

Racin'



Issue 339

June/July 2016

NRC's EASY FUND RAISING SCHEME

New for 2016! Members who shop online for almost any product/service can now help to raise funds for the club without any extra cost!

Funds raised can then be used towards free memberships, competition entries etc. and possibly some free NRC events as well as charitable donations to racing charities.

You will find further details on page 18 of Racin' and a link button on our home page at www.northernracingclub.com



Royal Ascot Mini Preview Night – Monday June 13th

We have already booked the Tetley Club in Warrington on Monday 13th June for a committee meeting at 7.30pm and it has been decided that we shall also hold a mini Ascot preview starting at 8pm to include members/guests.

Kieran Rowbottom has kindly volunteered to guide us through some of the key championship races so why not come along for the craic?

It will be free admission and we aim not to finish too late. NB England are not playing that night!

To help gauge interest/demand please contact Colin Stanton (see committee panel on page 18) if you can make it.

**Tetley's Club Address: Recreation
Club/Long La, Warrington WA2 8PU**

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Billy Carr's Coup

BILLY CARR was a legend among punters in the Lancashire mill towns. "Good old Billy," they'd say as the annual Wakes Week holiday approached. And often he'd "stick one in" at a good price to pay for a few more pints and ice creams for the kids along Blackpool's Golden Mile.

For quite a few years Billy's right-hand man was Jimmy Hughes who'd started at the Dunscair, Bolton, stables as a little lad. His mum took him from their home in Clayton-le-Moors. They went on the bus.

There are so many stories told by Jimmy Hughes about his time with old Billy and I've been toying with the idea of knocking out a few of them over the coming months.

A few years back I pulled many of them together for him to mug up and go on the after-dinner-speaker circuit. It was hopeless. I did my best to coach him but we always ended up rolling about in stitches. Such a pity. He'd have been a riot.

I thought – as Royal Ascot approaches – that I might start with the solitary time rough-and-ready Bromley Cross farmer Billy Carr made his one-and-only appearance at the famous track.

Jimmy can take up the tale: "We'd had a horse sent to us from some posers who lived down south. They owned factories and shops and they had a few bob. God knows why they picked us but they had a few businesses in the Bolton area. It was called Sable Skinflint and now it was up in Bolton. It was massive. A right big 'un. About 17:2

"We ran him a few times to get some weight off him and he showed us enough to reckon we could do a job with him. But then the owners rang up and asked us to run him at Royal Ascot. They lived near the course, apparently.

"Well, it's a long way from a little race up North to the Royal Hunt Cup, but why not?

After all, these rich southerners were forking out eighty quid a week so if they'd said they wanted it painted orange and entered in the Grand National we'd have tried to organise it. But Royal Ascot?

"Billy was certainly rough and ready. He was a proper farmer. Never happier than when he was wading around in pig muck. John Hamer, the big Bolton brewer, had bought him a gold-coloured Rolls Royce after one big job they'd pulled off but it was wasted on Billy.

"Inside three months he was carting hay in the back and the front was stoved in. He could never be bothered opening gates on the farm. He used to leave them on the latch. One smack from the Roller and they'd bang open and through we'd go. It looked like a tractor before it was a year old. It was covered in mud and muck.

"Came the day of the race and we were hoping Sable Skinflint would run well and impress the owners. We'd got a young kid over from Ireland to ride him. Joe Larkin, claiming seven. I was in charge of the horse and I was amazed when Billy Carr hobbled into the Royal Ascot paddock.

He looked immaculate. Top hat and tails, silk shirt, a silver-topped cane. He looked a million dollars — he'd even had a shave. But then he got closer. And what did he have holding his pants up? Bailing string. It was dangling down at the front. And his flies were open. I don't think I've ever been so embarrassed. And I don't embarrass easily.

"The horse ran well. But his big problem was he only had one eye. He beat the horses on the nearside — the ones he could see — but several on his blind side went clear.

We couldn't blame the horse. He thought he'd won. Wonder how many times that excuse has been stuck up the noses of disappointed owners?

"Anyway, it was a good run and we took him to Thirsk but 2/1 favourite was no use and he opened

as favourite again at Ponte so we decided to line him up for a big mile race at the York Festival. "And by this time he had come on a lot. We piled it on at York from early 33s down to 100-7. And "They're Under Starter's Orders and They're off!"

And off they went. All of 'em. Except for Sable Skinflint. All little Larkin had to do was get him off and keep him handy for a late run. It wasn't asking much. And there they were. Miles behind, kicking and rowing like mad. I thought: "I'll kill the little bugger. He's dead." So I started to make my way down off the stands, like a lost sheep, cursing away and thinking how much money we'd tossed off...

"All then I heard the course commentator: "It's So and so, So and so and So and so. And Sable Skinflint making headway on the outside." That was about the three pole. We come to the two pole and what happens — our horse takes it up. I could see it coming wide and cruising. The kid's doing nothing. I thought: 'It's going to win doing handstands'. And sure enough they went clear and won easily.

We'd won a fortune and you can imagine the excitement in the unsaddling enclosure. Then on the loudspeakers: "Would trainer W Carr or his representative please come to the weighing room".

I thought, that's it. We're buggered. The horse had been left 10 lengths and could have won by 10. Billy was at home in bed. He wasn't so good so I was in charge. I kept thinking that Billy had been up and about the day before and I prayed he hadn't given the horse something special in his feed. Just a little pick me up.

I rang Billy who swore blind the horse was straight and the stewards accepted my explanation that it could nearly have won the Royal Hunt Cup and that it had been doing well at home since. They hadn't gone much pace early on. All the bullshit I could think of. Luckily there were no problems and we all breathed a big sigh of relief.

There are plenty of tales about Billy Carr. The winner with a club foot - yes, a horse!

