

Racin'



Issue 374

April/May 2022

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS 2022

This renewal reminder is only for members who receive 'paper' copies of the club magazine.

If you have not yet renewed you will see a coloured dot on the address label this time.

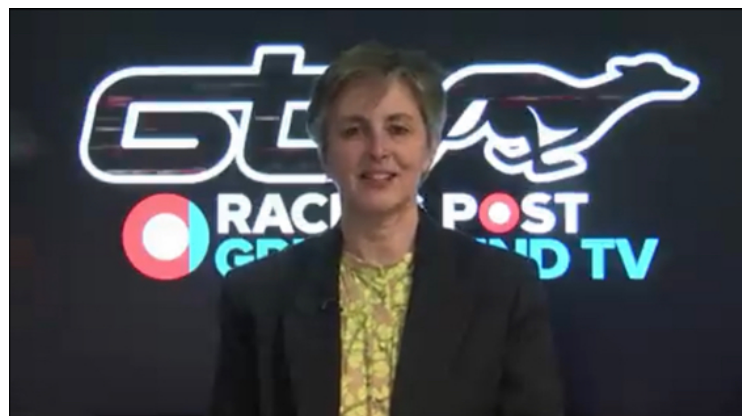
If you have sent the old £10 subscription rate please remit a further £2 with the new rate of £12pa being effective from 1st March 2022.

Please send any cheques (payable to North & Midlands Racing Club) to Helen Goodwill, Membership Secretary, North & Midlands Racing Club, 124 Lindsell Rd, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 5NZ.

Any 'paper' non-renewals will automatically be added to the online mailing list where we have a current e mail address.

TANYA STEVENSON INTERVIEW

Tanya Stevenson was part of the Channel 4 Racing Team for over 19 years until horse racing terrestrial coverage moved to ITV in 2017. Find out what Tanya has been doing since the Channel 4 days in an interview with Phil Evans – see pages 4 and 5.



ANDY ORKNEY – UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

Andy is set a series of questions about his racing career by Brian Goodwill – see page 7 to read how he got on.



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COMPETITION NEWS & RESULTS

59's DRAW RESULTS UPDATE

The latest '59's' winner is as follows:

March 5th – 48 – Andy White (North Yorkshire)

Andy wins the usual £50pm prize. The winning number is determined by the 'bonus ball' drawn in the UK Lottery on the first Saturday of the month.

Thanks to all who continue to support the draw.

We currently have one number available (03) so if you want to join the draw please contact Phil Evans (see committee panel on last page). It costs £1pm to join the draw payable either yearly or quarterly.

ALEX BIRD COMPETITION – 2022

Thanks to Mark Banks and Mike Wheeler for running this event again in 2022 and it is pleasing to see that the competition is again well supported with a higher entry than last year seen!

The total prize fund is now confirmed as £610 and will be shared as follows:

For each of the four rounds the winner will receive £70 and the runner up £30.

For the seasonal challenge the winner will receive £120, runner up £60 and 3rd place £30.

The provisional result (at time of writing) for the Cheltenham Round is as follows:

Winner :**Maureen Dawson** (Merseyside).

Runner Up: **Ted Halewood** (Merseyside).

Whilst just missing out on the prize money, Phil Doyle (3rd) and Steve Cawley (4th) also had excellent scores in the first round.

Only a short wait until the next round, with all three days of the Aintree Festival being covered before we move onto the two flat racing rounds.

COMING SOON – HERITAGE HANDICAPS COMPETITION 2022!

With the (turf) flat season starting soon it is worth reminding flat racing followers that this competition starts on Derby day in June!

Helen Goodwill will be sending reminders to past entrants and the entry form for the 2022 competition will be in the next issue of Racin' which is due out in late May.

Details will also be available on the club website in early May.

NH SATURDAY NAPS 2021-22

The winner of the second-round prize of £80 was **Mike Wheeler** from Greater Manchester with **Brendan O'Meara** from Malpas winning the runner up prize of £40.

In Round 3, after three weeks, **Jim Aitkenhead** is just ahead of **Frank Turley**.

In the supplemental challenge for the most winners, **Ted Halewood** is currently in the lead with 10 wins.

In the seasonal challenge the leader board as at Mar 19th was as below:

Tot	Name & Entry No.
72.72	Michael Wheeler 89
57.32	Brendan O'Meara 56
50.03	Jim Aitkenhead 29
46	Brian James 22
43.6	Diane Bates 68
41	Cieran Cassidy 87
39.3	Harold Woodward 50
38.1	Elaine Waddington 122
34	Dave Bates 44
33.94	Jason Sandland 74
32.2	Rob McDermott 28
29.4	Mary Claydon 05



BETFRED

THREE SPRING STABLE VISITS ACROSS OUR REGION

SAM ENGLAND STABLE VISIT – THURSDAY MARCH 31ST



We are delighted to be able to visit Sam England's yard at Guisley, Near Leeds. The stable mainly caters for jumpers, with husband Jonathan riding most of them, albeit there are also a number of flat horses in the yard. Sam also has her own racing club group costing £500pa.

The yard sent out around 20 winners (flat/jumps) last year and is well on course to better the number of jumps winners again in the current season.

