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A Horse Racing in the Kentucky Derby This Weekend is Attracting U.S. Media to St. John For its Namesake Zozo's Restaurant

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Zozos's winning race in Oklahoma. By. COADY PHOTOGRAPHY

When the Kentucky Derby kicks off this weekend, one horse which is already generating intense interest will be carrying not just the jockey, but the hopes and dreams of one St. John family with whom the animal shares a special connection.

John Ferrigno and his wife Karen are the owners of Zozo's, the iconic waterside fine dining restaurant on Caneel Bay. Longtime customers Barry and Joni Butzow are breeders of racing horses who own a home on St. John. Having already named several of their animals after island landmarks, they say they were at Zozo's one day for dinner three years ago when it occurred to

them that it would make the ideal name for their newest horse.

They ran the idea past Ferrigno, who said he was honored by the request, and immediately agreed. Barry Butzow said that as one of the better restaurants on the island, Zozo's equine namesake had to be an animal of quality. In his debut year, the horse has more than earned the right to the prestigious name, placing first in its first two races and second at the Louisiana Derby, carrying the lead all the way to the final turn before being overtaken by Epicenter, the favorite coming into this weekend's race.

Consortium journalists spoke to Ferrigno, who is very familiar with the sport, having served as a racetrack announcer in the past. He said he couldn't be more thrilled about Zozo's previous performances and his chances for the Kentucky Derby. He described it as a privilege to be invited, along with his wife and children, to walk Zozo's out of the paddock ahead of the race. "My family is just honored they're letting us share in this once in a lifetime moment," Ferrigno declared.



More than just a personal triumph, Ferrigno believes that having a horse which bears the name of an iconic St. John establishment will raise the profile of the entire island. Media outlets on the mainland have already made much of the Derby darling's connection to St. John and the USVI, and that PR push is in line with the Butzow's commitment to helping the island they love so much, Ferrigno says. The couple has been active in philanthropic work during their years of residency, and just in March leapt to the assistance to victims of [an apartment fire in Estate Grunwald](#) which displaced several people.

No matter the outcome of the weekend's races, Ferrigno believes that Zozo's - both original and namesake, as well as the island of St. John as a whole, and everyone involved in this fairytale story - have already triumphed.

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