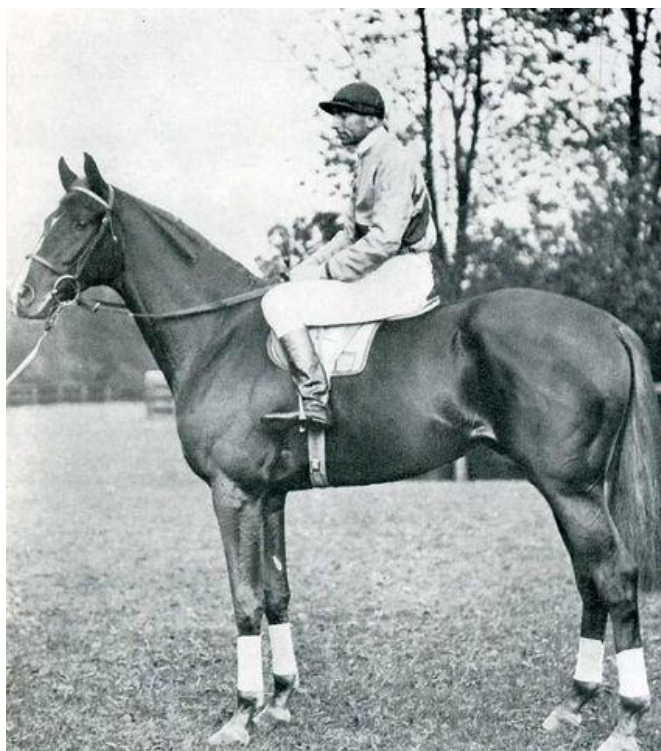
That's one for next time. And then I might knock out a piece on a few of the brilliant coups he pulled off. Patience? He'd wait years.

Oh, and my favourite tale from my old mate Jimmy Hughes. His instructions to the little lightweight jockey who was going out to ride a cert. No need for a load of flannel. Just three words: "Don't. Fall. Off."

He clung on for dear life — and coasted in. Jimmy bought a row of houses with the winnings. "Happy Days," he smiled.

By Harold Heys

- Editor's note: Although Harold couldn't find a photo for this article I have located a photo of the horse on 'tinternet and no doubt Harold will be able to tell me if it is indeed Joe Larkin up top! Harold did hope that the language used would not offend and indeed I feel it brings the article 'to life' as if Jimmy were in the room. Great stuff!



2016/17 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS & PASSWORDS

Thanks to all for renewing your membership for another year!

Most things will remain unchanged in 2016/17 but we are again adding passwords back to some of the club website pages – specifically Racin' Magazine downloads, Drawfacts, Trainer Traits & Festival Guides.

The password required for these pages is shown below and will be valid until the March 2017 renewals have been processed. All other sections of the websites will remain available for public access.

nwrc1980

INTRODUCE A FRIEND FREE IN 2016!

There may be no such thing as a free lunch but there is such a thing as a 'free gift' membership for any friend of an existing paid up NRC member!

As a thank you for renewing in 2016 we are offering all existing members the chance to enrol a friend free for the rest of the club year (until Mar 2017).

Just fill in the slip below and return it to our membership secretary and we shall set up an online membership of NRC. If anyone wants to set up with postal copies of Racin' provided instead this can be arranged at half price (£5). After the introductory offer normal renewal rates will apply.

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### **Northern Racing Club 'Introduce A Friend Form'**

Name(s) of new member(s).....

Address.....

.

.....Phone/E Mail.....

Name of Introducing Member.....

Please post to Helen Goodwill, Membership Secretary, Northern Racing Club,

124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire. WA14 5NZ

# SOUNDS LIKE 'JOCKEYS' QUIZ – ANSWERS

Due to lack of space last time I was unable to include the answers to this quiz from the Feb/Mar edition of Racin' so here they are! Dave Bates got 16/20 right and as top scorer will receive a small prize from the club!

Hopefully this set of answers will help members understand the way my mind works and I shall still try a 'Trainers' version later in the year now that I have got everyone on the same wavelength!

1. One of the doctors in BBC drama 'Holby City'. S(acha) Levey
2. USA musical/comedy/drama TV show set in an educational campus. G Lee
3. A car made in Oxford? L Morris
4. An American singer-songwriter that likes purple rain. P Prince
5. Someone delivering a type of household fuel (last century!). A Coleman
6. A former 'This is your life' presenter. L Aspell
7. A footprint! C Shoemark
8. My favourite gin (brewed in Warrington). J Greenall
9. A chef by another name! D Cook
10. An iconic UK made motorcycle. F Norton
11. A famous Fulham & England footballer from the 1950's to early 1970's. J Haynes
12. A former BBC racing commentator. J McGrath
13. A former Ireland international football defender. R Dunne
14. A point scoring shot in billiards. T Cannon
15. The bishop from TV comedy 'Father Ted'. (Bishop) P Brennan
16. A former England footballer, premier league manager and now a TV pundit. S Pearce
17. A great kids toy – back in the time before computer games! R Hornby
18. One of the prison guards from BBC comedy 'Porridge'. (Mr) N Mackay
19. A relative of hapless comic character 'Frank' who has been called to the bench? JP Spencer
20. Something you put inside your shoes for extra comfort. Jamie Insole

## GRAND NATIONAL SWEEPSTAKE 2016

Thanks to all who entered the club sweepstake in April. Everyone who entered was allocated a horse based on the race card numbers 1-40 which were drawn by our panel members on the Wednesday before the race at our Aintree Preview Night.

The winners of the four prizes were as follows:

**1<sup>st</sup> prize £100 (Dave Bates from Warrington); 2<sup>nd</sup> prize £50 (Paul Lang from Blackburn); 3<sup>rd</sup> prize £25 (Tony Coleman from Swindon); 4<sup>th</sup> prize (59's Draw entry) also Dave Bates.**



# GORDON ARMSITEAD'S RACING DIARY

## **Wednesday March 23rd Haydock**

Mainly modest stuff but Sharpasaknife winner of the 2 miles 2 novice handicap hurdle looks to have a future. Beating the very disappointing Birch Hill is nothing special but this was only his third start and he looks a chaser. Third home Beware the Bear is a great big sort who should make a chaser but will probably need extreme distances.

