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An interview with:

D. WAYNE LUKAS GARY STEVENS

THE MODERATOR: We're going to wait for Gary Stevens to get started. Wayne is here. Wayne, congratulations. Number 6, we'll make it official in a minute, but congratulations. Let's wait for Gary.

D. WAYNE LUKAS: I'm in no hurry. It's going to be a long night.

THE MODERATOR: Erin Kelly of Calumet, Brad Kelly's daughter, who accepted the trophy just a few minutes ago does not want to come out and actually answer questions in this setting. I think what she said up there probably will have to do for now unless some of you guys can get her. But as soon as Gary comes in, we'll get started.

Again if you don't know, Gary won his third Preakness: Point Given, Silver Charm, and now Oxbow. This is Wayne's sixth. Codex in 1980, Tank's Prospect in '85, then Tabasco Cat, Timber Country and Charismatic and now Oxbow.

And for Calumet, I believe it's number eight. And among the winners that they have brought here to Baltimore, Forward Pass was the last in 1968 and now Oxbow.

We're going to also take some questions upstairs. Joe Gordon's standing by in the press box upstairs as well. We'll get started, Wayne, if you're okay with that.

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Yes, I am.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Well, it's getting tougher, because we're getting larger fields and there are preparations leading up to these classics are so much tougher now. Back in the '50s and so forth, when it was eight, nine head in the Derby and so forth, it wasn't so hard to maybe come in.

In all fairness to the horses that were in the Derby, they came up a hard 20-horse field in the off going, and then to come back here in two weeks, that makes it tougher. If they can run in six or eight-head fields or ten-horse fields in the Derby and then roll in here, it's going to make it easier. So it's going to be tougher all the time.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Well, I left it up to Gary. Let me say, this I think I got a Hall of Fame ride. I think we can plan this thing, we can talk about it, we can talk about strategy. But once that gate is open, they have to make decisions. Gary made some great ones. He really -- I told him, if you get on the lead, get into that cruising speed and just let it happen. Actually, we thought that maybe that Goldencents and a couple of those other horses might show a little bit more speed and we would not inherit the lead as easily as we did today. Gary was smart enough. When he threw up the 1:13 and change, I knew we were in good shape. We weren't totally confident. But I knew the way this horse cruises and gets into stride, you could see how relaxed and how easy he was getting over that ground on the backside. I said, this isn't over by a long shot. We're going to be tough.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Very confident. I thought he had the best day of the spring yesterday. The gallop boy that gallop's him all the time was on him the same. And I said that is the best he ever looked. He just seemed like he was in the zone, relaxed, got over the track. He can get aggressive in the morning. He's not an easy horse to train at all. He's so aggressive. You think you're doing too much every single day with him, but the good ones sometimes do that.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to have to repeat the questions for everybody upstairs.

Q. Neither you nor Gary were happy with ride in the Arkansas Derby. What has happened since then?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Well, in all fairness to Gary, this horse is very difficult to ride unless you've been on him and you get to read him a little bit. When he got in the Arkansas Derby, of course, he got wide and Gary rightly so thought we were going to be way out there, so he took ahold of him.

This horse just doesn't want that. He wants to be left alone, and so we learned so much from that. You never know from racing. I learned about the horse. I learned a little bit more about training him, and that race may have made it a lot better for us to go into the Kentucky Derby and certainly today.

Q. Is there anyway, Wayne, to compare this one to the other five?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: They're all special because they were all with a different client. That is the thing. The key, if you're training horses, try to win one every once in a while for a new guy. We've got a new guy in Brad Kelly at Calumet, and that is just the good economics of it. You give that guy that special moment to stand up there with his daughter and to know that he was watching at home and put Calumet, who we all know that name, back on the front pages of the racing publications is very special. I'm so happy for him just to have the opportunity to represent him.

Q. Did you expect Orb to make a charge at the end and he just didn't, or did you just out run him?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Yes, I really did. I made a comment to some of my colleagues. I said, if Orb gets clear on the outside at the half-mile pole, in fact I told the Lieutenant Governor that right before the race, I said I don't think anybody can beat him before the race.

