

Stumbling to Victory

Saturday's running of the Preakness Stakes in Baltimore featured a dramatic finish, as horse races often do. But it will be remembered most for a competitor that turned a potential disaster into victory.

Afleet Alex, the favorite to win, was gathering momentum, coming off the far turn and looking ready to romp, to leave in his dust the winner of the Kentucky Derby, Giacomo. With a quarter-mile to go, Scrappy T. was in the lead when he responded to a left-handed whip from jockey Ramon Dominguez by veering sharply to his right and directly into Afleet Alex's path. The horses clipped heels in a frightening collision, and Afleet Alex was forced to his knees. Spectators – 115,318 at Pimlico and millions of others watching on television – figured the contest was over for Afleet Alex. The horse, however, saw it differently.

"I held on to the mane and he picked himself right up," jockey Jeremy Rose said, "and from that point on, I knew we had it won." Incredibly, to the disbelief of the crowd, Alex regained his footing and his drive. In the span of a few seconds, disaster was avoided and the courageous colt breezed to the finish line. The final margin was 4¾ lengths. It should have been more.

Winning trainer Tim Richey, who has been in the business for 30 years, has seen horses take bad steps and still win, but "I've never seen a horse stumble that badly and lose his momentum that much to come back on and win in a Grade 1 race like this," he said.

What happened to this horse can happen to the human race as well.

Every one of us has experienced occasions in our lives when misfortune came along – perhaps an illness, a financial struggle, a broken relationship, a setback in a career or the death of a family member or close friend. And maybe even those who were watching counted you out. They didn't think you could overcome the dilemma, and you would fail to win your personal or professional goals.

When those times come along – and they will to everyone, sooner or later – it may take all that is within you to succeed. As my grandfather once advised, when he saw me stumble and fall in a boyhood running competition: "Just pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and get back in the race."

Those instances will require courage, for the world is all too often ready to major on our failures. They will also call for faith – in oneself, in the people who are true friends and, most of all, in the God Who made you and loves you supremely. Keep in mind: He has set the course before us, and we are running the race to please Him anyway.

--Beecher Hunter