March 31st has been chosen as there is also racing at Wetherby in the afternoon with a 2.15pm start advertised with a seven race jumps card advertised

SARAH HOLLINSHEAD STABLE VISIT – SATURDAY APRIL 30TH



Next up is a visit to Sarah Hollinshead's yard at Upper Longdon in Staffordshire. The stables were run previously by Reg Hollinshead who trained over 1400 winners there prior to his death in 2013.

The yard caters for both flat and jumps horses albeit has achieved more winners on the flat in recent times.

April 30th has been chosen as there is also racing at Uttoxeter in the afternoon (being the first meeting of the 'new' jumps season! First race is scheduled at 1.43pm with a seven-race card planned.



OLIVER GREENALL STABLE VISIT – FRIDAY MAY 20TH

Whilst Oliver's yard, near Malpas, mainly accommodates jumpers, there will no doubt be some equine residents still in full training for the summer meetings, as well as the smaller flat racing string.

Oliver has his own ownership racing club costing £40pm and trains for several other well-known syndicates if anyone is considering shared ownership.

May 20th has been chosen as there is racing on at Haydock Park in the afternoon, which is about an hour away, by car!

Please book places on any of these visits as soon as possible by contacting **Dave Bates** (see last page of magazine for contact details). You will then be advised of final arrangements for the visits, approximately one week before the scheduled date.

NMRC members may also bring guests, if wishing to attend stable visits. As we also like to leave a donation to the stable staff social fund on our visits, by way of thanking the team for their hospitality, we do ask all adults attending to send a donation of £5pp to the club when booking places. Dave will advise how to send this.

If members support these visits we will plan some more similar events in the early summer and autumn months. If anyone has any connections with training yards they would like us to visit please drop us a line!

TANYA STEVENSON CHATS ABOUT LIFE AFTER C4 RACING

Interviewed by Phil Evans

Readers will no doubt recall the days of C4 Racing when Tanya and 'Big Mac' gave television viewers all the betting news from the courses during the afternoon's racing coverage with Tanya also often giving shrewd long priced winning selections on the 'Morning Line' for those who got up early enough to back 'price-wise' and the 'charity bet' selections before the bookies chopped back their prices! In those days Tanya was often referred to by John McCririck as 'The Female'. For those not 'in the know' this may have seemed a slightly derogatory nickname but as Tanya explains, the name came about after a Scottish newspaper, in an article about the C4 racing coverage, mentioned John and another 'female' in their piece. This was in the days when Tanya was less known to the TV viewing public, and the journalist concerned didn't bother to find out her name!. That's how the nickname 'The Female' came about and it stuck for many years with the C4 team!

Anyway let's step back a little in time to recall how Tanya got involved in her TV racing career. Tanya was brought up in the London area where her father was a bookmaker. By the age of nine Tanya was fully versed in 'tic tac' and would soon become a part of the family business and held a bookmaker's licence since the age of 20. That ultimately led to a job with SIS on the betting information team. In 1997 Tanya joined the C4 Racing production team in the role of 'Production Secretary' and covered many of the 'behind the scenes' tasks for the show.

Tanya was more than happy in the role 'behind the scenes', although in late March 2001, when foot and moth disease was causing havoc in the UK, Tanya was collecting viewers feedback on the impacts of F&M on the sport and was unexpectedly asked to read out some of the feedback live 'on air'. That must have impressed the show's producers and soon Tanya became a regular contributor in front of the cameras until the C4 coverage ended in December 2016. So, all told, Tanya was part of the C4 team for over 19 years. During these years Tanya also expanded her expertise into Racing and Sports journalism as well as other 'punditry' roles.

As the C4 role was coming to an end, a new opportunity came onto the horizon. Tanya, and another family member, set up a coffee shop in Warlingham Surrey called Coffee at 412. The premises were badly run down when taken over in 2016, and a full refurbishment was required, with trading starting in October 2017. This was very much a hands-on operation with Tanya also training as a barista and doing much of the day-to-day work involved. The business was eventually sold in December 2020, not because of covid-19 but because Tanya moved up to Yorkshire at that time. At some future juncture Tanya says that she would love to open another similar operation 'up North'.

2017 brought around another opportunity back on the racing scene when Tanya was asked by ITV racing to provide 'racing statistics' for their shows. Typically this would involve producing all the relevant statistics in a 'racing pack' for the ITV team to use in the coverage on the day with additional live support given during the afternoon on such topics as market movers etc. So, whenever you hear the ITV 'team' quoting various facts and figures, these will have come from Tanya! Unlike the old 'on screen' role, Tanya can do all her ITV work from home nowadays.

Greyhounds have been another favourite sport of Tanya since her early days of bookmaking at the local tracks and in the past has owned several dogs herself. Nowadays, her involvement with the sport is through the RPGTV Greyhound Channel where Tanya presents the programme once a week and also produces it twice a week. This involves travelling down to London where she can catch up with other family members again. This service can be viewed on Sky, Freesat and via the Racing Post website.

In terms of favourite racecourses, Tanya nominates Aintree, Newcastle & York and as a favourite racehorse, Into The Red. As regards the latter, Tanya admits that it is her pocket talking really. This is because when standing in the ring for the 1996 Becher Chase meeting, she decided to 'take on' the well supported favourite, Young Hustler and had a book that would have cost her a packet had it won. In the end she was saved by the 12yo Into The Red (who was 7lbs out of the handicap) winning by over 3 lengths for Mary Reveley/Tony Dobbins.