## **Saturday March 26th Haydock**

It would be hard to find a more competitive card with the finals of the Challenger Series and for most of the runners this was the chance of a big win with most being exposed sorts. Emerging Force with only three runs behind him didn't fall into that category and having taken the 8/1 in the morning his departure when looking the winner of the two mile seven handicap hurdle was a blow. He looks like another summer will do him the world of good and he should make a chaser.

## **Thursday April 7th Aintree**

### **Manifesto Novices Chase**

There was no doubt as to how this race would be run with confirmed front runner Arzal in the field. He was given a very easy time of it in front and was never challenged staying the two four well. I doubt if he will be challenging for top honours next season but the Old Roan back here would seem the obvious target. L'Ami Serge again hung left when under pressure and the jury is now out as to whether he doesn't stay this trip or just doesn't want to battle as all his wins have been achieved on the bridle. Sizing John was a disappointment never really jumping or travelling. Bouvreuil's run at Cheltenham ruined his handicap mark but he looks the sort who will strengthen up for another summer. Garde la Victoire just doesn't jump well enough and his fall was coming from early on in the race.

### **Anniversary Juvenile Hurdle**

Forty-one lengths is a long way and Apple's Jade was being eased down while the runner up was ridden right out. To try and make some sense of it Ivanovich Gorbatoev looked awful before the race and the soft ground was against him. The third home Azzuri is a maiden and Diego Du Charmil's Fred Winter win was off 133 and he was probably a lucky winner. Even saying all that this was an incredible performance and she looks the part as well but with the stables glut of Champion Hurdle horses and good mares it is impossible at this stage to say what her targets will be next season. We may no more after Punchestown as she must go there having barely had a race here.

### **Bowl**

Any doubts that his fall at Cheltenham would affect his confidence were brushed aside as Cue Card took this easily. Given a proper ride here Don Poli probably showed he is not quite up to the very top rank as he seemed to run his race. He was entered in both the Becher Chase and National this season so that would seem to be the way his trainer thinks he should go. Djakadam ran like his effort in the Gold Cup had left a mark. It would be nice to see Irish Cavalier go for a race he could win on top of the ground as he has acquired blinkers for running perfectly good races he had no chance in.

### **Aintree Hurdle**

Not surprisingly My Tent or Yours didn't stay the trip and with Nichols Canyon repeatedly jumping to his right it was easy for Annie Power. I backed her at 5/2 in a novice hurdle at Naas in February 2013 when amongst those behind her was Don Cossack and she has only been odds against twice since. I can't see her ever going chasing although she is big enough and you would hope she will try and defend the Champion Hurdle next season even if Faugheen makes a full recovery.

### **Foxhunters**

I wanted to take on On The Fringe on the basis he is not as good as he was last season. He may not be but of the two obvious challengers Pacha Du Polder turned in a very moderate effort and Marassonnien pulled up and subsequently collapsed and died.

Peter Bowen has a great record over these fences and elder son Mickey proved he can also get one ready to run a big race here with runner up Dineur.

### **Red Rum Chase**

A moderate renewal for a £100K race with the top rated runner being off 146. Winner Katachenko is not the most straightforward as he hangs badly left and he looks like he will stay further but didn't appear to when tried at two miles four. I won't be backing him to follow up. I saw Dandridge win at Doncaster but the seventeen pounds rating hike was just too much here. Third home Viconte Du Noyer was unlucky as he had no room after the last and he looks set for a good summer at some of the festivals in Ireland.

### **Nickel Coin Mares Bumper**

Two dominated the market. La Bague Au Roi dropped away tamely but the Greatrex stable had not been in the greatest of form and she looks the part to jump hurdles. That comment might not apply to Augusta Kate who is a much smaller model but she battled well and came up just short as Kayf Grace, who took a long time to win her first bumper, showed a big improvement to follow up. Third home Shattered Love and fifth Snow Leopardess were the eye catchers from the parade ring and this looked a good renewal.

### **Friday April 8th Aintree**

#### **Alder Hey Charity Handicap Hurdle**

7/1 the field and it paid to be up with the pace as Party Rock again showed his liking for the track going in at big odds. I am surprised to see Champagne at Tara running over two miles four but with all the head gear removed he seemed to stay the trip but his battling qualities are still suspect. Starchitect made his usual late mistake in third while the other two co favourites Ma Du Fou and Tycoon Prince both pulled up and you would hope they are better than they showed here especially the latter who is a great big chasing sort.

#### **Top Novice Hurdle**

Raised to Grade 1 status this year the only Champion Hurdler to win this was Granville Again in 1991 and I doubt that will change after this year. Buveur D'Air was well seen off at Cheltenham and was really made to battle by Petit Mouchoir who was about seven lengths behind him there. Both appeal more as chasers. Limini appears not to be the next Annie Power. A strange ride from Lizzie Kelly on Agrapart whose best form is in races where he has forced the pace but here he was held up here like he was suddenly going to find a turn of foot.

#### **Mildmay Novices Chase**

I have seen a lot of Blaklion this winter and kept expecting better staying novices to come along and end his winning sequence. In the end he took the RSA but the second was a non-stayer, the third bled, and the fourth broke down so it wasn't the best renewal. He had probably had enough for the season and ran a bit flat here. The staying novices look moderate and hardly look like breaking into the Gold Cup picture next season. Winner Native River is a big lazy sort and Richard Johnson just made him race and chased him all the way. Henri Parry Morgan has improved from a hopeless last of four in his first novice chase at Bangor in November and a mistake riddled non finish in his second chase to stroll home in two modest handicaps before his second here and is still hard to get a handle on. Cheltenham handicap winner Un Temps Pour Tout is one I don't trust while Out Sam just looks overrated.

#### **Melling Chase**

If it was all so easy we would all pile into 1/5 shots and be millionaires. You could see Vautour was meeting the infamous first in the back straight wrong from three or four strides off. Let's hope it doesn't affect him for the future. Only God's Own and Al Ferof were involved in the straight and God's Own gained his second Grade 1. Good horse that he is many better will never win one. Tom George gets plenty of stick but he has had another good season and the troop of promising Roger Brookhouse horses he lost to Paul Nicholls have mainly been very disappointing for their new yard.

#### **Topham Chase**

The usual wide open race. Having taken 33/1 my old favourite Mr Moonshine he was backed into 11/1 but after showing up early he faded from Valentines. I have backed both Eastlake and Fairy Rath in this race in the past

but it was hard to fancy Eastlake after three pulled ups in his last five runs including breaking blood vessels a couple of times. My other fancy Turban was never a factor and was pulled up after bleeding.

### **Sefton Novice Hurdle**

The first four from the Albert Bartlett at Cheltenham didn't turn up and this looked wide open. There was no Thistlecrack lurking in here but Ballyoptic stepped up from his wins at Ffos Las and Uttoxeter to peg back Bellshill who hung to his right after the last. A big gap back after the first two and there were plenty of poor efforts especially from Mystical Knight and Gangster.

### **Champion Bumper**

The first three from Cheltenham were in the first four here but in a different order and they look the best bumper horses around. Bacardys is from the first crop of Coastal Path a half-brother to good jump stallion Martaline and while he won his point to point at three miles he will probably be O K at two miles over hurdles. Runner up Battleford is a really solid sort who will stay well while Cheltenham winner Ballyandy looks a proper stayer. Surprise package of the race was debutante The Minch who trailed around behind early on before slicing through the field before running very green close home. Of the others I liked Any Drama on his first run for Harry Fry while third favourite Utility looked awful and ran like he looked.

## **Saturday April 9th Aintree**

### **Three Mile Handicap Hurdle**

This was run at a crawl so the form might not stand up. The only one I would take out of it is Arpege D'Alene who would have wanted a stronger pace and looks the sort to do well over fences.

### **Mersey Novice Hurdle**

Supposedly a cake walk for Yorkhill but he made it hard work by pulling and ignoring lots of the hurdles. He must have an engine to still have won and while the Champion Hurdle has been mentioned he looks a chaser. Le Prezien is ridden to come with a late run and looked like it might be enough to win for a second after the last but he was soon beaten as Yorkhill ran on again. The step up in class was just too much for Flying Angel who should make a chaser.

### **Maghull Novice Chase**

A stroll for Douvan and there were quotes for all sorts of races next season. We know nothing about the staying potential of horses by his sire Walk in the Park. He only won once and that was over a mile before running second to Motivator in the Derby. It was downhill from there and he ran once over hurdles before going to stud. Douvan doesn't look a stayer to me and the stable and owner will have others for the King George and Gold Cup.

Both The Game Changer and Fox Norton picked up more money for chasing him home while Ballybolley found this different from his handicap win at Haydock.

### **Liverpool Stayers Hurdle**

I still haven't forgiven Tom Scudamore for getting Thistlecrack beaten at Punchestown last April at 8/1 as he went for a ridiculous run up the rail with plenty of time to come around his rivals. Thistlecrack is unbeatable at the moment and surely the owners will stick to hurdles next season. This isn't Shaneshill's trip but he ran well for second while I was disappointed in Prince of Scars who looked to carry his head in the air.

### **3 Miles 1 Furlong Handicap Chase**

On the ground this was run at a very fast pace and few got home. Maggio became the second (after Bishops Road) of the National reserves to ensure that their rating is high enough to get in the race next year by running away with this. He has been around for ages and wins his share without being too consistent. Runner up Virak is highly consistent and has picked up plenty of place money this season without winning and will find it just as hard to win next season.

### **Grand National**

I first saw Rule The World in the Grade 1 two-mile novice hurdle at Punchestown in 2013 when he was 4/1 to beat Champagne Fever and Jezki. He was pulled up quickly with an injury after the third and I thought that was the end of him and was surprised when he reappeared that autumn. Our paths crossed again last October when



he was running at Tipperary in a Grade 2 Novice Chase over two and a half miles where he was easily outpaced by The Game Changer. The trip was seemingly what he wanted but it appears he won't be back next year. I couldn't have The Last Samuri at any price before the race but he ran a stormer always up with the pace and battled on well. His new rating now kicks in and he will find it very hard next season. Just to prove that National runners can come from anywhere Vics Canvas didn't run over fences until he was eleven and his one chase win was off a rating of 118. My bets all got round and I was very hopeful of Morning Assembly three out but he didn't stay and neither did Ucello Conti. I fancy next year's winner wasn't in this year's field.

### **Two-mile Handicap Hurdle**

Waiting for the last race of the meeting to get a winner is not good but Ivan Grozny at 16/1 ensured a profit for the three days by bolting up here. He had slowly been coming into form and is proof that not all Willie Mullins winners start at odds on. Runner up Automated was a clear second and should win soon.

### **Wednesday April 13th Cheltenham**

The two four novice hurdle on this card usually works out and this year's edition looked up to standard. Mister Miyagi won it well and has the scope to go over fences next season at a decent level. Runner up Solstice Star back from top class handicaps gives the form solidity in second place. Third home Rock on Oscar did nothing wrong while fourth home Whataknight needs another half mile.

The fresh horse in Voix d'Eau took the feature two miles four Handicap Chase but was aided by a slow jump from Art Mauresque at the last. Most of the other runners are regressing or have had hard seasons.

### **Thursday April 14th Cheltenham**

The Organist was winning the two four listed mares novice hurdle easily when coming down at the last. Being with Million in Mind she will be off to the sales in May and should fetch plenty as she has done little wrong all season. Winner Katie Too battles well and might stay a bit further while runner up Actinpeices has the size to do well in mare's chases next season.

A better jockey on Briery Bell and a more positive ride than at Doncaster saw her take the two four mares handicap comfortably at 9/1. Debdebdeb was held up here having more or less bolted at Ascot and she was clear in second and might find a race in the spring.

Perfect Candidate became another of the Grand National reserves to go in and just outstayed his rivals in the three two handicap chase at a huge 11/1 to make it a very good day. This was his seventh run on the bounce at Cheltenham so I imagine he will be back here in October.

