



**Tuesday, December 10, 2019**

## **A Personal Perspective of Racing's Past, Present and Future**

### **Moderator:**

**Amy Zimmerman:** Vice President and Director of Broadcasting, The Stronach Group

### **Speakers:**

**Todd Pletcher:** Trainer

**Bob Baffert:** Trainer

**Ms. Jane Murray:** Good morning everyone. Thanks for showing up bright and early this morning. We're looking forward to another great day of presentations.

Before we get going, I'd like to really thank today's sponsors, American Teletimer and On Track Media and Entertainment, for sponsoring breakfast this morning.

Our beverage breaks today are sponsored by International Sound, Premier Turf Club and Racing and Gaming Services.

The Mentor luncheon for the students is sponsored by The Jockey Club.

Don't miss the reception tonight, the Hasta La Vista reception, always a good time and sponsored by Sport Tech.

Our first panel this morning is gonna present a personal perspective of racing's past, present and future.

Amy Zimmerman is going to be moderating. She's the Vice President and Director of Broadcasting for The Stronach Group, joined by Bob Baffert and Todd Pletcher.

Amy.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Thank you very much. I am very honored to sit with two people that I consider not only idols but friends. I thank you very much for the

time here. Between the two of you, you have won 20 American classics, which is a fairly staggering number.

For both of you, a lot of that started here at U of A. I'm gonna start with you Todd, then to you Bob. How did you get started? What brought you here to the U of A?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, when I was a senior in high school, my parents thought it was very important that I go to college somewhere.

At that time, I was more interested in training horses than going to college. I figured if I were going to go to school, I'd like to go somewhere that at least has some involvement with the industry.

Actually, my dad was racing at the time at Louisiana Downs when Pat Pope was a racing secretary there. He was also a graduate of the U of A, and he said, "You need to go to Tucson. You need to visit it. You need to see it. I think you'll like it."

My dad and I came out here, I think it was probably sometime around this time of year in December. December is pretty cool in Tucson. I just figured it was the right fit for me. Plus, it was probably one of the few places I could actually get in.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Okay. Were you a good student?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I was not a very good student, I was an average student, always kept it between the lines. It wasn't a primary focus.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob you grew up not too far from here. How did you end up here?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** We grew up in Nogales which is on the border an hour from here. We didn't have a choice. It's either U of A, or — we weren't gonna go to ASU, 'cause that was like — it's one of those things where — my mother was — she was a teacher and a principal in Nogales, so education was very important to her.

I wanted to be a jockey, 'cause I grew up with my dad with horses, with him. I had to promise her that I would graduate from college first before I would — went to school, and I had great years here.

I loved the — University of Arizona, the campus, everything. I'd joined a fraternity. I think I was the first one to ever be in a fraternity in my family.

It was just a really — I got every ounce of university life, and it was the best five years of my life.

I really enjoyed it. Luckily, this race track management program had just come along. I thought, "Hey, here's some easy classes there that maybe I can skate through it." 'Cause it was interesting, and I enjoyed it. I met a lot of good friends from it.

Matter of fact, Jimmy Bell, who all people know from Jonnabell farm. I met him in class, because I saw this guy, he's got a BloodHorse magazine on his — he's reading a BloodHorse magazine during class.

I go, "Hey, when you're done with that, can I have that?" I got to become good friends with him.

It was one of those things where it was just — to me, I've had one child graduate from here, Canyon, he went here, and it's just an all-around beautiful campus to me. It means a lot to me.

Plus, what I have that he doesn't have. I got honored in the Hispanic hall of fame. He doesn't have something like that.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** See, goals.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** True.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Besides learning how to rush a fraternity, what did you learn most?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Well, I think —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Which is an important skill.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I think what you learn in college is, and I'll never forget this.

The first week you're thinking, "I've never had this kind of freedom. I can get home. I can stay up as long as I want. I have nobody to answer to."

Right off the bat you have to learn responsibility on your own. Nobody's telling you — you don't have your dad getting you up at six in the morning, and get out there, and feed those horses, and go do this or go do that.

You're like, it's up to you to make sure you get up and go to class. You have to learn to study.

College, I think a lot of it is just the responsibility that you have to take on without somebody just poking you saying, "Hey, come on go do this." What I'm going through with Brody right now.

I think responsibility is probably — it's the first — we had a lot of responsibility growing up on a ranch. With his dad with horses, he probably had to do this, and different things like that. When you're on your own, it was like, "Wow, I've got all this freedom."

You'd take advantage of it. You've seen other people that go there and they just, they can't hack it.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What did you learn?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Similar things. It was funny, I was thinking about it last night flying in. Actually, I am in a hall of fame. I'm in the Arizona daily Wildcat hall of fame.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I've never heard of that.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** It's the school newspaper. My roommate was working as the, I guess, the lead football writer, for the Arizona Daily Wildcat.

He came to me one day and he said, "Hey, there's a really easy job that opened up. The guy that writes the — covers intermural sports quit."

He said, "All you gotta do is write an article about some game that you watch and it's \$15 per game, per article."

What I did, I was refereeing intermural sports. I would watch a game — referee a game. Then I would write an article about it. I tell my kids now I held two jobs while I was going through college.

It was good fun. I think what you learn in college is like Bob said, you're on your own for the first time. You've gotta find a balance in life between responsibility and having fun.

You meet a diverse group of people that — when you're in high school, you have your little clique of friends that you hang out with. When you go to college, you get into fraternity. It's a diverse group that you learn how to socialize with and get along with.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What is your first memory of a horse?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Actually, I think probably when I was three years old falling off a pony that my grandfather had in the backyard of ranch house. It's one of the first ones there.

Then from a racing perspective, 1975, my dad won the first — Quarter Horse triple crown with a horse named Chicks Deck, the Kansas fraternity.

His archrival was a horse named Bugs Alive in '75, which makes it easy to remember that horse went on to win the All American. It was a pretty good rivalry. To me that was the pretty exciting time as an eight or nine-year-old to watch my dad running those kind of races.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** That's big time. 'Cause I was growing up with Quarter Horses, and I remember Chicks Deck and Bugs Alive in '75, 'cause we'd watch the All American.

To me, we were growing up and my dad had this dream of maybe we could raise a Quarter Horse to win the All American and make \$1 million.

That was the whole — the Quarter Horse, if you could — the All American at the time would change people's lives if you could win that. Everybody that won that, \$1 million, it'd be like \$10 million today.

That was the whole — when I tell these stories — he heard me talking about something, 'cause we know a lot of the same people. 'Cause he grew up in New Mexico.

He was on the same — like that Johnny Beans tag shop, everybody would go to buy all your stuff.

I remember my father, he would just — we'd be in Nogales, and he'd wanna — he decided he wanted to train his own little home bred, and on the side, but we'd have to drive to Sunland Park to this tack shop that had everything saddle.

