else can you ask for? I mean it's a Grade one for \$1 million; it's the centerpiece of the Saratoga meet. So we think we're in a very good spot with him. And the way he ran the other day, actually he ran almost the same as he did in the Derby trial. The day that he got headed at the sixteenth pole and he kept plugging and kept plugging and you know he's the kind of horse that you really don't want to get in to a street fight with because he's going to come back at you. I'm not sure he's the most talented horse in the land, but I know when you put everything together, I know he's the total package. At least in our opinion, but we're ((inaudible)).

Alicia Wincze: And another thing, Terry, I know a lot has been made this year about kind of the perceived weakness of this three year old group of colts this year. As somebody who obviously has one of these colts, did you kind of buy in to that or do you think that maybe this is just a group of horses that, like your horse, is just now starting to maybe hit their stride at this point in the season?

Terry Finley: Well, I don't buy in to it but I will tell you that's kind of a biased answer because you're right, I do, I am involved with one of these horses. I'm not so sure that you can just automatically feel because of the sheet numbers or because of the buyer's numbers, you can automatically just say that there were a group of four or five from '07 that were better than the top horses here. Obviously Big Brown he's separated himself from the rest of the ((inaudible)).

I strongly believe that we're starting to close the gap on Big Brown and I think it'll be a very interesting fall if everything falls in to place and we get a shot, us as well as a couple of the other improving three year olds, I think it will be very, very interesting to see how we run against Big Brown and compared that to what happened in the spring. I don't think we're smart enough as individuals to evaluate horses you know just because how fast they run.

I mean you can look at Big Brown, Big Brown if you compare him to the horses from here I don't think he's run the wrong times, but the Beyers numbers have all come in to place so I guess I could sum it up, I don't pay a whole lot of attention to that because we didn't run very fast on the sheets in the Jim Dandy, we ran a seven and a half which kind of puts us on the outside of the bubble. Three and a half in the Derby trial, but that being said we did everything we needed to do to beat that group of horses that we entered in to the gate right for the Jim Dandy so I guess in the long run everything will shake out. I'd like to think that this group of three year olds, aside from Big Brown, a couple of these horses are really starting to improve and put their games together and I think we're one of those horses.

Alicia Wincze: Thanks again, Terry. Best of luck with everything.

Terry Finley: Thank you.

Vince Bruun: Hello, Terry. First of all, I'd like to thank you; we really look forward to seeing your horse up here, Tropic Storm this weekend. And my question is two fold, first, what you saw in the horse before you acquired him that you liked?

And two, how the horse, you decided him to Craig Dollase in southern California as you delegated your horses around the country?

Terry Finley: We were at the, at that sale, I guess it was in '06, at the March Ocala sale, and we actually sold a couple horses at that sale, and Tropic Storm was stabled right across from where we were trying to sell horses, and we did sell a couple, and the day before the sale he kicked a stall wall that night. And he was on three legs and his back leg was, it was like the size of an orange, that back ankle. And he was on three legs right before the sale and I know he knocked a lot of people off of him because I thought he would have brought probably 300,000 to 400,000.

And we ended up, we bought him for 145,000 and I thought, I thought you know obviously we had him checked, and we had the area it was scanned and everything, and it was determined that it would just take a little bit of time. So those are the types of situations that we're looking for at the horse sales. We know that we can't go and just go toe to toe with the Arabs and the Coolmore boys and the other guys that, and the other entities that are coming to spend top dollar. We're looking for opportunities like this colt presented and of course you know up to now it's worked out really well. And we're excited to come up there.

Actually, it was funny when I was the military I was stationed for a summer at Fort Lewis and I guess that was back in '91 and I remember I took three or four trips up to Longacres so it's really cool. I'm not going to be able to get back out there this weekend, but I've always endeavored to have a horse get back up there. So obviously this is the premiere race up in the northwest so we're looking forward to it, we really are.

Vince Bruun: Thank you.

Eric Wing: OK, well, before we say goodbye, Terry, I want to ask you about another of your horses who might be one of the reasons why you said it could be an interesting summer or fall for you, and that's Awesome Gem, who last year ran a bang up race, a good third in the Breeders' Cup Classic, was a close second in the Pacific Classic last year, and after what was a heartbreaking defeat on the turf in which I think he just pretty much out and out lost to head bob, I understand you've got him ready again for a return engagement in the Pacific Classic.

Terry Finley: We do. We're really excited. Obviously we had a tough beat, we got beat by a very nice horse in '07 in the form of Student Council and we've been itching for a rematch so I was kind of happy to see that ((inaudible)) means are going to fly that colt back out there so we'll have another shot to get locked up again.

But this colt, Awesome Gem, he ran in the Big 'Cap and about, I don't know, two weeks after the Big 'Cap, Eric, he got very sick, actually we weren't sure we were going to be able to save. He had an intestinal virus, it wasn't colic, but he got, he was very sick, lost a lot of weight and we spent about a month at the clinic and we took our time with him and everything kind of fell in to place and he's come back with a lot of gusto. So it's kind of neat to be in the second half of the year with a fresh older handicapped horse because as we know there's a lot of parity in the division right now. So to think that we could run well in the Pacific Classic and then look towards the fall and the fact that it's on his home court, we're pretty excited and you know obviously you've got a bunch of different things, if Curlin were to come out for the Classic and the like. But we think that we're in the mix, so to speak, so the first step of course is going to be the Pacific Classic for a horse like this.

Eric Wing: And lastly, Terry, getting back to Macho Again, he seems like when he's on dirt, he runs his, he fires his best shot as long as there's any pace whatsoever in the race. For that reason, are you not going to be all that disappointed if it is a big field for the Travers, thereby perhaps ensuring an honest pace?

Terry Finley: Yes, we would like because I think obviously we wouldn't be too keen if he drew the 12 hole, Eric, but I think it is. I don't know if the filly, if the (Darley) filly is going to run, I don't know if they've made the decision, but she scares us a little bit and you know you've got a bunch of three year old at the end of the three year old summer and every which one of them could, they're in the position where they've obviously, they've obtained a level of success to warrant running in a race like the Travers.

So I'd like it to be as small as possible in one sense because the more horses in there, the more chance that you have a horse that is going to jump up and run the race of his life, but all those things we really can't control and I know it's sounds kind of old hat but we can't control that, we know that we've got one thing we can control and that's kind of the environment that we're bringing Macho Again to the Travers in. And that's what we're thinking about every minute of the day and you know it's a lot of fun to have a horse like this and to be in a spot like this where if we jump up and we run well, there's a lot of interesting possibilities. One of which is getting another shot at Big Brown which you know I think would be really, really exciting for us. And the partners as well.

Eric Wing: Absolutely. Well, Terry, we wish you the best of luck next week with Macho Again at Saratoga and Awesome Gem at Del Mar and most pressingly we wish and your investors good luck this Sunday at Longacres in the, excuse me, at Emerald Downs in the Longacres Miles.

Terry Finley: I appreciate it. I really appreciate the opportunity as well, thank you very much.

Eric Wing: Thank you. Terry Finley, the founder and President of West Point Thoroughbreds and as we just said Tropic Storm will stretch out his ability to the one mile distance out at Emerald Downs in the \$300,000 Longacres Mile which is a Win and You're In Breeders' Cup Challenge event for the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile.