

BARRY IRWIN FEATURED IN *BLOOD-HORSE* TALKIN' HORSES THIS WEEK FIELDING QUESTIONS FOR 40 MINUTES ABOUT TEAM VALOR, RACING ISSUES

Barry Irwin answered a wide range of questions on Tuesday on the popular Talkin' Horses podcast on the *Blood-Horse* website, from issues in racing to the continuing glow of Animal Kingdom's Kentucky Derby win to what guides him in buying horses for Team Valor International.

The full session is available [here](#), and some of the highlights follow:

Do you foresee a day when American racing will be 100 percent drug free?

"Yes. ... Until three years ago, I never dreamed in my lifetime that we would be able to get our horses off drugs. All the sudden, there was a groundswell of support and now not only is it possible, I think it's inevitable. I really do."

What are your next plans for Animal Kingdom? What has it meant for your organization and to you personally to have won the Kentucky Derby?

"He actually had a workout today. He went 3 furlongs in :37 and 1/5 and I thought he looked pretty good and galloped out really big. Hopefully we will get him to the races this year. If not, our goal is to try to win the World Cup with him in Dubai at the end of March. After that, we'd like to run him a few times internationally and then retire him the following year. A lot of people are surprised that we haven't sold the horse yet. We've had some pretty good offers, but we are a racing stable. The guys that own this horse are not breeders. They want to see him run. As long as there's a chance this horse can run at a high level, we're going to keep going with him. We've had some interest from England and Japan in this horse and at the correct point in time I'm sure we'll work out a deal with one of those people. Our guys would like to stay in for a percentage because we believe in him.



Barry Irwin addressed Animal Kingdom's comeback only a few hours after the champion colt had his first workout of the summer.

"As for as what it meant to win the Derby, it's just like with medication, I never thought I'd win the Derby. It's just one of these dreams that you have. I was very lucky in 1997 to have a horse named Captain Bodgit that just got beat a head in the Kentucky Derby. I thought, well, that was my chance and I blew it. I thought I'd never really have another shot. When it happened, my personal reaction was shock. I was hopeful, but I really couldn't visualize this horse doing it, and when he did, it just bowled me over. That was great on a personal level—I imported the dam and bought the sire for the guy that stood him, so it was a lot of personal satisfaction.

"But, the biggest charge out of the whole deal was seeing the reaction from our partners. We have some guys that would have paid money just to walk over with the horse, let alone have one that could win. To see some of their reactions was phenomenal. The biggest achievement was winning over a

couple of the wives of our partners, women who kind of indulged their husbands' passion in the game. Now both of them have their own horses with us. That means a lot to me."



Barry Irwin imported Animal Kingdom's dam from Germany and his sire from Japan.

With your tendency to buy horses overseas, do have a strategy?

"A lot of people will think I'm full of it when I say this, but I don't have a strategy. Just like when I go to a horse sale, I don't bring a catalog. I just look at the horses. I think horses in Europe have a better introduction to life. Any horse that starts out in Europe is going to be a better grass horse than anything we have in America, just because of the facilities and how we have to train them here. There are only a couple places where you can really develop a grass horse in this country. My strategy in Europe is to not have a strategy. I just sit back and I read and I watch and I wait, and I don't care where it is, if it's something that tickles me, I pounce. I rarely do the same thing twice. I try to be as creative

and open-minded as possible, and I don't look for anything specific."

"As an example, I never go to a horse sale and say 'I need to buy 10 yearlings,' or 'I need to buy 5 2-year-olds.' I can barely find a horse a month to buy. I just try to be as open-minded as possible and look to buy horses that look like they are special."

Recently Team Valor started a new kind of partnership that is geared more toward female partners with a charitable link to it. Team Valor, and you personally, have always been rather charitable. Can you explain some more details about [Valor Ladies] and how it's been received?

"Well, that was the brainchild of a young lady that works for me named Megan Jones. She's from South Carolina. She works most of the year up at Fair Hill and then in the winter she goes to Florida. She also takes tours of our clients around the world. We're going to Australia later this year. We've been to South Africa two or three times and to Europe.

"She came up with the idea of the ladies partnership and thought that if we came up with a charitable element it would be even more interesting and bonding. So, we came up with Susan G. Komen For the Cure, and 25 percent of all net profits from this horse will go to that. The first horse we did for Valor Ladies is a filly from Italy named Tuttipaesi. She is now with Marco Botti. On September 15, she is going to run in the Group 2 May Hill Stakes at Doncaster, and then we're going to bring her over here and run her in the Alcibiades."

You say you're a guy who gets bored, so what do you want to achieve next?

"I feel like I've reached my goal, which was to have a top-class stable with horses running in big races around the world. Winning the Derby was certainly a career highlight that I seriously doubt I'll be able to duplicate, but I certainly would like to give it a go and do it again. We're running in the Melbourne Cup this year, we ran in the Derby and the Preakness this year, and we've got some good horses overseas right now. I also am interested in getting involved at some point in racing in some other countries. I'm not bored right now at all, believe me."