He'd buy like \$2,000 worth of stuff. Stuff we didn't even need, but we just bought it anyway.

We had everything liniments, whatever. Yeah, I remember those. To me, that's how I got involved in it. I was only about 10 years old, 10, 11 years old.

That was his dream, and I just hung — I loved going to — to me, Sunland Park was just huge for me. We'd go there, and then we'd go to the Ruidoso. We'd go watch the All American and come back, and we loaded up the station wagon full of gear, more tack and stuff.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Your mom knew all about you riding races, right?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I wanted to be a jockey really badly. My mother was totally against it, so we couldn't tell her what was going on.

Finally, I had him out in Sonoita, Arizona, which is right down the road from here. She had a friend, her name is Nora Picker, who had jumping horses and — followed everything.

I'll never forget. I was in the bathroom, I was in the showers in there getting ready, and my mother comes knocking on the door. She goes, "Bobby, what's going on?"

I said, "No, I'm just taking a shower." She says, "Is that right? You're a jockey today. You're gonna ride a horse today." He says, "No, of course not. Where'd you hear that?"

She says, "Nora Picker told me, she says, "Tell Bobby good luck today. He's riding a horse."

No, they probably missed, it's my dad's trainee. It's Bill Baffert, B. Baffert that's —

We went up there and — my father and I, we did — we went to a match race one time and he would pick me up.

I was 15 years old. He'd pick me up from high school, and I was riding these match races. That's how I got into it. We went to — it was Tubac Arizona, and it was — I picked up a mount for extra money.

I picked up a mount, if you won, it was \$100 if you — \$50, if you won it was \$200. That was a lot of money for me. I picked up this mount, and I come out of the gate and the horse next to me — I'm in a saddle, in an exercise saddle, and the guy next to me, he's strapped on with the overgirth.

It's like Mexican style with the golf balls that you can't — you're on there, it's like bare back, and so you can't get out. Apparently, the fix was in because the horse that was ran against was — he was a heavy favorite, and my father had bet on my horse.

We leave the gate and this horse just jumps out about a half — three quarters of a length in front. We go about 50 yards, and it's this narrow track and the cars are just lined up on the side, just all lined up.

All of a sudden, he hits his horse and his horse bolts and goes off the track. He's off the track. I'm like, "Well, I guess I won." I look over and the guy is on the other side of the cars still whipping and riding this horse. I'm thinking, "I guess the race is still on." I keep riding. He's way far away it's ridiculous.

I win the race, and I come back. Then the guys, they start in this argument and the guy — I'm all excited, and the guy gives me \$200. Then the guy starts arguing that — 'cause they lost a — they'd bet a lot of money. "No, we have to have a re thing. My horse came off."

The guy starts — they get in a fight, and the guy — they start a little fist fight. One of the guys runs back, and I'm with my father and my uncle that went with us, and a guy brings out a rifle and starts shooting it.

Everybody just scatters. It's crazy. Everybody jumps in their cars and they start leaving. It's a dusty thing.

One of the guys is driving and — I'll never forget, this guy's in the truck leaving, I said, "Dad —" You can't see anything, 'cause of the dust is — "That guy's gonna hit the starting gate. He's running around — he's going fast."

Sure enough, he hit this—bang, guy crashes in there. My dad goes, "Hey, that's the guy that I bet my \$200."

I'll never forget we came out and the guy was — we couldn't run there anymore 'cause the guy ruined the gates, 'cause he ran into 'em.

Everybody left, and I'll never forget we're in the car and my dad says, "Don't you dare tell your mother what happened here today."

That's the way I came up with racing. The different match races we'd go to, and the people we hung out and — I've lived a pretty exciting life.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** For both of you, the common thread is your dad who got you into the sport. Todd, what's the best advice your dad ever gave you?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** There's been so much good advice he's given me so many different times.

I think one thing that he did for me when I was still in high school is, he — I pretty much worked, for him every Summer growing up. He said, "I want you to spend a couple of summers working for some other people and seeing how they do things."

He was very good friends with a guy named Henry Marino who's a trainer in California.

I went out and I spent one Summer with Henry, and it was a great experience. A great guy, very personable guy. Got to see how he did things.

Then the following year, I worked a Summer with Wayne. I actually did my internship when I was here at the University of Arizona with Charlie Whittingham.

One Summer I spent grooming for Charlie at Hollywood Park. I thought that was key advice that he gave me, is you need to get out there and see how other people do things and learn a different perspective.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What did you learn from Charlie at that time? 'Cause at that time it was Murderers' Row.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** It was intimidating walking in there the first day. He had Ferdinand and Judge Angelucci, and all these horses that — I'd read about in the BloodHorse. I didn't really have a position per se.

I remember meeting him the afternoon before and I said, "What time should I be here tomorrow?" His answer was, "Early." I said, "Okay." I got there at 4:15 and he was already there.

He was a terrific guy. Ended up grooming for the Summer, and every morning he'd make his rounds. I'd always try to ask him a question. He was always — would take time to answer me. It was a great routine, great system, and fun to be a part of, fun to watch. It was also fun to watch after I left there what some of the horses did.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob, what's the best advice that your dad gave you that you ignored?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** You know what, he was always telling me to always be prepared no matter what.

Know the answers when you talk to somebody.

That's the way he was, if something was going on — when you go to explain something to somebody, make sure you have all the answers.

When somebody asks you anything about it, you already know that answer. Don't say, "Well, I don't know."

He was very — that's the way he was. He was always thinking, he was always talking to himself.

Thinking what he was gonna say. He's lucky he got to — I never went to work for anybody, and I wish I could have worked for a Charlie, or a Wayne. I tried —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** You would not have lasted with Charlie.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I put in a job for — I remember calling Wayne Lukas. I was coming out of high school, I wanted to go to work for him as a gallop boy at Bay Meadows.

I had all this speech. I wrote it down. I was so nervous, I'll never forget, I wrote down everything I was gonna ask him. I finally got my nerve to call him. He was staying at — I find out what hotel he was staying. I called him, it must have been 1:00 his time in the afternoon, and it dawned on me afterwards that — he's taking a nap. I call Wayne, he answers the phone.

I say, "I'm Bob Baffert, you don't know me. I go to jockeys. I rode a few races, but I wanna learn. I wanna come be an exercise rider for you, gallop boy, work hard and all this."

Instead of saying, "Yeah, it's fine. Yeah, I'm okay. Don't worry." I'll never forget. I was so impressed when I hung up the phone, he said, "Oh, Bob, you know what, I just filled — I needed somebody, and I just filled it a week ago, which is probably a bunch of bs."

He made me feel so good. He said, "You would be perfect. God, I wish you would've called me a couple of weeks ago. You sound perfect for what I need. Maybe down the road, just keep checking."

Then, I finally — when I went out there a year or two later, I saw him out there. I said, "Hey, I'm the guy that called you up."

"Oh really?"

Whatever, he probably got a lot of calls. That would have — I'm glad I didn't do it, because I probably would have lasted a week. He'd be telling everybody, "See, I'm the one that got — I started that boy."

To me, Wayne Lukas has always been — the first time I saw him at Sonoita, Arizona running Quarter horses.

He came in there with these fancy trailers and shiny, and he was training for these — brought all these — there were all these well-bred Quarter horse in these trials.

I remember what he was saying, "Hey, that's Wayne Lukas. He's this guy came in from New Mexico and stuff."

I remember getting up to the fans and I was like, "Wow, that's Wayne." I'm watching some movie star coming in there. He just had a presence about himself, and he changed the game totally.

Number one, he's a great horseman. He knows horses really well. He also brought the professionalism, the business part of it. Was a well-educated guy and brought a lot of — he just changed it completely and for the better.

Then when he went to Thoroughbreds, he did the same thing there. He's lucky, that I wish if I could have worked for Wayne, I really could have jump-started my career.

Working for Charlie, I got to be stable next to Charlie near the end there. I would just bleed him for information every day, just talk to him.

He was just — that guy was — he never complained about anything. He was just straight tough guy.

He loved his horses.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** How did you end up coming to work for Wayne?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Same thing. My dad trained Quarter horses same time Wayne did, so we had a — we'd known him for a long time.

I spent one Summer working for him, and told him that when I graduated, I might be in touch to see if he had anything open.

I kept in contact with him for a while. Then, I think it was probably around the Christmas break, I went out to Santa Anita and met with him, and told him I was gonna graduate in May. He said, "I'll have a position for you, just call me when you graduate, and I'll tell you where to go."

It was a great break for me, because the time when I graduated, I called him, he said, "Why don't you go to New York, and work with my son Jeff?" Jeff was a huge, huge influence on me. A lot of the guys that worked for Wayne, terrific horsemen, strict disciplinarian, terrific teacher and coach.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** More so than Wayne.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** What's that?

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** More so than Wayne?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Oh, yeah. No, if you are on Jeff's good side, you were good in the organization. His attention to detail, and he was a perfect person to learn under.

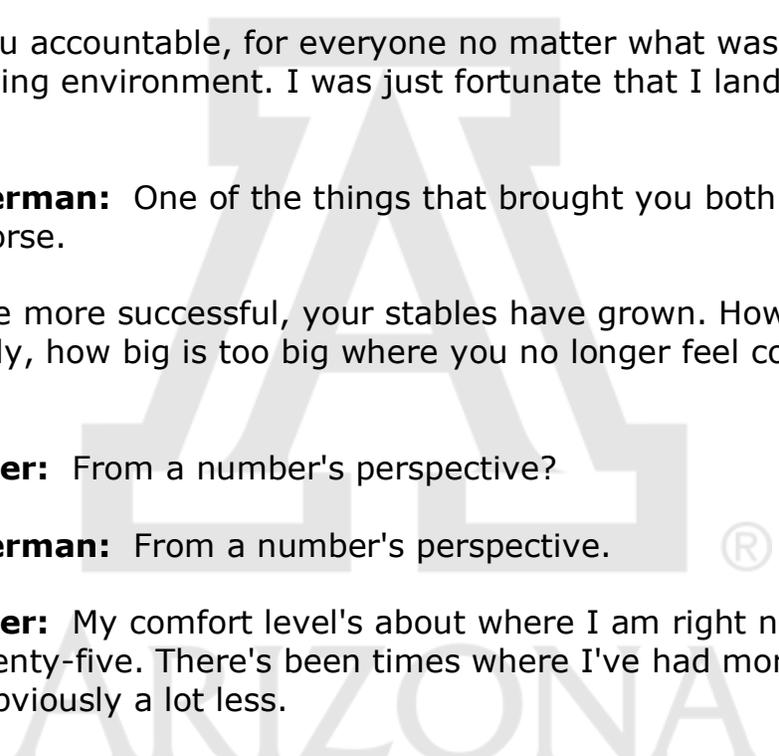
Because if you were the foreman in that barn, you needed to know what every single horse was doing, and every person was doing at all times.

He would hold you accountable, for everyone no matter what was going on. It was a great learning environment. I was just fortunate that I landed in the right spot.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** One of the things that brought you both to this sport is the love of the horse.

As you've become more successful, your stables have grown. How big are they now? Quite frankly, how big is too big where you no longer feel connected to the horses?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** From a number's perspective?

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** From a number's perspective. 

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** My comfort level's about where I am right now, around a hundred and seventy-five. There's been times where I've had more and times where I've had obviously a lot less.

For me, that's a comfortable number that I feel like I can know what each and every horse is doing every day. Having a more widespread out doesn't really appeal to me at this time.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Are you still a guy that likes to go in every day, and put hands on everybody?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I do.

Yeah.

To me, knowing your horses and — especially young horses and developing them, trying to figure out what they want to do, what their potential level is, and hopefully developing some Derby type horses and two-year olds — to me that's the funnest part of it.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** How about you Bob?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Well, I don't — I've never been — my number's always been — I try to keep 50 at Santa Anita, and probably 60 at Los Alamitos, mainly young horses.

The thing about — it's tougher when you're in the East coast, 'cause they're constantly moving.

You have to have numbers, because the thing about the numbers you just — you don't know where that one's going to come from.

You have horses that are — if they have a little problem, we can send them out right away, or give 'em the time.

In California, we have the weather, we don't have to move, or the Santa Anita, we'd go to Del Mar, go to Los Alamitos close by. It's more of a — like if I was back East, I'd need probably more, 'cause there's more space.

You can only expand so much in California. There's so many opportunities when you're on the East coast.

If you have a certain horse they can — you can send 'em to Monmouth Park or if he's not gonna fit in with — here, California, we just — you better be pretty good, because it's really tough, 'cause they're — we're in an island out there.

It's like if you can make it there, you're gonna make it. If they don't work out, Bob — most of my clients I'll tell them, "This is not a California horse."

They'll ship 'em out to another trainer, to Midwest or somewhere where, he can be competitive. 'Cause you want your horse to be competitive.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Let's talk about California in the last 12 months. What have those — what's the last 12 months been like for you?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Well, it's been a little bit — I never thought racing — I never worried about racing that could be — just turn like a strawberry going bad overnight.

Man, it just changed like that, and just in a few months. It was one of those things where not only I was worried about my business in general in California racing, but I was more worried about my employees.

I have all these families, what are we gonna do with them if this doesn't work out. If I'm gonna have to move back. I'm thinking, "Where am I gonna move to?" It was like, that's been going through my mind.

Finally, I think everybody felt that way. At the same time, you have to just plow through it, and worry about what you have right now, and do the best that you can do.

I think it's been an eye opener, for a lot of us that we better do a better job. Everybody's gotta be on board. I think a lot of trainers are watching everybody else.

During the whole time this was happening, I'd be up in the grandstand in the morning, and you've got the guys there that are — maintenance crews are working, they're painting, they're working on the track, whatever. If a horse — if the siren went off and a horse was — got hurt, they were even saying, "That's not good for us." Everybody was worried.

We're at a point where it's like, "Hey, this — bad things can happen to this sport." It was like a wildfire, it got out of control. We didn't know how to put it out. All we did was just point fingers at everybody.

Now I think we've got it a little bit better contained, and then in the outside noise was just horrendous.

Especially with social media now, it's just — before you could — guys in a bar they can be sitting there, and just tweeting out whatever they want and talking about somebody.

The minority noise is getting louder.

I think management was in a tough spot.

It doesn't matter.

There's nothing you can justify, if a horse breaks down, you can't say, "Well — " The story hasn't been told that this does happen in our sport, and nobody wants to tell it unfortunately.

Our own fans they understand.

Amy, the best thing was that Breeders' Cup by having it there. Those stands were full. Full of people that prove that our sport is not as bad as it is — you read about it. Unfortunately, the horse the last day, the last race, and it then in port — he wins —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** That's why I wanted — yeah, I wanted to ask.

You finally got your first classic win, but with a really terrific horse, and a great training comeback job with Vino Rosso.

He was overshadowed with what happened with Mongolian Groom.

How do you rectify that?

How do you justify that?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I don't think you can. I think like Bob was saying, it's a side of the sport that there's no way to defend.

Unfortunately, it happens. We know that it could happen. I think as an industry we're doing better and better of trying to reduce these numbers.

I said afterwards, I think racing a lot of times gets through a crisis and then they coast. This crisis is not over, and we can't coast.

We've gotta keep trying to improve and improve. Honestly, I didn't see that Mongolian Groom had been injured until I was halfway down to the Winner Circle.

It was startling to me when I did hear it for the first time.

For me, I felt bad for Vino Rosso. I felt bad for Mike Repole and his family, and Vinnie Viola and his family that — here's a moment where they're literally winning at the pinnacle of the sport and can't fully embrace it the way that they probably would have had the injury not taken place.

It was bittersweet to win a race, and at the same time feel remorseful, for someone else's horse and the industry itself.

Yeah, it was a little bit frustrating.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** You don't normally race in California, so you were —. Based on the East coast, were you immune to what was happening, and what you were hearing out of California?

Or was the assumption that it was just a California problem or a Santa Anita problem?

Or is there a recognition that this is an industry wide problem?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Oh, I think without a doubt it was — those of us on the East coast were fully aware and equally as concerned as anyone else. I was watching races in California holding my breath hoping that everything would go smoothly.

By no means did I feel like anyone on the East coast was looking at it as a West coast problem. I think everyone was looking at it as an industry problem.

As an industry, we need California to succeed. It's a huge, huge part of American racing. No question in my mind everybody was looking at it as an industry-wide issue.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob, how did this affect your — how did it affect your family?

How did it affect Brody?

You and I have talked several times. I'll tell you, from a personal standpoint, it got to the point where when somebody said, "Oh, where do you work?" There's a pause button.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** No, he's been at school. His teacher, they all watch horses, and they'll mention it to him. He doesn't know what — how to answer it. We are all like that.

What do you — I remember when it first started happening — actually, when they started the count, I think it was 17 or whatever. I didn't even know — as the trainers, we don't — we're not counting. I didn't know it was that many.

Then the count started, and I think it was probably harder on my wife, Jill, because it's something that it's like — she just loves the horses.

When something happens and — she's constantly says, "Please Bob, don't — if you have any — if you ever had that don't — if you have a horse that you just feel just a little bit look at you the wrong way, do not send him out there."

That's extra pressure on everybody. Because sometimes you can miss something and they can look fine, and it happens and you're like, "Oh, how did I — " It beats us up.

I think everybody — the whole backside of — morale, it's still — it's just everybody's like — every time that horn would go off. I keep telling 'em to change the horn, make bells, or something.

That horn, everybody was — the anxiety was just — still there the anxiety. It takes the fun out of the racing.

Racing's supposed to be fun, the owners come out. You go over there like he won the Breeders' cup, that Vino just ran unbelievable race.

I go down there and I ran second, but I just — I got outran. I go down there and they're — the first question they asked me is, "What do you think of Mongolian Groom?"

I go, "I don't know. Did he run third?" I didn't know, and they told me that he got hurt. I go, "Oh really?" 'Cause Santa Anita everybody works so hard, and they have the bets, and they have everything. It's the last race.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Let's talk about the reforms that have been put in place. One of the things that was put in place is you now have to apply to work to train — you have to apply to work. How it has that impacted you barn?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I think the reforms — I think we — well, it was a lot of knee jerk reaction. I think a lot of it was overboard.

I think that — I think the main thing is it was a wakeup with trainers. "Hey, you better go over that horse."

Our veterinarians we have, we go over thorough. If I have a horse, I'll get there in the morning, I'm gonna breeze a horse, or something. The guy will say, "You know what, one of my — "

I get the report every morning, "So-and-so has this so-and-so has that. We better not work him, he doesn't — "

That's it.

We have our own reforms.

That was just to make sure everybody was on the same page. At the end of the day, I think the surface was probably the main thing. It was deep. I've never seen the track so deep when we came back last year.

They just kept adding more sand, more sand, and every time a horse got hurt, they just add more sand. That was the — we got to slow it down.

That's why I say, racing, we need more science in the dirt. We don't have that. We've got guys that are great track men, but they really — it's like sometimes when they mix their — it's like soup.

They add a little this, they add a little that, there's no real science to it. We need to — the deeper it got — when a horse gets fatigued, that's when they start getting hurt.

They might hurt the back and the front, and they get off the back the front. A lot of it is the — it was getting deep tiring in the horses. I remember having Johnny V when he came out to ride, he said, "Well, how's the track feel?" I said, "Man, it's different. It's deep.

They go in and they have to work out. They're not going over the top of it to make it — "

If you talk to somebody, and you talk to the track guys, and say, "You know what? I think it's too..." What's happened is that in the sport, in a lot of sports, you become so successful in something.

If I say something, they say, "Well, Baffert doesn't like it. He likes it fast."

We're not gonna do it for him. I want it for everybody. I want everybody to have it safe. The thing is that these horses, when they get fatigued, that's when they get hurt.

They're working on it now, but it's still — I think it was the depth of the track. It was deep. If you could — on the Friday of the Breeders' Cup, it was really ridiculously deep.

That's not good for horse racing. 'Cause these horses, they struggle. They weren't finishing. Los Alamitos, it's a faster — they run fast, but they can come from off, they can come from last.

They can come — they get over it and they come back, they're not really that tired, but they've — good horses run there.

They have to — we have to find that little — I'm not a track guy, and that's the first thing I told these guys. "I'm not a track guy."

They say, "Thank you Bob."

I say, "I can tell you, and he can tell you that my horses are not traveling well over this track. They're having trouble with it. We've got the best horses in the world; they can't even break a minute in the morning.

They're struggling, they come back like it's the first work they've ever had." It's like you train in — if you've got athletes and you said, "We're gonna go to the beach, but you're not gonna train near the water.

You're gonna train in the heavy stuff and run on that."

Eventually, it wears the body out. I think that's what a lot of it — then we had all those rains. When it dries out, that's when to me — that's when I felt — I didn't have any issues last year, I would knock on wood.

We learned to — well, I'm gonna wait a couple more days. I'm going to let it dry out really well. As a trainer, that's what we're supposed to do. You're supposed to go out there, and a lot of guys they just feel like they've got to win.

Unfortunately, I think now — I think everybody's on the same page now.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Todd, you've been — another issue, Lasix, you've been fairly outspoken about your thoughts about Lasix.

What are they for the record? How do you think that that plays into moving forward?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, I just think from a public perception standpoint, we have to get to a no race day medication policy.

Lasix is the final issue that everyone's very divisive on. I can see the pros and cons from the horse's perspective, from the owner's perspective, from the trainer's perspective.

I think from the standpoint of the right look for racing is no race day medication is the way we need to go. It'll be complicated for a while, I think, until everyone figures out what a program — new program can be put in place.

I think there's some solid research out there suggesting maybe the 24-hour Lasix is potentially beneficial. There's no question we scope every horse after every breeze and every horse after every race. A lot of horses bleed, and a lot of 'em bleed after they leave the Winners Circle.

I think deciding which ones are truly affected by it is also another issue. I just think that when things happen like what has happened over the last year, if we don't have that defense of, we don't medicate our horses for races, I think we're putting ourselves in a really compromising position.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Is this a guns or abortion issue where you're never gonna get everybody underneath the same tent?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** No question. I don't think you're gonna satisfy anything — everyone, no matter what you do.

Especially in the horse industry, anytime I've ever been asked to sit in on a trainer's panel or — you can get 10 guys in the room and have 11 different opinions. It's just so.

I think we have to look at it what's best for horse racing.

I think no race day medication is where we need to be.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What do you think Bob?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I am so tired of hearing about it. I'm like, "Get rid of it." It's one of those things where — I really think if you have a really true bleeder, he's gonna bleed.

I've had horses that once they bleed out their nostril, you better turn them out. The thing is I always worry about and he probably worries about, I said, "I just hope I have somebody to run against." 'Cause I worry about the littler outfits and stuff.

That's the only thing I had against it.

Well, to me, I wish they would've just gotten rid of it in turf racing first. In Europe they don't use it on turf, 'cause I think turf racing probably — you don't probably need as well, because you're not getting any kickback.

Where dirt, they're running fast, they're getting kickback. It's getting in their in their face and their nose.

I've gotten to the point where if it's gone — I grew up in Arizona riding horses here before I went to — we didn't, have Bute or Lasix.

I learned without meds. It's not like — sometimes it can be a crutch.

I remember when — Santa Anita, when we were sitting in all those meetings. You're in there, and we're trying to figure out — I said, "Well, let's get rid of Bute. Let's go 48 hours with the Bute, and let's drop Lasix to 5cc."

Man, I got some trainers that were mad at me.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** You told at the time that you usually give three and a half cc anyway.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I give three. I don't give that much Lasix. I did the preventing. I had guys calling me, he says — I didn't even know they gave 10cc. Guys were giving 10cc. It's one of those things —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** I'm not a trainer obviously, but your phrase when you and I had, and we're not going to talk about who it was discussion, but you said at 10ccs you're liable to only have lactic acid and hair.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Yeah, I didn't really — I've never given a horse 10cc. I think in racing we're — as trainers, and I've been in the same boat, you hear, "Well, so and so's doing this, they're doing that." Then you start doing that. Well, he's doing this. That's the way it works.

I really think that once we get — at 48 hours the Bute doesn't make a difference. At least it — they do it in New York. It works there. I've never had a problem there.

To me, in racing I'd like to see Clenbuterol go away. I think that's a problem. I think when that came around, that was the start of the super trainer. I know at Los Alamitos the Quarter Horse guy, finally Dr. Allred, he finally just got rid of it.

They test their hair, and if they have it, within six months those guys are gone. I think Clenbuterol and — when it came out, well, it's a good drug if they get sick, but you know what that should be really — that should be out.

I think to me that — that's where guys they know how to work the system there, and Clenbuterol, Albuterol, all that stuff. You see it coming up over and over, but I really think that should be —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Well, another medication you guys spend a tremendous amount of money with clients each year buying yearlings, the bisphosphonate issue.

How concerned are you about that medication and horses in horses that you're buying? Not that you've given 'em, but they have been given.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I think it's extremely concerning because first of all, you're in a lot of cases getting a horse that you didn't know that this was administered to.

From my understanding, this is a medication that's beneficial to horses that are at least four years old.

Also, from what I understand, it can alter the way that radiographs look in a pre-purchase situation.

To me, something like that is potentially very harmful, because Bob might be getting a two-year-old in that he doesn't know has been administered this, might not be showing some of the warning signs that need to be backed off. Potentially have a horse get injured like that.

One of the points that I tried to make a couple of weeks ago or after the Breeders' Cup was, everyone's for transparency, and Bob and I and the other trainers are the end users and ultimately, we are responsible when the horses go out there and get injured.

The transparency needs to start way before that, when the horses are bred, when they're born, when they're foal, when they're raised, when they're weaned, when they're yearlings, when they're two-year-old and training sales.

We're the guys taking the inherent risk at the end of the day, because we're the ones putting 'em on the track. If a lot of things have been done to some of these horses that we're not aware of, we might not be in a position where we can make the right decisions. I'm all for transparency, but it needs to start at the beginning.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Are you more likely a buyer if a consigner has said this horse has never been given bisphosphonates?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I would certainly be more confident in buying one. At the same time, I think that was a wakeup call for the industry.

A lot of guys that — I don't think they were giving bisphosphonates thinking, "This is potentially going to be a long-term problem."

I just don't think they had enough information, and sometimes something, "Oh, this works, start using it." They don't really have enough information.

They haven't seen enough horses administered it to know what potentially some of the harmful effects could be.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I didn't even know what it was until a few months ago when I started — when it came out.

I read about it and I didn't — I asked my vet, he said, "Yeah, but we don't use it. It's for older horses, for the jumping people in the show horse industry, I'll use it."

Then you got to thinking, and I said, "Well, wait a minute, what if they are — we were probably — some of these guys and two-year-olds in training were probably given it, or whatever."

Then you read about it, it sounds like very sinister. Unlike him, they probably didn't realize how much damage it really is. They probably thought, "Hey, if you give it, it will help fill in the sesamoids."

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Right.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I was reading about it. It fills up the — it's bone, but it's really not bone. You read that and wow, this is pretty — this is not cool.

