

TEARS OF JOY SHED FOR BARBARO August 2006

It has been three months since the 2006 Kentucky Derby champion tragically shattered his right hind leg in the opening strides of this year's Preakness Stakes. He has courageously endured the surgeries, drugs, needles, slings, cast changes, stall time, and so much more, in order to stay alive. And now, finally, he is well enough to go outside. There, he feels the sun on his back, and he rips the grass from the ground.

During his first outing, Gretchen Jackson, Barbaro's owner said that Barbaro stared "for easily five minutes, looking at the scenery like, 'Oh my God, I'd forgotten about all of this.' He was closely monitored and handled by Dr. Dean Richardson the chief surgeon at The New Bolton Center, who let him graze for about 20 minutes.

Victory and defeat, followed by victory and set backs have been the agonizing reality in following Barbaro's career. As the most promising Triple Crown contender in years, Barbaro dominated this year's Kentucky Derby, running easily to victory over a talented field of 19 other three year olds. He rested well, and trained well at Fair Hill, Maryland, during the two weeks leading into the second leg of the Triple Crown. He was trucked to Pimlico Race Track for the 131st running of the Preakness Stakes, and it was there that he came face to face with the unintended race for his very life.

After romping his way to the starting gate, full of power, spirit, and will, Barbaro sprang through the starting gate before the official start. He was led around, and observed by the track veterinarians, and it was professionally determined that he had not sustained any obvious injury. Shortly after being loaded into the starting gate again, the official bell rang, and all of the gates opened, ushering forth all of the contenders at once. Within 100 yards or so, jockey Edgar Prado heard a snap, and felt that Barbaro was different. Prado kept Barbaro straight, and shifted his weight to relieve the injured right side. He pulled Barbaro to a halt as quickly as he could. There he stood, holding and comforting his friend and equine partner, until others were able to come and help stabilize the situation.

The situation was very grim indeed, for Barbaro was suffering from a devastating, and life threatening injury to his right hind leg. The owners Roy and Gretchen Jackson decided to do whatever they could to save a very special horse, one that was not only very talented, but one who was very much loved.

He was moved to The New Bolton Center at the University of Pennsylvania in Kennett Square, PA, where Dr. Dean Richardson, chief veterinary surgeon assembled his team, and gathered the necessary radiographs to understand and treat the injury. Barbaro's prognosis was not good. He underwent 5 hours of surgery to repair the breaks in three of the major bones in the hind leg. Stabilizing plates and 27 screws went in, a cast went on, and a special shoe put on the left hind foot, to equalize the length of the hind limbs.

Days went by, and the stall bound Barbaro was eating well, and resting well. Days and more days went by, and Barbaro was enjoying his treats, his attention, his baths, and

tolerating all the things that the care-givers had to do to keep him healthy. Barbaro beat the initial odds against him.

Then, early July rolled around, and two bent screws had to be removed, and three new ones put in. Soon, it was apparent that Barbaro was developing an infection in the injured leg, and was becoming uncomfortable. Surgery was performed to replace the infected plate and screws, and to scrape infection away from the tissues. With another successful recovery from general anesthesia, the vigil was again intense, and blood drawn often to monitor Barbaro's condition. An abscess was treated in the left hind foot, which was also causing him some discomfort.

Disaster struck when Barbaro's healthy left foot was critically affected by a condition called laminitis. The laminae of the hooves essentially provide the layer of connection between the hoof wall and the coffin bone of the foot. When the laminae become inflamed, the weight of the horse may push the wall of the hoof away from the bone. The wall of the hoof is very similar to our finger or toenails, except that we, as humans, do not have to bear all of our body weight on them. It is simply excruciating to the horse.

Barbaro was operated on immediately, this time on the left hind foot. His life once again threatened. Without surgery, the pain and impairment from this condition would result in the essential euthanization of the Champion. Eighty percent of the hoof wall had to be removed, and a cast placed on the left hind foot and lower leg. This cast has to be changed every day. In a press conference July 13th, Richardson, an experienced and talented surgeon, did not want to sugar coat Barbaro's condition. He felt that the chances for recovery were poor, especially given the complications already presented by initial injury.

Barbaro is a beautiful horse. He is bright, happy, and exceedingly intelligent and loving. People from all over the world are rooting for him by sending him prayers and caring wishes to websites and newspapers that follow his story. Millions of us hope that Barbaro can live a comfortable life, where people might be able to visit him at his home, and meet an extraordinary individual.

So, yes... it is a very big deal that Barbaro, after all that he has endured, is now being taken outside and hand-grazed. It is a significant step in his recovery, and for a horse, it is a great thing to be outside.

Mrs. Jackson said to Mike Curry of the Thoroughbred Times, "He just looked around for some time before he put his head down, and then he ate away and was probably out for a good 20 minutes, enjoying himself. It was just the nurses out there and maybe a few vets and I think there were quite a few tears shed to see him do that."

If Barbaro remains comfortable, he will be hand-grazed daily. Barbaro still has a very long way to go, but he is such an inspiration, and a very classy fellow. He continues to be a beacon for the important things in life: Courage, Compassion, Determination, Trust, Hope and Love.

If you would like to view the updates on Barbaro's condition, or send him your kind thoughts, go to: <http://www.vet.upenn.edu/newsandevents/news/Barbaro.htm>

Also, for those that are interested, you may follow this link: http://www.vet.upenn.edu/newsandevents/news/Barbaro_Update8-14.htm to view the video of Barbaro going outside to graze!

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Adrienne owns and 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

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