Another current role of Tanya's is being on the committee of the Horseracing Bettors Forum. This group was set up in 2015 with some financial assistance from the BHA, albeit there are no other direct ties. It is a means for punters to share views on the sector so that the group can lobby for changes. I had to admit to Tanya that I was not aware it existed. That said, their list of achievements to date is quite impressive and includes:

- Declaration of wind operations
- Accurate race distances
- 48-hour declarations
- Sectional timing figures
- Avoidance of advertised race times clashing
- More accurate going reporting



The photo to the left shows the C4 Racing team towards the end of that era. Many others had left the programme since it was first aired including the likes of Lesley Graham, Alastair Down, John Oaksey, Stewart Machin, Graham Goode, Derek Thompson, John Francome, Mike Cattermole, Brough Scott and of course John McCririck. So, it can be seen that Tanya is one of the few members of the C4 Racing team that lasted the full 19+ years! Whilst Tanya does not keep in touch with all the team she does try and keep in contact with Rishi Persad and Richard Hoiles in particular.

In the short time it took to hold this interview it became apparent that Tanya is an excellent example of someone who is very dedicated and enjoys working long hours and is good at multi-tasking. This is further evidenced by the fact that in 2020 (during lockdown) Tanya started studying for a degree in history and politics with the Open University.

The first year has gone well and whilst the course is part time, and will take a little longer to complete than a full time University course, I am sure that Tanya's will to succeed will see this project 'over the finish line' in a positive fashion. Her motto is 'Never say 'if only'' and hopefully this article will help inspire others who may not have achieved their full potential at school but in later life still want to aspire to some bigger challenges.

When not working or studying for the degree Tanya still likes to have a bet – besides racing and greyhounds she also follows, golf, darts and cricket. Virtually all her bets will be at the local bookies 'in cash' albeit like many punters gets frustrated that many shops will not take larger bets nowadays.

Whilst also frustrated by the way the Greyhound and Horse Racing industries are going in recent years, and the state of the bookmaking sector nowadays, when posed the question 'What one thing would you change in racing if you could?' The decisive answer was to 'reduce the number of meetings being held and make racing more competitive'. I am sure many of our readers will concur with that view.

Even though Tanya's list of achievements would be enough for most people, there are several others that we have not even touched upon here. When asked what her proudest achievement was in her career to date the rather unexpected response was 'When I was asked to speak at the House of Commons!'

With this article published after the Cheltenham, no festival tips were requested. I did however ask if Tanya had any fancies for the Grand National. The two she liked most at the time we spoke (just before Cheltenham) were Fiddlerontheroof (25/1) and if it gets into the last 40 at final declarations, School Boy Hours (33/1). Wishing Tanya good luck with these two and good luck with the degree course and her future career opportunities!

NMRC's GRAND NATIONAL SWEEPSTAKE

NMRC will be repeating its Grand National sweepstake for 2022. It will again cost £5 per entry with no maximum number of tickets sold – last year 60 tickets were sold and the prize fund was £300. Everyone who buys a ticket is allocated a horse in the race! Members may also purchase additional tickets for family/friends.

The prize fund will be allocated in the following proportions:

- 1st place – 50%
- 2nd place – 25%
- 3rd place – 15%
- 4th place – 10%

HOW TO ENTER

There will be three ways to enter this year, as below:

1. Postal entries can be accepted until Friday April 8th. Please send to NMRC at 53 Dalebrook Rd, Sale, M33 3LB together with cheque (payable to NMRC) for number of entries required. Please include name/address/email/phone details.
2. Online entries can be made until 6pm Friday April 8th with online bank payments accepted (contact Phil Evans at info@northernracingclub.com for bank details to remit to).
3. In person at the Aintree Preview event on Wed April 6th – details available on page ten in this issue of Racin' magazine.

HOW THE DRAW IS MADE & PRIZES ARE ALLOCATED

1. An online draw* (using a random number generator) will be made at 8pm on Friday 8th April and the race card numbers 1-40 allocated to those who have purchased tickets. The draw details will then be made available via e mail and also club Facebook page before 9am on the day of the race. Entrants who do not have internet access will be advised by phone/text as regards the race card number they have been allocated. *To watch the draw please contact Phil Evans for the link to the online event.
2. In the event that more than 40 tickets are sold, the first 40 tickets will be allocated a race card number(1-40) before a second draw commences. For example, if 60 tickets are sold again this year, twenty horses will have two tickets allocated to them. It follows that if two tickets are on the same horse, any prize won will be shared equally.
3. Should less than 40 tickets be sold it may be possible that a horse may win a prize where no ticket has been allocated. If this happens then the next horse to finish will be allocated the prize instead.
4. If less than four horses finish, the unused prize(s) will be shared equally between the places filled by those that do finish.

OTHER DETAILS

We shall have a standby option of using the 'virtual grand national' result instead, should anything happen to stop the 'real thing' being run this time or declared void.

Prizes will be forwarded to the winners bank accounts as soon as possible after the date of the race.



ANDY ORKNEY'S RACING SPOTLIGHT

COMPILED By BRIAN GOODWILL

WHEN DID YOU START IN RACING?