The Eaglehaslanded bolted up in the three-mile handicap hurdle seemingly liking the better ground in blinkers. He might be kept going into the new season and could switch to fences.

### **Saturday April 23rd Haydock**

Winner Gunnery was easily the most forward of the runners in the mile four maiden but made hard work of it although he stuck his neck out in likable fashion. Runner up Superyacht is a big sort and is bound to improve with this trip looking a minimum for him. The mile fillies' maiden went to Oaks entry Fadillah and while she did it in a nice fashion she will have to improve massively to go to Epsom.

The eye catchers from the handicaps included Lord of the Land fifth in the seven-furlong class 2 who was not given a hard time and will be suited by a bit further. Alfred Hutchinson fifth in the class 2 mile got little help from the saddle and his new yard will have him winning soon. Sir Roderic won the class 5 three-year-old mile handicap easier than the half-length margin and can go in again.

### **Monday 25th April Naas**

A couple of decent two-year-old maidens and in the six-furlong race Teofilo's half-sister Bean Feasa for Godolphin and Jim Bolger was odds on to make a winning debut. She has plenty of size about her and when she went for home two out it looked over but the strongly ridden Psychedelic Funk collared her close home. The pair were well clear of a couple of O'Brien debutants and look useful.

The second two-year-old maiden was over five furlongs and confined to fillies and it appeared that nothing was particularly fancied despite some having very high profile relations. It went to Roly Poly a daughter of multiple Group 1 winning mare Misty For Me at 10/1 for Aiden O'Brien and Seamie Heffernan and she was not given a hard time to win. She should improve plenty but what it amounts to is guess work at this stage. Some of the

beaten fillies will no doubt improve considerably for the run including Guineas favourite Minding's full sister How.

Dermot Weld was not on course for his runners in the two-year-old races but had arrived by the time of the last (a mile three-year-old maiden at ten past eight) and when Khalid Abdullah racing manager Teddy Grimthorpe arrived as the horses paraded I imagined favourite Footbridge must be well thought of. A flashy chestnut with four white feet he took it up two out but as soon as he was challenged he turned it in tamely as first Freeman and then winner Elusive Heights came to lead. These two look useful but time will tell how good they are.

### **Tuesday April 26th Punchestown**

#### **Herald Champion Novice Hurdle**

A real end of season result. After Aintree it was a bit of a surprise to see Yorkhill out again and he did not look great before the race. It was soon clear he was in trouble and with Charbel also running well below par it was hardly Grade 1 form. Winner Don't Touch It looks like he should make a chaser but horses by Scorpion are building a reputation for not being too reliable. Petit Mouchoir again ran a good race and will be better over two and a half over fences next season.

#### **Boylesports Champion Chase.**

Plenty of reasons to take on Vautour- the trip, the right hand course, his fall at Aintree, and as with Yorkhill he didn't look great. With obvious alternative Special Tiara jumping like the fences were electrified God's Own was there to pick up the pieces again for his third Grade 1. The distance back to Clarcam was much the same as at Aintree. Simonsig looked much fitter than at Aintree in the autumn and ran an excellent race but it is difficult to see where he goes to win a race. Vautour will go back up in trip and an obvious target would be the Betfair at Haydock but we shall see.

#### **Growise Champion Novice Chase**

Nothing from either the RSL or Mildmay came on here and it looked a wide open race. I had doubts about Zabana at the trip (I can only find a couple of Hallings who have won at three miles) but he made just about all and was never really challenged. Outlander also appeared to get the trip in second while the drop in trip from the Irish National seemed to suit third home Sub Lieutenant. National winner Rule the World's reported retirement did not last long (but was subsequently confirmed) and he ran a decent sort of race. It is hard to see any Gold Cup horses coming out of this so the handicapper will have a say on their chances for next season.

#### **Other Races**

The valuable Land Rover bumper produced a good looking field but there was little form to go on and winner Coeur De Lion had the worst on offer being beaten a total of over two hundred lengths in two maiden hurdles. He was only 22/1 so better was expected but is hardly one to follow when he goes back over jumps. The one winner in the field Jenkins was half a length back with the one I liked Moulin A Vent back in third on his debut. Those in the maiden bumper looked moderate bunch and the Willie Mullins winner Cilaos Emery cannot have been showing too much to start at 100/30.

### **Wednesday April 27th Punchestown**

#### **Irish Daily Mirror Novice Hurdle**

Bellshill managed a repeat of last season- poor run at Cheltenham, second at Aintree and Grade 1 win here. He doesn't want to be in front too long but should make a decent chaser next season. Coney Island has improved no end for the step up to three miles winning a good handicap off 130 and again ran well in second and he too looks a chaser. Acapella Bourgeois made the running but didn't get home while a Genie in Abottle on only his second hurdles looked the sort to improve next season. Emerging Force looked like he had had enough for the season while it was too much for the inexperienced Bigbadjohn but he looked a nice sort.

#### **Bibby Financial Punchestown Gold Cup**

I had to take on Cue Card and while he looked well enough before the race in running backers must have been laying him like mad as he refused to settle right from the start and never looked like winning. I couldn't have Djakadam who didn't look great or Don Poli so took a chance with Road to Riches who was bound to get an easy lead. He jumped like a stag before taking a thumping fall two out where the race changed completely as

Carlingford Lough, having been ridden along from early on, arrived travelling best to win going away just as he had at Leopardstown in February. He appears not to like Cheltenham so the Gold Cup does not appear to be an option. Djakadam ran his race but it appears he doesn't get home at the trip in this grade. The Gold Cup betting for next March is very strange at the moment with an injured horse, a horse that has never jumped a fence, and a very doubtful stayer sharing favouritism.

### **Attheraces Champion Bumper**

After over a year off Moon Racer looked really wound up for this but didn't get the run of the race being chopped off very early and dropping back to last place before coming right around the field on the last bend. Having nearly got to all the way winner Blow By Blow a furlong out he had nothing left. It is to be hoped that David Pipe gets a clear run with Moon Racer from now on as this was just his fourth outing in two years. Blow By Blow who is a great big beast got an excellent ride from Katie Walsh and will be suited by two and a half over hurdles but looks a chaser. Bacardys might have been below his Aintree form but still ran well in third while the inexperienced Grotesque should do well over hurdles. I wasn't impressed with Aspen Colorado when I saw him at Leopardstown and he was well beaten here.