It's tough, but there's so much money now involved in this — in the selling. All the money's in the sale ring right now.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Is the model — is racing's model broken? Do we now race to breed as opposed to breed to race?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Well, a lot of people they raise these horses, and then got to get 'em — once they get 'em to the — they wanna get their — they bake their pie, they sell it and then they don't wanna eat any of the pie afterwards.

It's one of those things where — we get 'em and then all of a sudden something happens and we're responsible. We're like, "How did that happen?"

Well, it could have happened this horse might have had something, and finally it gave.

I've seen horses out there and — a lot of these horses that I've had that got hurt they'd never been injected in the joint. They would talk about this and — or the shockwave.

There's another thing, the shockwave gets a bad rap. First of all, the shockwave, that's a bad name for that machine. It should have never been named that. It should have been named something.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob, what would you name it?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** It should have been named like the stimulator, bone stimulator, or whatever. It's good for if you want to heal — if have shins, or high suspensories. It's not for — you don't wanna use it then run a horse three days later, whatever it is. If we use it, we use it as a — to help heal the horse.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Is it a 30 day stand down in your mind?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Yeah, 30 days or whatever. I think it's within three days, or four days, it's — doesn't have any effect.

In California, it's 10 days or whatever. The sound of it sounds horrible, shockwave. It gets a bad rep, but it's actually — I use it if you have horses with — especially on a deep track, you get little high suspensories that are minor, but it's — before we used to paint 'em and blister 'em.

Now you don't have to do that, with a shockwave, you shockwave 'em, and rings stimulates the area and that's — I t's all what it does. It does have, I guess, a numbing effect, but I've — it's supposed to last, I dunno, 72 hours, whatever it is like that, but there's things out there that people just throw out there.

Well, you've seen a horse, well, he got hurt, but eight months ago they shock waved him. He must've had an issue. Like Joe Biden says, a lot of malarkey. It's got a — he might've had his shin or something. It's anything, but we just have to define those things a lot better.

Because what happened at San Anita when things went bad, everything was pointing to the drugs, the this, whatever. At the end of the day, it's the surface is the — was the main — it's like a little leak in the boat, and we have to stop that leak.

We need to concentrate on better racing surface, dirt surface. Right away they go, "Well, we better go to synthetic. Then the synthetic comes up again." Well, synthetic, it's nice to train on and everything.

Probably should be on training tracks especially during the winter season or when it rains. It's an even surface. Right now, we're just — we just want something to work, and we got our work cut out for us.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** We do. Different topic, better topic. Sometimes do you guys become a victim of your own success?

If you win four races in a day, Todd, are you — when you go home, are you thinking about the one that you didn't win?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Yeah, I'm guilty of that. Always trying to figure out the ones that didn't go the way we had hoped.

I think that's probably the case with anyone who's trying to be successful in whatever endeavor they're doing. If you're not always striving to do better, then you're probably not gonna meet your expectations hopefully at the end of the day.

I think that's the one thing I try to check myself every once in a while. It always sit back and try to try to appreciate the good times.

I think that's the way I'm wired. I'm always thinking about the one that I messed up.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What is the one training job you would like to have had back?

Not that you are blaming the rider or the way the race's set up. What's the one horse or the one race you would have liked to have said, "If I did this a little bit differently"?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** This thing ends at 9.30.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Don't worry, 'cause he's gotta go again, he's gotta go too.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Yeah.

I can't tell you one specific one that I thought I really necessarily screwed up.

I think one thing that I can improve on is sometimes I get locked in on a race and try to make sure that I have the horse ready to go.

I'm horrible about scratching. When I get a horse in, sometimes I look at a race and say, "Man, I know this isn't the right spot, but there's only one way to prove it and that's go over there and not win." I can't think of one specific horse or race that I wish I had to do over.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What's your do over?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** American Pharoah in the Travers. I beat myself up for that. I didn't do a very good job. I wasn't planning on running there. Then at the last

minute we ran, and when I got — I've never been so overwhelmed the day before when I went to train that horse, it was like I really — I said, "Man," I didn't realize how big it was, and the place was filled.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** With 20,000 people show up to watch and gamble.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I was like, "Man, I hope I don't mess this thing up."

Going in, I was a little bit like, "You know what? I didn't really — " That's the one — we lost focus.

You get on this run and you've got this great horse, and pretty soon you get to the point where it doesn't matter what I do, he's just so good, he's gonna win. I just wish I could redo that, because I felt like I let the whole town down and then — when he got beat that day, when the horse —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Would you have trained him differently or would you have not run him there?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I would have trained him differently. I came back, and I wasn't going to do anything with him. Or else I could have just taken him up there.

I would have trained them a little bit differently, and then all of a sudden, I wasn't going to go. I rushed him a little bit to go. When he got there — the day before he trained, we usually train him early in the morning so he wouldn't get worked up.

We trained during the special break and all the people were out there. I made a mistake and I sent him with a pony. I told the rider, whatever you do, just don't go too fast.

I sent him with Jimmy with the pony. When I took him, he thought — every time we had a pony with him, that's when he breezed. He thought he was gonna work. He went really fast around there. He was just — I was so mad at the rider kept him, and he jerked.

The riders, they're like primadonna's, he jerked the stirrups up, he had the camera on his head. It was just too much showboating. When I got back, he looked unbelievable. If the race would have been that day, he would've won. He took too much out.

He came back and he was really blowing. He was actually courted up. He was blowing hard. He was drinking a lot of water, and it was like — I didn't feel good about that.

When I went to saddle him the next day, I could tell he was like — I told Victor, I said, "Victor, you're gonna have to help me out here man. This guy is — he's not — " I can tell, as a trainer, you can tell when you're putting the saddle on 'em, if they're — "man, he's on."

Sometimes you're putting the saddle on 'em, they're like — they got this little look in their eye like they're, "Ah." I go, "Oh man, this is not — " You have that feeling like, "Oh, this is not good."

Because my wife always says, "What did you think? How did he look?"

"I don't know. He's a little quiet."

Sometimes they run well, but I was really leaking badly that day. I was afraid and — he ran one of the toughest — he was completely empty at the top of the stretch, empty as he could be, and he still almost pulled it off. The great ones do that.

He gutted it out, but it was so disappointing. I felt bad for the Keen Ice Crew, 'cause they'd won, and we were sitting down. They wanted to talk to me first.

We're explaining to it, and we all felt horrible. All of a sudden, I see Keen Ice owner Jerry, and he's standing there. I said, "Jerry, I think I'm sitting in your seat. You need to be sitting here, 'cause you won the — you guys won the race and you sit here."

I get up and I walk away. Everybody gets up and follows me. It was like they couldn't really enjoy it, 'cause it was all about the — Todd wins the Breeders' Cup classic and then that tragedy happens, and it just — it takes away and the horse — by the way, you did a tremendous job with that horse.

When I saw Vino show up the first day at Santa Anita, I said, "Oh shit."