I had my first ride in the Cambridgeshire Harriers Members race at Cottenham on 9 February 1980 finishing second on Coracle trained by John and Jane Thelwall and owned by Peter Thelwall. I had never previously been to a point to point or racing, I slept in the horsebox on the way to the races and rode in the first race. I worked in the Thelwall's yard which was mainly eventing and show jumping during my gap year but after that first ride, I was only interested in racing.

After leaving university I rode out for W A Stephenson and Mick Naughton and began to have a few rides in point to points and amateur races. Golden Ty, owned and trained by Hartlepool car mechanic Vic Hall, was the horse that raised my profile. I won 4 hunter chases on him and finished second in the 1985 Welsh National at 100/1. I turned professional in 1987 and retired in 1993 having ridden 103 winners including one in Georgia.

YOUR STIRRUP IRON BROKE APPROACHING BECHER'S IN THE 1985 FOXHUNTERS. TAKE US THROUGH THAT AGAIN

Riding Golden Ty, my iron snapped on landing over the previous fence and so I took the other foot out of the iron and carried on. In 1985 Becher's Brook was the last fence in the world one would wish to be approaching without irons. He was an amazing horse and would have won had I been of any assistance as we were only beaten a few lengths.

DID YOU ENJOY YOUR TIME AS A RACECOURSE STEWARD?

I certainly enjoyed the lunches but it was an easy decision to give it up when I became a part time Racecourse Judge, mainly because the judging was paid.

RELATE AN UNUSUAL STORY FROM YOUR TIME AS A COMMENTATOR

We had a runner, Little Red, at a Market Rasen point-to-point where I was commentating. He fell at the third fence and while I was trying to describe the race action to my adoring public, I was also watching Little Red jumping over the rails into the betting ring, causing mayhem and then jumped a big gate out of the racecourse onto the road. My wife Barbara and a friend drove off in hot pursuit, encountering ploughs, harrows and other farm machinery in every gate way until they found Little Red in someone's garden several miles away without a scratch on him. He turned out to be useless. I hope they didn't say the same about my commentating career.

WHAT DO YOU DO NOW?

I am enjoying my 33rd year running my Optometrist practice in Wensleydale. I still ride out a couple of times a week in Middleham for Jedd O'Keeffe.

ANY PARTICULAR FUNNY STORY YOU CAN RELATE FROM YOUR TIME AS A JOCKEY?

I rode in a juvenile hurdle for Mick Easterby at Sedgefield one day. He had 3 runners and as I was on the least fancied of the trio. I wasn't particularly surprised when he didn't speak to me in the parade ring before the race. However, having pulled up when the filly tired, I was walking back in and saw Mick walking towards me. I waited for him to stop spitting and put his spotted hankie away before I started to explain how the race had gone. He interrupted saying, "Who are you?" When I told him he put his finger to his mouth in a hushing sign and walked away.

WHAT WERE THE BEST HORSES YOU RODE?

Edberg was useful right-handed and we won a nice 2-mile chase at Sandown. He was favourite for the Grand Annual at Cheltenham but was never as good left-handed. I won a race at the Grand National meeting over the Mildmay fences aboard Howe Street and beat R. Dunwoody and P.Scudamore in a 3-horse race at Newbury on him. They were both trained by Howard Johnson for whom I was briefly stable jockey.

ANY RACING AMBITIONS LEFT?

I think the only Racecourse job I haven't done is the vet's. At 7 years the training is too long.

WHAT WOULD YOU PUT IN RACING'S ROOM 101?

Water jumps and Mick Easterby

Oscar saves the day for student punters By HAROLD HEYS

IT CAN BE quite a challenge, finding summat interesting for just about every issue of Racin'. So in the last issue I came up with an idea for readers to weigh in with a couple of hundred words or so on a story of a day's racing during two years of Covid. I didn't hold my breath and wasn't surprised when editor Phil Evans reported on deadline day: "Not a sausage." Even though I'd offered £25 for charity to the best entry.

In some desperation, I emailed youngest granddaughter Imogen who is at Manchester University. She had been quite excited about going to Haydock Park for the Grand National Trial in mid-February with scores of fellow students and I'd given her a tip to pass round her mates.

I'll keep it short. Her pet dog is called Oscar, but everybody calls him Mr Bear. I couldn't work out why.



Something about Oscar Bear? Anyway, there was a lot of money on the morning of the race for Ben Clarke's eight-year-old The Galloping Bear and I reckoned it only had Haydock specialist Bristol de Mai to beat.

We'd taken Imogen to Haydock when she was about 10 and, with some helpful coaching and short-priced winners, she had managed to back five winners out of five races. We left before the last as she would have been beyond insufferable if No 6 had gone in.

She had a system. She watched closely as the horses walked round the paddock and, if one looked at her and smiled, they went on the short-list. However, if they stopped to relieve themselves – off the short-list they went. Don't knock it. Five winners on the trot... Back to National trial day. Of course, being an expert after that one visit she gave The Galloping Bear to everyone she met. The morning odds tumbled from around 10-1 and to a tremendous roar from the, by now well-oiled, youngsters it came through the mud to overtake Bristol de Mai and win comfortably at an SP of 9-2 under Ben Jones.

The Bear's victory helped to offset the cost of the on-course drinks and the disappointment of the universities day-at-the-races gang being confined to what used to be called the "silver" ring. No access to the paddock, so Imogen couldn't bring her psychic powers into play as the runners in the other races paraded for her

inspection. But went the day well, from all accounts.