### **Other Races**

The blinkers were rightly taken off Irish Cavalier as he dropped to handicap company at two and a half and he was far too good under good claimer Jonathan Moore even with top weight at a very nice 9/1. For a €100K race this was not a great field but he will go up to a rating of about 160 which will make it hard for him and there might be more races in Ireland for him than at home.

Runner up Colms Dream has gone up from 95 to 139 this season and his trainer Karl Thornton does very well with only a few horses.

In the listed mare's bumper, The Nipper who hung badly left at Sandown ducked out through the rails to the right for no apparent reason when going easily in front and looks one to avoid even if she is talented. Augusta Kate returned to winning form and really tries but she is not a big one and might struggle over hurdles. Her stable companion Glens Harmony ran a fine race on debut and this full sister to Glens Melody looked a decent sort.

### **Saturday May 7th Haydock**

After his decent run at Cheltenham's April meeting and back up in trip on good ground Whataknight looked well treated in the two mile seven handicap hurdle and I was amazed to see 22/1 available on Betfair in the morning. Always well placed he had it won at the second last. He looks like a chaser but just doesn't go on soft ground so could be out early in the autumn.

It looked likely that Gwafa would come out second best when All Set To Go challenged at the last but he found plenty and went away again on the run in to take the Swinton Hurdle. Ch'tibello came from well off the pace for third but wasn't gaining much on the run in. You would think all three will stay over hurdles for the season and they look well suited to the faster ground.

In the flat races Shaiyem took the three-year-old mile handicap with plenty in hand and you would imagine he will be back here for the Silver Bowl later in the month. So Beloved easily won the listed seven-furlong Spring Trophy and Don't Touch won just as easily in the conditions sprint and must take his unbeaten record up to Pattern Company now.

### **Friday May 13th Aintree**

Nathans Pride has missed big chunks of time over the last couple of years but had the two mile four handicap hurdle under control from two out and off his mark there will be plenty of opportunities for him in the next few weeks if he stays sound. The favourite Saint Charles has started market leader in five of his six runs and won just the one and is one to avoid.

I have been watching Alzammaar over the winter and he has finally hit form on better ground and he paid the expenses at 5/1 in the three-mile handicap hurdle. It wasn't the best of races and another ratings hike up to near 140 will make it harder.

It was hard to find the winner of the point to point bumper as Gustave Mahler had been pulled up in his last two points and it is doubtful if any of the runners are any great shakes.

# HERITAGE HANDICAPS COMPETITION 2016

The Heritage Handicap Competition is back soon for another season, a challenge for all you flat racing fans. It will run through the Flat Season starting with the Epsom Dash on the Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> June and ending with the Cesarewitch in October.

Just select 3 horses to be placed in the first four (or three if 15 runners or less) for each of the selected Heritage Handicap races (full list of races available on website or via post). Points will be awarded as per the tote pool dividend (win and place). If you select more than one placed horse, you will score the points gained from all placed horses. A league table will be compiled with the total points scored.

To add a bit of extra skill, those who successfully pick the exacta and trifecta of any particular race will go into another league. This will be run separately to the main league.

The prize money will be divided as follows: 80% of the entry fees will go into the main competition with 20% being given to the winner of the exacta/trifecta league. If nobody selects an exacta/trifecta throughout the whole season, the prize money for that league will be given to the Injured Jockeys Fund.

**It costs just £10 to enter for the whole season with all entry fees added to the prize fund. If you wish to send entry fee electronically, please e mail [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) for details. E-vouchers can also be used as part payment of the entry fee. To claim please e mail [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com) .**

**To enter please complete slip below and return to NRC  
at 124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire. WA14 5NZ**

**Selections are accepted via text, email or answer phone.**

Each entry will be acknowledged and an entry number allocated. If entrants also require a paper copy of the rules please send a SAE with the entry form - internet entrants will receive confirmation via e mail of course.



## HERITAGE HANDICAP ENTRY FORM

Please accept this entry for the 2016 Competition. I am also  
enclosing entry fee of £10 per person (payable to NRC).

Name.....Address.....

.....

.....

Phone/Mobile.....E mail.....

# DESERT ISLAND RACECOURSES

## (MARK JOHNSTON – RACECOURSE COMMENTATOR)

***If you could only work at eight racecourses, anywhere in the world, for the rest of your career which ones would you choose.***

In alphabetical order -

**Aintree Grand National Festival (UK)** - The Grand National is the ultimate commentating challenge and, as golf is such an individual sport commentating is an individual skill, so commentating as part of the National team is like being part of the Ryder Cup.

**Auteuil (France)** - The home of French jump racing situated in the Bois de Boulogne, Paris. Only 15 minutes on the metro from Notre Dame. A true testing of jumping and a wonderful spectacle with the Eiffel Tower in the background. The two day "48Hrs of Jumps" Festival in early November is a fantastic meeting to attend.

**Doha (Qatar)** - Although currently only a tenth of the scale of near neighbour Meydan in Dubai, the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club in Doha is a small racecourse with big future. I first went there last December, between Christmas and New Year, for their Qatar Derby Festival and was really impressed. I have since been signed up as the English Commentator (they have an English & Arabic Commentary) for their main meetings including the Emir's Sword in February.

**Keeneland (USA)** - I've called at twelve race tracks in the USA and of course was resident Track Announcer (commentator) at Churchill Downs in Louisville Kentucky for five years but one track I haven't called, but would love to, is the other main Kentucky track Keeneland in Lexington. They race two month-long "boutique" meets during the year (one in the Spring and one in the Autumn) and every day gets a huge crowd with top quality racing. One of America's very best tracks.