Man, he looks good. It was one of those things where you — 'cause I like to look at all the horses — we knew it's — it's Vino and him, it's — I figured it's gonna come down to those two.

All in all it was still — as a trainer, I feel we — I feel good when — if my horse shows up, if he runs or gets beat, as long as they show up, we just want 'em to turn for home, and they're there they're trying to run.

That's all you can ask for as a trainer. Sometimes they, do and sometimes they don't.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** You once told me that your job as a trainer is to, at the quarter pole, the Kentucky Derby, and I'm sure it's exactly the same for you, give everybody a chance to believe that they can win it.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Yes, you wanna see 'em running, when they quit running — that's why everybody is, "Why do you watch the race in the paddock?" Because —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Close to the exit.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** It's close right to the exit. I go right to my car and I'll just talk to the jockey later on, and just get out there and go.

Everybody thinks I'm kidding, but I don't, I just — we leave immediately. I just cut out that door, and I'm out of there.

It's something that the — racing is just where I'm so fortunate that I found something that I loved to do, and I was able to do it. I've met a lot of good people. I've had a lot of — every once in a while, I love YouTube. I can go back there when I'm feeling down and watch all these old races.

Todd has been unbelievable. He came up and his earning record is — it's untouchable.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What is your favorite memory Todd?

What is your best day?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** My most fun win for me was Rags to Riches win in the Belmont.

I think part of it was the fact that it was — she was a filly and winning the Belmont for the first time for a filly in over a hundred years. Part of it was it was my first classic win.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** It's the most animated I have ever seen you.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Literally for three or four weeks we were undecided about what we were gonna do, whether or not we were going to run her.

After the Preakness we started to look at it and she was training fantastic. As soon as the gates open and she went to her nose, I said, "Dang, why'd you run her?" She crept back into position and I said, "Wow, maybe we still have a shot."

Then, at the top of the stretch she got to Curlin. I don't think you can have one race where as many emotions go through your mind is during that race from the beginning, the stretch-long duel. Where it looked like she was gonna win, it looked like Curlin was gonna come back.

It was just — many different things going through your mind and in less than two and a half minutes that — even to today, I haven't had so many people tell me how much fun they had watching a race.

When you'd go to the airports or whatever and people would come up to you and say, "I was standing on my couch rooting for the filly." That's still the most fun for me.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** For a guy who generally does things by the book to run a filly in a mile and a half race, that was a definite step outside of a comfort zone.

That was a different move.

What led you or how did she lead you to putting her in the starting gate?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, first of all, she was exceptionally good. She was enormously talented. She was really bred for the Belmont.

She was by A.P. Indy and she was a half-sister to a horse that has won the Belmont. If you look at her pedigree, there's just Belmont winners all through it. At the end of the day, I think to win the Belmont, you need a horse that wants to stay the trip, one that will turn off early.

You can't have one that's gonna be headstrong and pull in the first part of the race. She was a tremendous galloper. She fit all the criteria. It was just a matter of is a filly capable of, at a mile and a half, competing against what — that an exceptionally strong crop of three-year-olds.

Street Sense was dominant.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** That was a pretty ballsy move just to have her there.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I think when the Street Sense decided not to go, he said, "We're willing to take on Hard Spun and Curlin. Are we willing to take on Street Sense also?"

When he decided not to go, we felt like maybe that was the — a little bit of opening that we were looking for.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** A little bit of Wayne Lukas training to run the fillies against the colts.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Exactly. It's his first derby win.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I got a question for you. How have you stayed married to Johnny V so long? I go through jockeys like Elizabeth Taylor with her husbands.

That's quite a team there.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Johnny's a terrific person to begin with. He's ultra-consistent. For what we do, it's demanding. You show up every day and the ups and downs of the game, but sometimes you forget from a jockey's perspective they're involved in the same thing.

To ride at a high level, basically the whole year now. These guys will take a short vacation here and there, but to compete at a high level and be on all the time.

He's the most consistent guy I've seen. He's completely reliable, and he shows up, gives you 110 percent every time. I think we're all gonna make some errors, but usually his are minimal, and his intentions are right.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** You talked about being married to people for a long time. You've been married to Jimmy for a long time. Even married, you've got assistants for a long time. What is the key to keeping a good assistant around?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I think from an assistant standpoint, they enjoy working around good horses.

I think that's what drives us all, is that hope of finding that next good horse, and competing in some of these big races.

I think I've been fortunate, a lot of the guys that work with us, guys and girls, have been with us a long time. I think they appreciate a good work environment, a consistent routine, and working with quality people and quality horses.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What goals do you have left?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** I don't really point towards — I think this is a difficult business to be in and say, "I wanna win this number of Kentucky Derbies," or "I wanna win this much purse money or this many races."

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** When you start the year there's a day or two or three or something that's always circled on the calendar, what is it for you?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, I think we all start the year looking at do we have a Derby horse?

Is there potentially a horse that could get you there? What's so great about the Derby itself is, there's so many great opportunities leading up to it.

Literally, every weekend starting in February, there'll be a race at Oaklawn or the Fairgrounds, or Gulf Stream or what have you that are significant races, stallion-making races in their own right.

It's always a fun time of the year.

I think Derby season's probably the most fun.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Do you have something under the radar you're looking forward to?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Hopefully.

They're definitely under the radar.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I've never really had any goals. Every year —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Yeah, your goal was to make sure mom didn't find out about riding.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I've always just been — I'm just waiting if I've been — who's gonna be the next big horse in the barn.

These two-year olds, I think, watching these two-year olds. I've always loved the young horses develop, and you're hoping who's gonna be — will I have another good one. I remember when American Pharoah retired, it was so — I went through a two months depression.

Because you go through this whirlwind, the Triple Crown and all this attention, and all of a sudden, it's just gone. You're really just like, "What else? What can be better?"

It took a little while, then all of a sudden here come Arrogate. He hits the scene.

We're always looking for that, who is gonna come, and take that next spot in — you're watching these horses develop.

To me, we're always looking like, "Is this the one?" Or else I'll think one is the one, and then Jill would say, "I think you're a little bit too high on that horse." She'll pull me up. I'm not at Gary Stevens mode yet where the last — the last one he rode is the best he ever rode.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Is the best he's ever rode.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I'm getting to that age now where I feel that way, but I really feel that — Todd's the same way, we just want — is there going to be a superstar?

We're waiting on a superstar to emerge from out of the pack. That's what we live for. I don't take any vacations, but I just feel like I'm on vacation all the time.

When I run a horse out of town, when we ran Justify the Triple Crown or American Pharoah, that was our vacation.

You bring the family, and you enjoy it. Those are memories that I'll always cherish. We'd get to the Belmont, Triple Crown, the whole family comes in and watches. When it works out, it's great.

Horses bring people together, especially good horses. They bring everybody together.