Imogen sent me a few pars about it. She was most complimentary about the first-aid and recovery area which



was kept busy with a steady stream of youngsters rather worse for wear. I said she could have the for-charity pony I'd offered for a contribution to our magazine and she asked that it should go off to a fund for Ukrainian refugees. Only disappointment following the day out was that she and her pals had been looking forward to backing The Galloping Bear in the Grand National. I explained that the horse hadn't even been entered for the race. The former successful pointer had only had a handful of races – previous outing was a win in the Surrey National at Lingfield – and Ben Clarke reckoned Aintree could wait for a year or two.

Photos

(Above) Student Imogen Heys with her bichon shih tzu Oscar, known as Mr Bear. (Left) Ben Jones wins the Surrey National on The Galloping Bear before his Haydock win. *Photo: Getty Images.*

ANDY WHITE'S POINT TO POINT NEWS



In the Yorkshire area, my first visit of the year was to my local meeting Sinnington at Duncombe Park in Helmsley (photo left).

Given the forecast for showers in the afternoon, instead of walking I took the car and I was glad I did as the wind got up after the first race followed by hail, sleet, snow and rain with spectators racing to the Beer tent or back to their cars for shelter. The weather eased off and the meeting was able to continue through all eight races.

The opening Hunt Members Race was won by Point the Way ridden by Joe Wright for trainer Guy Brewer who outfought his rivals to win a very close four-way finish by a length.

The Conditions race was won by Steely Addition trained by Chris Dawson ridden by Christy Furness returning to pointing after a successful rules career with Phillip Hobbs where it reached a high mark of

150. The favourite Vent D'Autome under Lily Frank had a substantial lead when missing a marker post and had to be pulled up. Another good performance came from Sine Nomine in the restricted race who won for the second time this season trained by Catterick Clerk of the course Fiona Needham and ridden by John Dawson.

On Sunday 6 March it was on to the first Yorkshire Jockeys club meeting at Charm Park just outside Scarborough. This is a new meeting arranged and run by local Point to Point Jockeys with Will Easterby the Clerk of the Course with profits from the meeting going to the racing charities Racing Welfare and the Injured Jockeys Fund. Photo below shows the final fence.



Best performances on the day were from raiders from outside Yorkshire. The opening race saw the Kelly Morgan trained Feuille De Lune romp to a 40-length victory under Alice Stevens. Second was Mammoth under Gina Andrews who went one place better in the ladies open winning on short priced favourite Latenightpass for her husband Tom Ellis. The horse who had finished second in last year's Aintree Foxhunters may be heading back there for another go in this year's race in April. Gina Andrews other winner on the day was in the 4-year-old Maiden on Holy Joe Smoke also for Tom Ellis who beat off a challenge from Mount Bonete for Francesca Poste. Gina currently leads this seasons Ladies National

Championships and Tom is leading the Trainers Championship. Other winners were in form horses Point the Way in the Men's open, Sine Nomine in the intermediate race and a win for Will Easterby the Restricted race on Ask to Dance.

On the same day in the North West, a good crowd attended the Sir W W Wynns and Flint & Denby meeting at Bangor-On-Dee. Toby Wynn rode Casa No Mento to win the opening 4- and 5-year-old bumper for Bradley Gibbs who then won on the ex-Evan Williams trained Rocambolas in the maiden for Clare Sherriff. Bradley is in second place in this seasons Men Jockeys Championship behind leader Will Biddick. Top performance on the day went to Clive Boulton-Brooks who trained Racing Snake and Felicie du Marquis to win the final two races under Tommie O'Brien.

Upcoming Yorkshire meetings include :-

Sunday 27 March The Badsworth and Bramham Moor hunt at Askham Bryan College (YO23 3FR) just off the A64 on the approach to York.

Sunday 3 April the Middleton Hunt race at Sheriff Hutton featuring the Grimethorpe Gold Cup

Saturday 9 April Bedale hunt at Hornby Castle near Catterick

Sunday 24 April York and Ainsty South and York North and West Of Yore Hunts race at Easingwold

Sunday 8 May the Derwent at Charm Park near Scarborough

In the North West the next meetings include: Tabley House Knutsford (WA16 0HB) where Cheshire Forest race on Sunday 3 April and Knutsford Races Club on Sunday 15 May.

Plenty of point-to-point information and meeting details can be found at www.pointtopoint.co.uk and in the free weekly "Go Pointing" Newsletter.