**Kempton Park (UK)** - If the powers-that-be in the UK had the same system as in the US that one commentator calls a certain track all the time I would go for Kempton instantly. Not only is it the closest to my home in SW London it also has one of the best commentary boxes in the country. The jump racing is top class and I really enjoy the all-weather evenings which have an American racing feel.

**Les Landes (Jersey)** - One of the most beautiful race courses in the world and I have been lucky enough to be involved there for 25 years. As well as commentating I am now on the Jersey Race Club Committee. Tremendous fun and throw back to how racing used to be.

**Pau (France)** - If you love jump racing, red wine and cheese this is the place for you! The cosmopolitan city of Pau itself, situated in the shadow of the Pyrenees, is a wonderful mixture of old and new with a combination of French, Spanish, Basque and British influences. After Napoleon was pushed back into France by Wellington's forces many of the British officers settled in the region hence the proliferation of tea rooms in Pau as well as Rugby, Polo and of course jumping racing! The race course is small and quaint but the fences are huge with the double bank on the Cross Country course "Le Grand Fromage" the daddy of them all. The course is twinned with Cheltenham and races during the winter from early December to the end of February. I have been offered a chance to commentate there - which will be a thrill.

**Suffolk Downs (USA)** - I have been a visitor, guest track announcer, race analyst etc. for many years at the "East Boston Oval". Although the track has fallen on hard times over the past decade or so it is still a lovely traditional old style US racetrack and is situated in one of America's great cities - Boston.

***What is the hardest part of your job, apart from the travelling?***

Having had perfect eyesight for most of my life, and having just turned 50, at present it is trying out and practicing with several different pairs of glasses to match up with binoculars, different light conditions and the angles of various commentary boxes to the track. Luckily my distance vision is still perfect but reading in poor light is now an issue without 'specs so it is a case of trial and error. Also, as a whole compared to the rest of the world, British commentary boxes are awful. Just finding a way of getting all your equipment out safely and positioned in the box is taxing if not impossible.

***What would you say to any teenagers who wanted to get into racecourse commentating?***

The same as the late / great Raleigh Gilbert said to me as a teenager, "Homework, homework, homework and when you think you've done enough - more homework". I would also say make sure you get to call some Point-to-Points - without doubt the best grounding you can get as a young commentator - and get a really good rounded education.



***What are your first racing memories both off and on-course.***

I would argue watching the 1967 Grand National (Foinavon) on TV but as I was only about 14 months old at the time that may be a nostalgia enhanced memory. All I ever wanted to be from my earliest memories was a racecourse commentator ever since I asked my late mother & father (who were my biggest supporters and biggest fans and to whom I owe everything) if I could go and see "Gee Gees" and they took me to Market Rasen - I was hooked immediately.

***Name two horses to follow.***

BATEEL (4-y-o filly by Dubawi, trained by Davis Simcock)

Never raced as a 2-y-o but won all three of her starts last year (at Salisbury, Goodwood and Newmarket) at 1m2f and 1m4f twice. Caught my eye when I called her losing her unbeaten record to a more positively ridden stablemate at Goodwood last time in her first try at Listed company. Given a better ride she would have won that day and it will be a surprise if she doesn't go on to win soon at Listed level or better.

JAZZY TIMES (3-y-o colt by Discreetly Mine, trained by Bob Baffert, USA)

Made his long awaited debut at Churchill Downs on KY Derby Day when winning a 6 1/2 furlong maiden by 2 3/4 lengths. Bob Baffert has made no secret of the regard in which he holds this son of Discreetly Mine who runs in the American Pharoah colours of Ahmed Zayat and who is stabled in same stall at Baffert's Santa Anita base as last year's Triple Crown hero. So he has big boots to fill but he already looks a prime candidate for a race like the Haskell Invitational (Grade 1) at Monmouth this summer, a race won by Bob Baffert a record eight times. Should appear on plenty of big days when US racing is covered on TV over here.

***What is your most embarrassing on-air moment?***

I take it this is betting without my RUK French Racing partner in crime Claude Charlet whose use of colourful language often leads me to believe I will never work again in TV. I was once commentating at Tweseldown Point-to-Point course (where I also filled the job as Stipe and PR) and was going through some form with the Chairman of the Stewards up in the tower as the horses arrived at the start. I said something along the lines of "I have no idea why X is favourite for this race, it pulls like stink, can't jump and probably won't get round". We then realised some guys at the bottom of the tower were shouting up to us say my mic was still on "but thanks for the info". The favourite unseated two out (no harm done) to my relief!

***What can The BHA do better***

First of all, bring the UK back into line with other racing nations around the world and disqualify horses if they "prejudice the finishing position of another runner" and therefore place the offender behind the horse(s) affected. Stewards Inquires are part and parcel of racing and it is simply ridiculous that in Britain you can simply barge your way to victory. So what if that means occasionally an unaffected runner-up gets promoted to the win as the first-past-the-post interfered with the original third. I'd also like to see less handicaps and more imaginative race conditions for example "Non winners of two", "Non winners of three", "Non winners of a race in 6 months / 12 months" etc. Also end retrospective handicapping. If a handicapper gives a horse a mark he should stick with that until the next run - putting a horse up several pounds whilst it is stood in it's stable because another horse has shown improved form is wrong. Again, so what if that horse is "well in" for one run - how many of those actually win?



Thanks again to Brian Goodwill for compiling this article.

# COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

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## 59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

The latest '59's' winners are as follows – each now wins the monthly £50 prize!

The winners are based on the bonus ball drawn on the first Saturday Lotto draw each month.

**2<sup>nd</sup> April (#15) Helen Goodwill from Altrincham & 7<sup>th</sup> January (#28) Phil Evans from Sale.**

All numbers are currently allocated – thanks to all for supporting the draw.

## SATURDAY NAPS CHALLENGE 2015-16

Congratulations to **Rob McDermott** from Cheadle Hulme who is both the seasonal winner and also the round 4 winner. Rule The World helped Rob to his success but there were several others who finished well in round 4 including runner up **Phil Evans** from Sale (also seasonal runner up) with long-time leader **Harold Jones** (from Ruthin) a creditable third and our leading lady entrant **Floss Howes** (from Chester) taking 4<sup>th</sup> spot. Thanks again for taking part this winter – hopefully we shall start all over again in November!