I thought that-- when Gary turned the corner and we got that little bit of spurt on the lead change, then I got to feeling pretty comfortable. Of Course, I'm not watching Orb at that point. I'm trying to find Will Take Charge and Titledown Five and see how this thing's unfolding after they hit the 3/16 pole. I only watched one.

Q. It's been a while since you've won a Triple Crown race. What does it feel like?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: People asked me that there and you guys have been asking me all week. I thought I did. The thing about it is you get up every day and look for that one that you maybe can do something. But as long as we've got something to work with, we're going to be around.

I think that we're not through by a long way here. I feel like we can get up and maybe get another one someplace down the line.

But that's what makes it so interesting. You have to have a passion for it. It's not a 9:00 to 5:00 job. Is this a bad -- listen what happened? I run last in the first horse I started. The second one doesn't even finish the race. How is that to start your day? Then all of a sudden, I run a grass race and I win the Preakness. What a roller coaster. I mean, that is the nature of our game.

Q. Did you hear Bob Baffert thought you would appreciate this one more than your first one. Do you?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Yes, yes, definitely. At 77, I do, yes. The first one I thought I was going to win quite a few more. I ran the first Classic I ever ran in was Codex right here. I told my son, this is no big deal. We'll win a bunch of these, and then I went ten years before I got another one. Bob's a good friend, and a meant a lot to me to have him come down all wait from where he was and congratulate me. I called him this week at home. He was on the fence maybe he'd even run here. And I said, Bob, get on an airplane and come back. You need to be here. We'll have some fun.

So what does he do? He comes back, wins the Black-Eyed Susan, wins the Sprint. He didn't get this one, but he had a hell of a day.

Q. Are you going to go to the Belmont?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Well, one of the things that really Gary and I were talking about that really impressed us was he was not even blowing when he was walked in the winner circle. You guys are pretty astute. I don't know if you noticed that, but he didn't hardly turn a hair, and he showed no stress lines whatsoever, nothing, so a mile-and-a-half.

Frank Stronach says he can run that far. Of course he owns the sire. But we haven't had a chance to cool him out yet and I've got to talk to Mr. Kelly. But you know me, I like to rack them up in the big events. So I'll probably go.

Q. What are your travel plans?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: 4:30 tomorrow morning, if you want to get up and watch him load on that van, he'll be on it. And my truck driver and I will get in that big old truck, and we'll head down

the road and make about two Wendy's stops on the way, and we'll be in Louisville, Kentucky by 5:36 tomorrow night.

Q. I know you want to win more of these, but how complete now do you think your Hall of Fame Triple Crown career is?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Well, I enjoy it so much. I don't wake up every day trying to prove I can train a race horse anymore. When you're younger, you keep trying to prove yourself in this industry.

But at this point in my career, I'm very comfortable with where we're at. I don't wake up and say, gosh, I've got something to prove to you all that I can train a race horse. I do it for the personal satisfaction of working with the horses and developing some young assistants.

We've still got some guys coming through the ranks, and it's just a wonderful lifestyle. I mean, where in the hell can you get paid to ride out there. I ride on my saddle horse in beautiful weather four hours in the morning, go to the turf club, have lunch. Deal with great people. I mean, is this a great country or what?

Q. You broke the record for most Triple Crown wins. I believe today was 14. How does that make you feel?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Well, I shared that record with a very special man in this industry in Sunny Fitzsimmons. And if I never broke it, I was proud of that. I know he meant so much to the thoroughbred industry. I never knew him personally, but I thought that that was something I'm really proud of. I don't have it documented anywhere. You guys reminded me of it all week.

I thought maybe we'd win another one, but to get it done, it's probably going to be on trivial pursuit in about five minutes, but that's it.

Q. The last thing you said at the Alibi the other day when you were talking to us was I think we're going to get another one, and you got it.

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Yeah, but I didn't know if it was Saturday.