AINTREE PREVIEW NIGHT EVENT – WEDNESDAY APRIL 6TH (7.45 PM START) THE TETLEYS CLUB, LONG LANE, WARRINGTON WA2 8PU

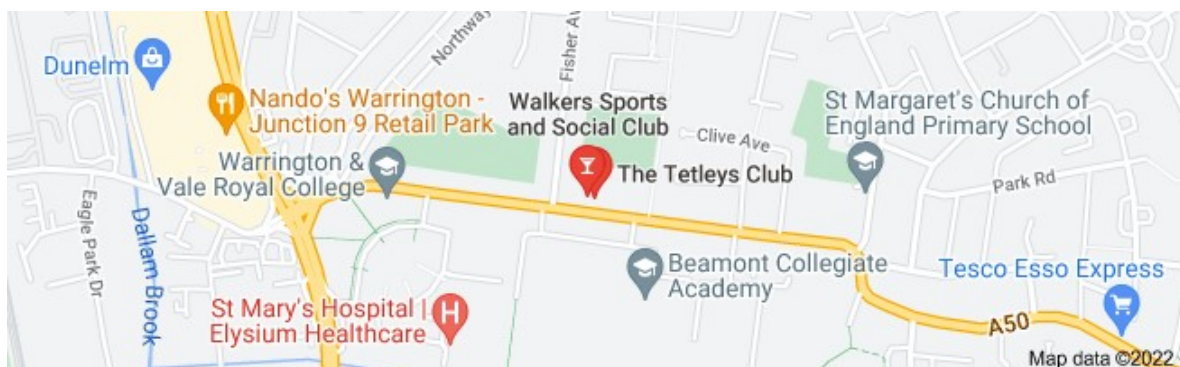
After more than 2 years absence (due to the pandemic) we are back with a live preview event! If you live within easy reach of Warrington we hope you can join us on the eve of the Grand National Meeting.

Our panel for the night will include two past Racing Post 'Naps Table' winners in **Paul Jacobs (Moorstyle)** and **Keith McHugh** with our very own on-course racing correspondent **Gordon Armistead** making up the trio.

We aim to restrict numbers to max 50 people so it does not become too crowded and for those who book in advance you will be able to reserve a table for parties of 2 or more people. For individuals there will also be unreserved seating available.

Admission will be £5pp and it will help with organising seating if places can be pre-booked and online payments sent, especially if you want to reserve a table. To book places in this way please contact Phil Evans (see committee panel). NB Refunds will be available if you cannot attend on the night for any reason.

Unreserved places should still be available on the night (cash accepted on the door) although correct money will be appreciated! As above, it will help our seating planning if you can advise if you will be attending the event and also so we do not exceed the proposed cap of fifty people. If all places are booked in advance, details will be posted on the club website and social media.



If you are not from the North West, or unable to attend for other reasons, we shall also be holding the online **Grand National Sweepstake draw on Friday evening 8th April** and once the draw is completed we will have a general chat about what people fancy for the big race on Saturday. To register for this online event please contact Phil Evans, although those buying the GNS draw tickets will automatically be sent an invite to attend.

GORDON ARMISTEAD'S RACING DIARY

Saturday February 12th Warwick

A really good renewal of the Kingmaker Chase with the three best British two-mile novices running and Edwardstone won it nicely. He used to pull too hard as a novice hurdler but now looks a solid performer. It looked better than the Irish Arkle and he deserves to be favourite for Cheltenham. Third Time Lucki ran up to his best and connections indicated that he might go straight to Aintree. He has been found out against the best. Brave Seasca was stepping up from handicaps and appeared not up to graded class at present. Marie's Rock has always had a turn of foot and while not being totally straightforward she outpaced the novice Get A Tonic in the mare's listed two-mile five hurdle. The runner up has the scope to jump fences next season. The two four handicap chase looked wide open. Dual Haydock handicap hurdle winner Celebre D'allen looked under pressure turning in but by the line he was easing down. He was talked up for the Plate at the Festival but that will be much harder.

Saturday February 19th Haydock

Porticello was the stand out in the parade ring before the Victor Ludorum and he was never in danger during the race. He has more scope than most juvenile hurdlers and any Triumph Hurdle challenge will evidently depend on the ground. Third home Tanganyika was making his British debut for Venetia Williams and as with the winner he won a hurdle race last April so is not officially a novice. He might not be a star but he looked O K and can win at his level.

Wholestone had a rating in the 160's at one time but had looked on the downgrade even before going missing for over a year. He just stayed on to take the Rendlesham Hurdle which was a sub-standard Grade 2. Top Ville Ben warming up for a National tilt ran well but his 50/1 for Aintree makes no appeal.

We didn't see the National winner in the National trial which was survival of the fittest. Under eleven stone twelve Bristol de Mai ran a stormer till his stamina gave out but only The Galloping Bear was there to take advantage. The Galloping Bear managed to run into another future decent performer Grumpy Charley in a point-to-point bumper at Milborne St Andrew on his debut and has done nothing but progress since then. The extreme conditions here suited him and we will see how he goes on just soft going or better off his new mark which will be well into the '140's. Those who may go to Aintree all pulled up with Secret Reprieve who has no chance of making the cut looking beaten with two circuits to go.

Hillcrest just ran from the front and saw off all his rivals in the Prestige Hurdle with plenty in hand in a time much quicker than the Rendlesham and the modest handicappers in the Pertemps qualifier. We still have no idea how good he is but the Sefton Hurdle at Aintree would seem a better option than the Albert Bartlett at Cheltenham.

Wednesday February 23rd Punchestown

What seems like a long time ago on my second last days racing pre covid I saw Burning Victory win her first hurdle noting her poor jumping. It hasn't got much better in two years since but she was adequate if a bit slow at some jumps in winning her first hurdle race since the Triumph Hurdle in the Grade 3 Quevega Hurdle.

Runner up Queens Brook has some very good form but misses great chunks of time. This was back from another break and if Gordon Elliot can get her to Cheltenham I fancy she will turn it around with Burning Truth in the Mare's Hurdle and won't be far off winning it.

