

## BARBARO: STILL A CHAMPION

For those of us who grew up with ABC's Wide World of Sports, we are familiar with their saying, "the thrill of victory, and the agony of defeat". On May 6<sup>th</sup>, we witnessed the thrill in seeing the greatness of Barbaro when he won the Kentucky Derby with class and style. We saw him as a valid Triple Crown contender. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, we witnessed the horrible agony of a horse who had broken a significant part of his right hind leg in the opening 50 strides of the 131<sup>st</sup> Preakness Stakes. We suddenly had to face the real possibility that he might not live to see another day.

He had been bouncing and exuberant in the post parade of the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of the Triple Crown trail. It was a beautiful clear day. Once in the starting gate Barbaro broke it open, and cantered out by himself... he looked absolutely magnificent... full of fire and will. He was reloaded into the starting gate. From there, it seems, from one stride to the next, the great horse was being pulled up by jockey Edgar Prado. The trainer Michael Matz raced down to tend his horse, while others broke into tears. The sight of Barbaro struggling, silenced the crowd of over 118,000.

Many of the other jockeys did not realize what had happened until the race was over, and therefore ran a noble and exciting race. Bernardini was an unexpected winner over Sweetnorthernstain, who followed 5 ½ lengths behind in second. Hemingway's Key trained by Nick Zito came in third, and Brother Derek came in fourth.

Barbaro was put on to an equine ambulance, and brought to his stall, where he was sedated so that X-rays could be taken. During the whole process, the people handling him, and the people surrounding him collectively commented on his grace. Horses just want to keep running once they start. It is an extremely powerful instinct. Barbaro stayed composed, and did not attempt to kick out in pain, nor was he uncooperative in any way. It is such a dangerous time, because one further upset may cause the horse to further injure himself and others.

He was treated immediately at the track, with a stabilizing splint, antibiotics, and anti-inflammatory injections. He was then taken to New Bolton Center in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, approximately 1 ½ hours away, where he was given pain medication and suspended in a sling. He underwent five hours and ten minutes of surgery on Sunday.

Dr. Dean Richardson, chief surgeon at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine stated at a press conference on Sunday evening, "Surgery was very difficult", and went on to say that Barbaro's (long) pastern bone was in "probably 20-plus pieces."

Barbaro also broke his cannon bone, and sesamoid bone. During surgery doctors used metal implants (a metal rod and 27 screws) to reconstruct the bones. They also had to reposition the dislocated fetlock joint.

After surgery, there is a very critical time when horses come out of anesthesia. They can really thrash around and panic, when waking in unfamiliar surroundings, from something they don't understand. Their own reaction may be life threatening because of their weight alone. An average sized horse weighs 1200 pounds. A simple kick out, or even a stumble may cause additional damage, enough to tip the precarious scale.

Like the true champion that he really is, Barbaro woke gently from anesthesia, floating in a pool of water. He was then taken to his stall where he was able to stand on his own. Trainer Michael Matz was relieved to see him begin to eat hay. It was said that he was very comfortable at that time.

Barbaro will never race again. And he still faces many, very serious obstacles. Blood circulation is most certainly affected, and yet the extent of that damage is impossible to assess. During surgery Richardson felt that the blood supply to the lower limb seemed to be adequate. Infection at the site is a very big concern, and of course, the fact that the horse, who is fit as a fiddle, must stay relatively still for up to six months. Recovery is the most dangerous part of this process.

This was a catastrophic break. The surgery performed was unprecedented. Horses are usually euthanized at the track for injuries this serious. We can only hope that Barbaro continues to be a success, and wins this race for his life....

Fans of Barbaro adorned the outside of the New Bolton Center with signs conveying their love and support, and the inside the Center's waiting room with flowers, pictures drawn by children, get well cards, apples and carrots...

Barbaro is surrounded by people and professionals who really want to see him recover to the best extent possible. It is way too early to tell whether this leg would withstand the requirements of a Stallion. The owners, Roy and Gretchen Jackson don't care. They are doing this because they love Barbaro, and so do we. We are all still rooting for Barbaro... He will always be a Champion.

For those who want to follow Barbaro's progress go to:  
<http://www.vet.upenn.edu/newsandevents/news/Barbaro.htm>

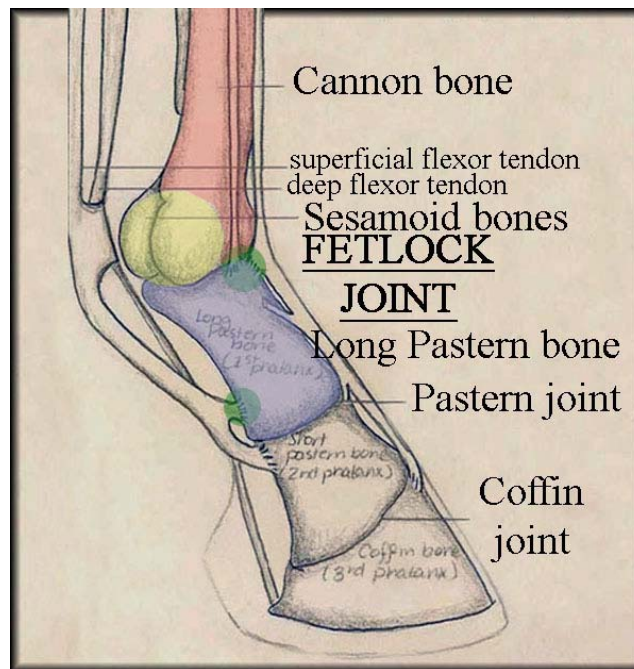
Anyone who would like to send good wishes Barbaro go to:  
<http://www.vet.upenn.edu/barbaro/>

Contact Information:  
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Adrienne trains horses in Wilton Maine. She has produced a website for horse lovers, which features valuable information about the horse, and her nationally recognized artwork at [www.wingspanartsintl.com](http://www.wingspanartsintl.com)



Location of Barbaro's injuries



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