Q. The whole press corps is wondering can you delay the departure time from 4:30 a.m. to 5:30 a.m. tomorrow?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: Some of us in this great nation get up and get after it in the morning; others sleep in.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

D. WAYNE LUKAS: I get young guys that say I'll do anything. I just want to be a part of it. I'll clean stalls. I'll wash pots, and I'll get up and be right there. And I look at them and say, we'll test you on that. I would say they have to have a passion for it. It's not a 9:00 to 5:00 job. The most important thing is to have a complete, unquestionable passion for the industry and what you want to do.

Then I tell them, don't get married. You can have a trainer's license or a marriage license. You can have one or another, but not both at the same time. Then dedicate yourself completely, completely to the game, and if you work, it will probably come. Treat your owners good, they'll get you the horses.

You guys have been great all week. I really appreciate you. Thank you. Any superlatives you'd like to use on Oxbow, just feel free.

THE MODERATOR: Gary is finishing up a live shot and should be in here any minute. Gary Stevens is here.

I don't know how I should phrase this, Gary, but I believe you're the first grandfather to win a Triple Crown race?

GARY STEVENS: I'm sorry, I didn't hear that. I guarantee I'm the first grandfather winner of the Triple Crown race.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations.

GARY STEVENS: Thank you.

D. WAYNE LUKAS: When did you think you had it won?

GARY STEVENS: Just to reiterate that he ran a huge race in the Kentucky Derby. I don't consider that we were really part of that fast, early pace. That was the leader that day, and we were five lengths off of it. This horse has such a high cruising speed that he'll fool you a little bit. I was very comfortable and he was very comfortable in the Kentucky Derby. When I hit the half-mile pole, the leader was out there a ways. Normandy Invasion came up outside of me, and that forced me to move possibly a bit earlier than I wanted. But when you're in the Kentucky Derby, you don't give anything up. You try to get away with what you can.

I won't say it backfired on us, but I learned a heck of a lot about Oxbow, what he did the final 1/8 mile when he was breathing fire a little bit.

Everybody else caved in, he didn't. Had a heck of a time pulling him up after the race, and it showed me how much heart he had.

Came back on Monday, breezed him for Wayne, and we didn't want anything fancy. Just quiet, nice, relaxed. He warmed up relaxed, he worked relaxed, he pulled up relaxed, and that's all I was looking for, and I think that's all coach was looking for. I stayed away all week long, and I've been watching on TV a little bit, and I was liking what I was seeing when he was galloping, and I loved the prerace warm-up today.

We had talked about strategy, and I didn't expect to be on the lead as I said earlier. In these classic races, you don't give up anything that they give you free, and they gave me a free three-quarters of a mile today, and I was smiling pretty good midway down the back side.

I actually thought about Wayne up in the grandstands. I knew he had to be looking at those fractions and pleased with what he was seeing. When I saw Oxbow's ears fluttering back and forth at the 3/8 pole, I thought of the 1988 Kentucky Derby came back to me. I said kick from here. Try to get some separation from the field. I don't know how much separation we got from the 3/8 pole to the quarter pole, but I had a lost horse, and I pretty much rode him like I did Skyring the race before.

I jumped on him at the quarter pole and said let's go now, and put it to him and just try and last as we did with winning colors. But we did more than last today. We pulled up. He wasn't a tired horse. He was a happy horse. He enjoyed the celebration, I think as much as -- well, maybe not as much as Wayne and I, but he was enjoying it.

Q. What is it like winning another Triple Crown race for Wayne? You won your first one back in 1988.

GARY STEVENS: Well, that first one is one I'll never forget, because it put me on the map with winning colors. Wayne put me on the map. When you win that first classic your phone starts ringing, people want you. That's why I got the phone call from Oxbow this year dating all the way back to 1988.

But I'm not going to lie to you, to win a Classic at 50 years old after seven-years retirement, it doesn't get any better than this. This is super, super sweet, and it happened for the right guy. All the stars were aligned. I couldn't be more pleased winning this thing. It's even more special winning it for Wayne Lukas and his team.



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Q. Have you ever had one moment of doubt since you came back January 1st?

