

What if WinStar, Big Brown

By Bill Heller

Is there a horseman alive who hasn't wondered, "What if...?"

Last week, the decision-makers at Versailles, Kentucky's WinStar Farm, which was already a co-owner of top Kentucky Derby contender Carpe Diem, asked "What if we owned another?" WinStar then bought into Ralph Evans's star New York-bred Upstart.

Back in New York, where breeders are rejoicing that there will be three New York-breds running in the Kentucky Derby on May 2nd with International Star and Tencendur joining Upstart, the owners and managers at Dutchess Views Farms wondered what the impact would be if their stallion, 2008 Kentucky Derby and Preakness Stakes winner Big Brown, becomes the sire of this year's Kentucky Derby winner should his undefeated son Dortmund win the Run for the Roses. Big Brown has already been sensational after arriving in New York last Christmas Eve.

WinStar acquired a share in Upstart on April 20th. Evans will remain the colt's majority owner and Rick Violette will continue as the colt's trainer. Upstart is a son of Flatter out of Party Silks by Touch Gold who was bred by Joanne Nielsen.

Upstart won the Grade 2 Holy Bull Stakes, then finished first but was disqualified and placed second in the Grade 2 Fountain of Youth. In his final Kentucky Derby prep, the Grade I Florida Derby, Upstart finished a clear second, a length and a half behind Materiality.

"Upstart has been on our radar since the Breeders' Cup," WinStar President and CEO Elliott Walden told Jonathan Lintner of the Louisville Courier-Journal in his April 20th story. "Jerry Brown of Thoro-Graph approached me because he really believes this colt has a big future. We are honored to be partners with such a nice man as Ralph Evans on such an exciting horse as Upstart."

Evans is pretty excited about the partnership, too. "When Elliott called, I became excited about what we could do together with WinStar in a partnership on Upstart," he said in Lintner's story. "We look forward to sharing in Upstart's promising future."

Big Brown's new stallion career in New York is way past promising. Not only is he the top stallion in New York by a wide margin with his near-\$1.8 million in prodigy earnings is more than \$1.1 million ahead of Posse in second, he currently ranks 16th nationally.

There's always a chance that Big Brown could be relocated if Dortmund was to win the Kentucky Derby and/or other Triple Crown races, but both Michael Lischin and his wife Anya Sheckley, the owners and managers of Dutchess Views Farm in Pine Plains, think that's highly unlikely. "I don't think it would affect Big Brown," said Anya, who also runs her own equine insurance agency. "I don't see him leaving New York."

Michael agreed: "That's always possible because he's been doing well, irrespective of Dortmund. But I think it's unlikely. The majority of the ownership is from the New York area. They acquired him from Three Chimneys (in Midway, Kentucky). They wanted a stallion in

New York. They also own Frost Giant and Heavy Breathing. Frost Giant, who ranks ninth in New York State, stands at Keane Stud in Amenia. Heavy Breathing stands at Dutchess Views Farm.

Dutchess Views hasn't had Big Brown long. After standing at Three Chimneys, Big Brown was shuttled to stallion duty in Australia. "He arrived to us last Christmas Eve, at two o'clock in the morning from quarantine in Chicago," Anya said. "He will continue to shuttle."

He couldn't be doing any better in New York. Asked about Big Brown's impact, Michael said, "Oh, wow! It's big. We've been standing stallions here for 18 years and it's like night and day. People are coming from all over the country to breed to him. We have mares from big farms in Kentucky and Florida here and that's never happened, people sending their mares to New York."

Big Brown's schedule couldn't be busier. "He's up to over 130 mares this year," Michael said. "Oh, he's busy. He's breeding three times a day every day. If Dortmund wins the Derby "

Michael let that thought linger and said, "If he wins that, it makes it more spectacular."

Anya is blown away by Big Brown's popularity already. "It's been a huge response," she said. "What more could you ask for?"

Hmmm. What if Dortmund won the Derby and the Preakness? What if