

Justify Still Worth Millions

By Dave Lukow

Justify's racing career is done, but he's still a prized commodity.

The 13th winner of the American Triple Crown, Justify, according to the Associated Press, was retired this week due to an injured ankle. Despite trainer Bob Baffert's desire to race Justify at least one more time this summer, he stopped training earlier this month. Baffert also hoped to possibly run the horse in the Breeders' Cup Classic at Churchill Downs in November.

Fluid in a front ankle made Baffert and the horse's owners reluctant to continue.

"What a way to go out - never beaten, won the Triple Crown," jockey Mike Smith said. "He's happy, healthy. That's just beautiful."

The news comes a little more than a month after Justify won the Belmont Stakes to secure the Triple Crown. Bred in Kentucky, he won all six races he ran and was the first horse since 1882 - that didn't race as a 2-year-old - to win the Kentucky Derby.

"We all wanted to see Justify run again, but ultimately, it is my responsibility to make sure he is perfect," Baffert said. "Without 60-90 days, I can't be definite."

Justify, also the winner of the Santa Anita Derby, finishes with career winnings of nearly \$3.8 million.

Next week, Justify will be flown from California to WinStar Farm, which owns a majority share in the horse. China Horse Club, Head of Plains Partners and Starlight Racing also have shares.

Once an official announcement is made, Justify will go from WinStar to Coolmore's Ashford Stud in Versailles, Ky., where American Pharoah, the other Baffert-trained horse to win the Triple Crown, resides.

The price for Justify's breeding rights isn't official, but reports have Coolmore paying \$60 million.

While the money Justify generates is impressive, some aren't focused on bottom lines.

"I could almost say he made my life," Smith said. "I'll forever be grateful for that horse. It takes a great, great horse to do what he did."