Your family, everybody, the owner, you get close to the owners of the horses, and they get close. When you have a good Derby horse. You have a lot of friends. I start getting calls, "Hey Bob."

One thing though, my family, they've gotten very good, I know about yours, at reading the form.

Because if I have a Derby horse, it looks a little bit shaky, they call me up, my siblings, they call me and say, "Bob, we can't make it this year. We got a lot going on. You're on your own."

We bought War Emblem a month out. I said, "I think I got. Oh, it's okay, nobody showed up." "We're gonna go."

It's really fun, especially when my parents were around, it was so much fun. That's the only — the sad part is that they weren't there to enjoy the Triple Crown.

I wish they were there, and it was very emotional for me. These horses, they bring so much joy. That's why when things don't go right, and if they get hurt, it's just — it really affects us.

They don't realize the hurt when there's nothing worse than going to the barn the next day and that stall is empty. It's just terrible. I think right now — I think racing, I can see — I think the Breeders' Cup was great momentum to get things back.

The place was filled. People showed up. If nobody showed up, if it would've been empty or they don't wanna go anymore, that would've really hurt.

To me, it felt like Santa Anita did a great job. We all pulled together, and we all threw in — we put our egos on the side, let these veterinarians — "We don't trust you, but we're gonna double check your horse." "Hey, go ahead, check 'em out."

We welcomed that. I think there's a big change there now. We just gotta march forward, and keep it going.

**Ms. Any Zimmerman:** Todd, Bob mentioned family, how hard is this on your family?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** From just —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Just from being a trainer.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, it's such a time consuming, and I've always said it's more of a way of a lot — way of life than an occupation.

I think and the cool thing about it is that your family can really participate. Now that my kids are older, and they're out working at Saratoga during the summers, and can share the big moments, come to the big races, and be a part of that.

There's a lot of sacrifice, but there's also a lot of reward at the other side that would be unique to this business as opposed to maybe a corporate executive who's going in and working nine to five.

Maybe their family's not really knowing what really goes into it and being able to participate in and go to the races and stuff. I think it's — it has its checks and balances.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Do they have a desire to follow you in the business?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, actually, one sort of the disturbing things to me about the last nine or 10 months or years, my oldest son, Peyton's at Texas A&M right now.

He's in the equine program there. For the most part, he's wanted to train horses for a long time.

I think the last year has been where's the industry going? What kind of opportunities are gonna be there? I think it was something that he and I talked about a lot. I've honestly never encouraged him to train horses. I've never told him that I thought it was a bad idea, and if he decides that that's what he wants to do I'd fully endorse it.

I think it's given him cause for concern to see where the industry's going, and maybe he's considering vet school now a little more than he was.

Yeah.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Small animal?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Nine to five small animal, yeah. Yeah, that was an internal thing for my family that was directly impacted by the ongoing horse issues.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** When he asks for advice, what do you tell him?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, I tell him — the one thing that I tell him, and Bob spoke about this earlier. Whatever you do, do something that you're passionate about, something that you love and something you enjoy, and then the rest will fall into place.

If training is what you decide you wanna do, then go out at full speed ahead. You also have time to make a decision. I think as a young person, and I know I was guilty of this, you leave college and you just — you want everything to happen right away. That's a good thing to want that. Sometimes you look back now and say, "Man, it wasn't quite as timely as I thought it was back then."

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Bob, what about you? If Bode or Forest or Canyon or said the same.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** I would never encourage training, only because there's too many disappointments in the game. It's a lot of disappointments. You have to have the right — you have to be right mentally.

I don't think he would have that. Like Jill, he's has a lot of his mother in him where he's just, it would bother him. When he hears things, it bothers him — I think to be a trainer —

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** By the way, it bothers you too.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Yeah.

You have to have a certain mental — the way you are very — more of a laid back — you gotta handle a lot of — you're gonna be handling a lot of bad news, and it's a lot of disappointments, because of all the losses.

Every day we might think, "Oh, he's doing great." We don't have a good day ever. There's always something, somebody sick, or something going on.

We really don't want to encourage that. Plus, he's never really been — he wants to be a weatherman. He's always been — he likes weather, and he can tell you everything about weather.

He watches TV shows about weather, and that's all he — he's a weather guy. He's never showed me that he's a horse guy ever.

He's never wanted to hold a horse. He's never wanted to do anything. He likes the horses, but he likes the — he likes the big races. He's always asking me, "Dad, who do you like?"

He's getting to that age, and he gets interested. It's fun that he's at the age now where he's really getting into it.

He's very spoiled.

We want him to — he's seen all these big horses, American Pharoah, Justify — I have been though that role. It's really these good horses I got to enjoy with my older kids too. 'Cause they were during — I was working so hard in the Quarter Horse business at night, I never really had — been around there for 'em.

Because this game it just takes all your time. You have to, if you wanna stay at that level — I would love to take a week off and go to Europe or something, but you just can't because you just — you're always worried about — I've always been a control freak kind of guy, and so — yet I have a great staff. I got Jimmy and everything, but still at the end of the day, you just want to be right on top of it.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Charlie Whittingham used to say, "I'll take a vacation when I'm dead."

Last question to both of you, Bob, we've talked about this before, but what is it that you love about horses?

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** Well, you've asked me that before. What really got me when I was little, I would smell their noses, their nuzzle there. I love that smell. That's what really got me. There's a certain smell. It's corny, but I just loved that smell. I just fell in love with 'em and at a young age. I've always told everybody that once racing gets in your blood, there's no rehab to get it out.

You have to die.

That's what people think.

How can you just work seven days a week and just be so — it's just they're noble, they're great companions. I used to love riding them. I grew up on a ranch, so I'd get home after school, saddle my horse, and just ride for hours and hours. To me, it was like going snow skiing, because you've got to concentrate on your horse.

You're not thinking about anything else.

Just to think how it was in the old West. Imagine traveling on horseback. I've always considered myself just a horse lover, Western type.

I got involved with Quarter Horses, and I really didn't like Thoroughbreds when I was growing up. I watch them on television and all that, but I never dreamt that I would be a Thoroughbred trainer being — it was just something that wasn't even on my radar. To be in this position, I still every once in a while, I just have to pinch myself. Like, "Man, I've done really all this. Here we are, and I got to go to the most beautiful school in the United States, U of A."

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** What is it about horses that you love?

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Well, there's a lot of things I love about horses, everything good in my life since childhood has been because of horses.

The thing that I love more than anything is the constant challenge of trying to figure out horses.

I love going to the sales.

I love judging confirmation.

I feel like it's the ultimate puzzle challenge, because no matter how many good horses you see, and no matter how many you're around, no matter how many sales you go to, there's a constant learning curve, and you trying to improve that.

That's one of the things that I really enjoy.

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** Thank you both very much.

**Mr. Todd Pletcher:** Thank you.

**Mr. Bob Baffert:** We're done?

**Ms. Amy Zimmerman:** We're done.