The two-mile maiden hurdle on this card was once won by Un De Sceaux but nothing remotely like him in the race this year. Pick of the parade ring by some way was the Ted Walsh runner Be Fierce who had run once when mid field in a decent maiden at Navan at 100/1. The three shorties in the betting were Haxo a cheapish buy from France for Willie Mullins with in and out form, Nonbinding a big lump for Gordon Elliot who is a half-brother to Ferny Hollow and 68 rated flat performer Walnut Beach who I had seen finish fourth in a maiden hurdle back in October at Roscommon. The ones that beat him had done nothing since but he was good enough here and the that form would come up later in the card. My each way five places on Be Fierce at 20/1 was rewarded with fourth place and he is the one to take out of the race. Haxo will need to go into handicaps while Nonbinding burst. Third home Miss Pronunciation could find a bad mare's maiden hurdle.

The two-and-a-half-mile maiden hurdle had a very short favourite in the Willie Mullins trained Ramillies who had chased Kilcruit and Sir Gerhard in Grade1 bumpers last season and another stable mate The Nice Guy on his hurdle debut. He won but his jumping was average at best in beating the Elliot runner The Waltzer who had

finished eighth in that Roscommon hurdle but had managed a couple of second places at big prices since. It's anybody's idea what the form is worth.

The mare's two six maiden hurdle had plenty who had had a few goes but 25/1 winner Martha Divine for Paul Nolan had only run in one hurdle when mid field here three weeks ago. The runner up Emily Roebing has a rating of 109 from seven goes and four places to set the level. I liked the Louise Lyons trained Lady Rita in the parade ring and she was going alright when taken out by a faller three out.

Only one mattered in the four-year-old bumper and that was the Gordon Elliot runner Imagine. He was 4/9 on debut and he was never off the bridle. Disko, Early Doors, and Mighty Potter are previous winners of this race. The profit on the day came courtesy of My Immortal in the three-mile handicap hurdle for Sean Flanagan and Barry Connell with a very easy win which he can follow up.

Thursday February 24th Thurles

The snow which was coming down hard early in the morning had stopped but the countryside was white driving down the motorway and it was a bitterly cold afternoon.

Three good mares in the two six novice chase with Jeremys Flame confirming the form with runner up Dolcita and third Minella Melody from earlier in the season in spite of starting at a bigger price than either of them. Her early chase career was plagued by poor jumping but she is now a solid performer if not top class. This was Gavin Cromwell's first winner for a month and he has been low on winners all winter. The other two appeared to run their races and were just not good enough.

Main race of the day was a below average renewal of the two-mile four Grade 3 Michael Purcell Novice Hurdle. Winner The Goffer goes back to that Roscommon maiden hurdle where he finished seventh and where I thought he showed little promise. He was the only winner to come out of the race until Walter Beach the day before and followed up here. He looks a chaser. The Mullins runner up Berkshire Royal made his stable debut as a 100/1 shot in Shiskin's Supreme Novice and his one run since was fourteen months later when winning at Kilbeggan. Another nine months pass before this run. I must mention The Little Yank who was making her twenty first start of the season giving weight away all round and her thirty sixth start since I saw her fall at the first in this race two years ago. John Ryan thinks race horses are for racing but she did manage to have a five month break somewhere in there.

Rajsalad who had chased home Chester Cup winner Falcon Eight here over course and distance earlier in the month took the three-mile maiden hurdle easily kicking for home a long way out to give Conor O'Dwyer's son Charlie his second ever winner. Rajsalad already has a rating of 111 and the runner up has one of 107 so that is the level and he looks like he will stay any trip.

Having mentioned a Louise Lyons runner the day before I fancied her stable star Espion Du Chenet in the two-mile handicap chase and he jumped for fun to win very nicely at 9/1. She trained a winner at Gowran when I was over in October and has now had six wins from twenty-nine runners this season. She represented Ireland in the three-day event in Beijing despite being born in Birkenhead and this is her second season with a licence. Brookline wouldn't be one of Willie Mullins best bumpers by a long way but she was well seen off by debutante Mitiva on debut for Liz Doyle under Jody Townend. Mitiva is likely to go to the sales and we will see where she ends up.

Saturday February 26th Fairyhouse

I thought that Icare Allen faded rather tamely behind Vauban at the Dublin Festival and at first glance wanted to take him on in the Grade 2 Juvenile Hurdle. However the opposition seemed exposed at a level below him and it proved a wise move not to when the only possible challenger Man O Work fell two out. It really told us no more about him than we already knew.

Most of the runners in the two four handicap hurdle were out of form or coming back off long breaks except for the novice Carrig Sam who had beaten an odds-on Mullin's runner in his maiden hurdle win. He was a strong favourite and made all to beat the unreliable Ten Ten. The winner will probably go for a better handicap at but he will have tougher opponents than these. It seems a shame that Anibale Fly placed in two Gold Cups and a Grand National is still competing in a race like this off a rating of 129.