### Round 4 Scores

|       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| 45.25 | <b>Rob McDermott</b> |
| 38    | <b>Phil Evans</b>    |

### Seasonal Scores

|       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| 50.23 | <b>Rob McDermott</b> |
| 43.62 | <b>Phil Evans</b>    |
| 41.5  | <b>Harold Jones</b>  |
| 29.5  | <b>Floss Howes</b>   |

## ALEX BIRD CHALLENGE 2016

Round 2 of this year's challenge covered the Aintree Festival as usual. **Harry Sandland** from Leigh finished top in the Round whilst John's 'other half' **Linda Boswell** is showing him how it should be done in the overall table at the 'half way' stage.

Aintree Scores: Harold Sandland 170pts; Phil Evans 163pts

Combined scores after two rounds: Linda Boswell 377pts; Jim Aitkenhead 350pts; Harry Sandland 338pts; Guy Weaver 333pts.

We now move onto the two flat meetings at Royal Ascot & York (Ebor) and if any new/existing members want to join in you can now enter at half the entry fee (£5). Please contact John Boswell on 01704 576521 should you wish to join in the fun!

# MARTEN JULIEN'S ROYAL ASCOT GUIDES 2016

## Marten Julian's Royal Ascot Bulletin Books 2016

Enhanced for this year's edition by being published as two books to incorporate the very latest news. I am confident that this new format will ensure you receive a far more comprehensive and accurate coverage of this great meeting.

### Part One – Published and Despatched on Thursday 9 June

This will contain my previews of the races on the first two days of Royal Ascot, the Dark Two-Year-Old feature and the Top Handicappers. The races will be the Queen Anne Stakes, King's Stand Stakes, St James's Palace Stakes, Duke of Cambridge Stakes, Prince of Wales's Stakes and the Royal Hunt Cup.

The Two-Year-Old feature and Top Handicappers are included in this section in case any of the selections run on the first two days.

### Part Two – Published and Despatched on Tuesday 14 June

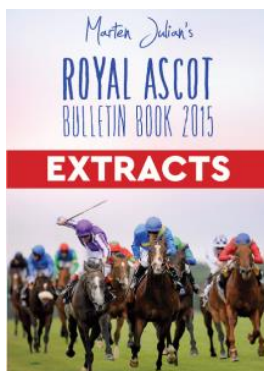
This will contain my previews of the races on the third, fourth and fifth days of Royal Ascot and the Premier List Update (from the Dark Horses Annual). The races will be the Ribblesdale Stakes, Gold Cup, King Edward VII Stakes, Commonwealth Cup, Coronation Stakes, Hardwicke Stakes, Diamond Jubilee Stakes and the Wokingham Stakes.

Includes updates on horses featured in my Dark Horses Annual. Special mention is made of horses that have been specifically prepared for the meeting, notably in the handicaps.

### Past years results:

Last year I pinpointed seven horses for the meeting. Unfortunately, only three ran, but they each won – Arab Dawn 6/1, Balios 3/1 and Time Test at 15/8. The previous year two of my horses ran, with one winner and a third, and the highlight in 2013 was Elidor at 20/1.

If you have not bought our services before, please contact Rebecca or Jodie on 01539 741 007 [rebecca@martenjulian.com](mailto:rebecca@martenjulian.com) to request past copies of our work. We also have a booklet with extracts from last year's edition.



# MARTEN JULIAN GUIDES COMPETITION

We have 3 great prizes on offer courtesy of Marten Julian publications:

1<sup>st</sup> Prize - Royal Ascot Package (value £50)

2<sup>nd</sup> Prize - Hard copy books (value £20)

3<sup>rd</sup> Prize - PDF books (value £10)

Given the short time frame available the closing date for entries will be Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June at 6pm sharp!

I shall ask two questions about each day's racing for the Royal Meeting. Answers to be sent to NRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, Cheshire M33 3LB or via e mail to [info@northernracingclub.com](mailto:info@northernracingclub.com)

In the event of a tie a draw will be held to determine the winners.

1. Tuesday – How many winners has Aiden O'Brien trained in the St James Palace Stakes?
2. Tuesday – Name the last two dual winners of the Kings Stand Stakes
3. Wednesday – Name the past Hunt Cup winner that may also be an ingredient for making bread?
4. Wednesday – Name the last dual winner of the Prince of Wales Stakes
5. Thursday – The Queen won the Gold Cup with Estimate in which year?
6. Thursday – How many Irish trained winners have won the Ribblesdale Stakes since 2001?
7. Friday – In which country is 2014 Queens Vase winner Hartnell now trained for Godolphin?
8. Friday – Which inaugural race was first run in 2015?
9. Saturday – The last 5 'Wokingham' winners all finished in xxx position before winning. What position is xxx?
10. Saturday – In the last 20 years which horse finished 8<sup>th</sup> in a maiden hurdle at Cartmel two years before winning a Grade 1 sprint at the meeting?

I have made the questions fairly tricky given the value of the prizes on offer although all should be solved if members are happy to spend a little time and effort in digging out the answers.

So even if you don't find them all it may still be worth entering??

# EASYFUNDRAISING SCHEME FOR NRC MEMBERS

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online this year, you could be raising a free donation for Northern Racing Club?

There are nearly 3,000 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, thetrainline and Sainsbury's, who'll give a free donation to Northern Racing Club, it doesn't cost you a penny extra. Head here to sign up <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/northernracingclub> and collect free donations on gifts, groceries and much more.

If you shop on your mobile or tablet, get the free easyfundraising app and you'll never miss a donation. To get it, visit the App Store or Google Play and search for 'easyfundraising' or find out more here: [www.easyfundraising.org.uk/raise-more/easyfundraising-app](http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/raise-more/easyfundraising-app)

***Thanks for your support!***

## NRC COMMITTEE/OFFICIALS 2016

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***Next copy deadline date is Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July***

***This is earlier than usual due to the Summer Hols!***