GARY STEVENS: I haven't had any doubt at all until this past three weeks. I went out from California to Keeneland, and only won three races during that short meet, which wasn't bad. It was one of the most competitive boutique meetings in the United States. So I was happy enough with my three wins there. But shifting my tack to Churchill Downs, I have not won a race since leaving Keeneland. It's been a month since I won my last race; granted, I haven't had a lot of opportunities in the right place.

But Oxbow two weeks ago in the Kentucky Derby was one of my best finishes, a horse that really went out and performed for me. I thought maybe my business was lacking, maybe this was a mistake. I've been questioning myself, and when riders go through slumps, I don't care if you're 15 years old or 30 years old, you start changing your stirrups on your saddles and this and that.

I told myself, you know what, if it's meant to be, it's not going to matter where your stirrups are, it's going to matter what horse you're riding.

When I won on Skyring, a \$50 horse just prior to the Preakness, you don't know what kind of boost that gave me going into the Preakness, and it was for Wayne Lukas. And I thought to myself, man, this guy, it doesn't matter what the form looks like on a horse. You go out there with confidence, and you can throw an upset.

I went out on the turf course to be legged up on Oxbow, and I couldn't have had more confidence. After the prerace warm-up, I was actually joking with Donna Brothers in the post period, and I said, can I borrow that microphone and take it with me and interview Joel halfway through the race? And she said you're not getting this microphone.

But I was very relaxed, and very happy, and it's just funny how things go. But one race can really boost your spirits. Doesn't matter if you're 16 or 50.

Q. (Indiscernible)?

GARY STEVENS: I fully expected that Orb possibly departing and Will Take Charge would be making a run. But I came into the stretch so loaded. I couldn't believe that no one challenged me going into the far turn, but when no one did, I said, I think everybody's in trouble right

now. I expected to maybe see a horse come up and shadow me the last 50 yards, at least get up on my hip, on Oxbow's hip.

When that didn't happen, when I didn't see anybody by 16th pole and Oxbow was not responding to the presence of another horse, normally a horse can hear before myself and with their vision, another horse comes up and they'll kind of jump in it. A lot of critics are going to think that I'm full of it saying this, but I won with a little something left, believe it or not.

Q. Every win that Oxbow has been on the lead like you won today. Is that his M.O.? Is that what we're going to see from here on out, do you think?

GARY STEVENS: I wouldn't think so. The thing about being on the lead, he rated himself today. Wayne Lukas has this whole thing he tells jockeys with instructions, take about five pounds of pressure on those reins, put a little smile on their face and give them some confidence. That kept ringing through my ear while I was in the starting gate today, just making him comfortable and put a smile on his face. And he had that smile on his face for a long ways today. And as long as he's comfortable in a rhythm, and he was very comfortable today. He rated himself. I was just a passenger.

So another thing that I'll answer right now, because I know the questions are going to be coming, what about the Belmont? This horse has that happy kind of pace, and anybody that wants to come and tangle with him early on, bring it on. You're going to get in trouble if you tangle with him. That's all I can say.

I know Coach well enough, and I'm thinking along the same lines. If he acts as happy in the morning as he did in the Winner's Circle, I can't wait for three weeks from now.

Q. While you were doing TV, did you ever think, and you were watching your colleagues, your brethren sit here and answer these questions and watch them celebrate wins in the Triple Crown series, did you ever think you'd be back here doing this?

GARY STEVENS: Well, I'll just say that my great friend Mike Smith, who is more like a brother than a friend to me, we've been through so much together over the years, watching what he has done since my retirement over the last seven years and to continue on as he has at a high level was a big inspiration for me. Just did an interview

from a French television station as well, and watching Olivier Peslier do what he's done. I've ridden with him for so many years and watch him ride at the level he does, both of those guys gave me a lot of inspiration.

I thought back to Lester Piggott and his comeback in the Breeders' Cup and what he did, I won't go where he was and came out of retirement and pulled off what he did with Royal Academy, but you don't forget what you're doing. You're only as good as the horses you ride and the people that you ride for. And I rode for what I consider to be one of the greatest trainers of all time today.

I didn't know you were standing there still. Oh, all right. I love you, Wayne.

THE MODERATOR: Gary, thank you so much. Great job, Gary Stevens.

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