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Breeders' Cup Postscript: All is Well

by Ron Mitchell

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Photo: Rick Samuels

Horsemen making their regular morning stops at Santa Anita's Clocker's Corner Oct. 26 were abuzz over the success of the two-day Breeders' Cup World Championships, the first ever run on an artificial surface.

There were no reports of major injuries among the major participants, as winners and high-profile losers were reported to be in good shape.

Trainer John Gosden reported that all three of the Darley Stable winners came out of their races in good order. "They were in great form this morning," he said of Classic (gr. I) winner [Raven's Pass](#), Grey Goose Juvenile Turf (gr. IT) winner [Donativum](#), and Bessemer Trust Juvenile (gr. I) winner [Midshipman](#).

Gosden trains Raven's Pass and Donativum for Darley and Princess Haya of Jordon, while Bob Baffert conditions Midshipman for Sheikh Mohammed's Darley. Gosden said Sheikh Mohammed, who did not

attend the Breeders' Cup, was "very pleased" with the day's outcome.

Gosden said neither the intense heat nor the Pro-Ride racing surface proved problematic for his runners, as evidenced by their success.

Though no decisions have been made on the 2009 campaigns of the Darley horses, including whether Raven's Pass, a 3-year-old son of [Elusive Quality](#), would remain in training. If he continues to race, Gosden said the Dubai World Cup (UAE-I) would be a likely starting point for his 2009 season.

Gosden said the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (gr. I) could be in the plans for Donativum, who is not eligible to race in certain British stakes because he is a gelding. If that happens, Gosden said he would like to have the gelding in the U.S. for several preps prior to the classic.

"We've been fortunate that he really turned around from being gelded," Gosden said. "His maiden win was impressive and his works got so much better since. He's a real street fighter of a horse. He had to fight his way to get a run. To that extent, he could fit into any program. But if you're thinking about those sort of races, you don't sort of drop in on them. You need to really train for a race like that."

Baffert, who also saddled [Midnight Lute](#) to a win the [Sentient Flight Group Sprint](#) (gr. I) for the second consecutive year, also reported his horses returned from Saturday's races in good order. Midnight Lute will be probably retired to stud ("There is no other place to run him"), but Baffert said he would have to wait until Sheikh Mohammed makes a decision on Midshipman. The Juvenile victor is a son of [Unbridled's Song](#) and was among the horses recently acquired by Darley from Stonerside Stables. Baffert was retained as trainer of the colt, who now looms as a solid contender for next year's Derby.

"I am just going to have to wait and see," Baffert said. "I hope we don't lose him."

Meanwhile, trainer David Hofmans said [Turf Sprint](#) winner [Desert Code](#), a 4-year-old son of [E Dubai](#), could run again this year, possibly in Hong Kong. "It is hard getting him back" after a layoff, Hofmans said of the colt, who had made his first start since Sept. 24 in the Breeders' Cup. "I like to keep him going, once I get him back."

Topping the list of horses that did not return victorious Saturday, [Curlin](#), North American racing's all-time leading earner, was fine Sunday morning after running fourth as the Classic favorite, according to trainer Steve Asmussen.

"He came out of the race in great shape and will be shipped to Louisville tonight or early tomorrow morning," said Asmussen. Of the first start on artificial surface for Curlin, Asmussen said the son of [Smart Strike](#) has to "work harder to go through it than on dirt" but that he was not using that as an excuse for the outcome.

"We have no excuses," Asmussen said. "I would never disrespect the winners by making excuses."

Asmussen said he has not discussed future plans for Curlin with Jess Jackson, majority owner of the colt in partnership with Midnight Cry Stable. "I am very proud of what Curlin has done," he said of the reigning Horse of the Year.

Trainer Eoin Harty also did not have any excuses for the sixth-place Classic finish of [Colonel John](#). "I think the best horses won the races. I don't think there was any track biases. The European form was very solid. They should not have been taken lightly."

Another Classic runner, [Fairbanks](#), who finished 10th of 12, will also be retired, according to Mike McCarthy, assistant to Todd Pletcher. McCarthy said all of Pletcher's Saturday runners came back in good shape. "It just wasn't our day, that's all," he said.

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