Two of the placed horses from last year's National and another that is vying for favouritism this year made it a good Bobbyjo Chase and it turned into a super race. Winner Any Second Now never seemed to be going that well until turning in when he went into second chasing leader Escaria Ten and just getting there in the last stride. He has a five-pound higher rating for Aintree this year but is certainly a contender. Runner up Escaria Te

n had blinkers fitted for the first time here and travelled and jumped really well. He would probably have been better off with a lead for a bit longer but was travelling so easily three out Jordan Gainford had little choice but to go for home. I had already backed him at 33/1 for Aintree and this was a good step up from his run at Gowran and he and Any Second Now are now the joint favourites. Willie Mullins had won this for six years in a row but Burrows Saint faded tamely from the turn in. He was beaten here last year (this year's was a much better contest) before going to Aintree where he just didn't get home. Coko Beach has not managed to be competitive off his revised mark in handicaps since winning the Thyestes Chase last season and seems to need really heavy ground.

Monbeg Notorious was another Thyestes winner who was never as good afterwards and his half-brother Mister Bo took the bumper on his debut. His trainer Pat Doyle is usually a Point-to-Point trainer for the sales but something must have caused the now six-year-old Mister Bo to miss two seasons pointing. It will be interesting if he goes to the sales now. He is a big chasing sort as was runner up Banjaxed a close relative of good mare Banjaxed Girl. The favourite Kansas City Star had easily won his point but was well beaten here.

Sunday February 27th Naas

Three good second level two-mile chasers in the Grade 3 chase with all of them having a tendency to pull too hard. Captain Guinness settled better here and was too strong close home for Blackbow. He might get a bit further now that he does settle. Blackbow was held up behind stable mate Cash Back but his best runs are when he makes it. Cash Back now makes too many mistakes to warrant any support over fences.

Maybe not the best field for the Grade 2 two-mile novice hurdle but probably a decent winner in Flame Bearer a second winner in two days for Pat Doyle. This one is not for sale. He will certainly get two and a half miles and should make a chaser in time. Runner up Meet and Greet will need a longer trip. The Mullins runner Ha D'or runs from the front and jumped really well. He just didn't get home and might be better next season over fences.

Two divisions of the two-mile maiden hurdle with totally different types winning them. Division 1 went to Highland Charge a typical big Gigginstown sort who will be chasing next season. He made a mistake at the last but came back well to repass Micro Manage. I saw the runner up win his maiden on the flat and he has had an up and down career since. Good enough to run in an Irish Leger his jumping career has been plagued by him pulling too hard. He settled better here but there wasn't much of a fight from the last. Fourth home Arlo can win one of these.

Division 2's winner Bring on the Night was a 93 rated flat winner for Andre Fabre in 2020 but hadn't run since. I didn't particularly like him in the parade ring and his jumping was not great but he showed his flat speed from the last. The Mullins yard could hold a good Grade 1 race for their own novice hurdlers so how he fits in we will see. Runner up Snake Oil was paddock pick and was another who was back from a big break. Third home Smooth Scotch was a decent sort and this was much better than his first effort. The Elliot debutante The Quiet Horse was in need of the run but did O K back in sixth after running a bit freely.

An interesting runner in the two-mile handicap hurdle was Prengarde just about favourite for the Cheltenham Cross Country race. This was his first run outside France and he looked very much in need of it and was always in the back group.

Sandor Clegane was long odds on for the bumper after his well beaten second to Facile Vega but was maybe not helped by the slow pace. Winner Music Drive who was runner up to another Mullins bumper horse that goes to Cheltenham Redemption Day just out speeded him. The third here Kiki Badger had chased home another Mullins horse at Christmas in Embassy Gardens and this appeared a better effort.

Next copy deadline for Racin' will be Sunday 15th May

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'THERE WAS A YOUNG LADY FROM SEDGEFIELD'

BY PHIL EVANS



I could not resist this headline to share the news about 'one of our own' Emma White moving from her role of General Manager at Sedgefield to take over a new position at Limerick in the latter part of January this year. A big thank you to Emma for sparing the time to talk to me for this article!

Before I go any further, I would mention that the literary term 'limerick' seems to have only a tenuous link to the city of Limerick as regards being the birthplace of that poetry style. This is now generally accepted as having English origins, with William Shakespeare apparently writing the odd limerick in his day. That said, the current General Manager of the city's race track definitely has English origins!

Emma hails from the North of England and had a track record in equine sports as well as commerce before spending nearly four years in a role with 'Go Racing In Yorkshire' marketing the sport in the 'White Rose' county. Her next step was into racecourse management, spending over three years at Sedgefield.

When accepting that role Emma was quoted as saying 'I know where I want this place to be and I won't leave until it is'. Having achieved all her original

goals, Emma decided to seek out a fresh challenge and was offered the chance to 'take over the reins' at Limerick at the start of 2022.

For those that don't know Limerick, it has a population of 96,000 compared to only 5,000 back at Sedgefield! The track was relocated to its current home at Patrickswell, just outside the city, in 2001. As such it is the newest track in Ireland with modern facilities.

As many readers will know, racing in Ireland is generally much cheaper than in the UK. At Limerick an annual badge costs just €120 (18 meetings) with daily admission for most fixtures being €17. However, an interesting difference is that over 12's have to pay to enter racecourses in Ireland whilst in the UK this is generally at age 18 for routine fixtures. Even the hospitality packages look more reasonable in Ireland!

The role of General Manger (GM) in Ireland is fairly similar to that in the UK. Essentially the job holder will report to the directors who will set the GM income targets and spending budgets and then largely let them 'do their own thing' to achieve results. The key teams working alongside the GM will be the Clerk of the Course (CoC), who looks after most track related matters and helps to optimise the fixture list, and the 'office team' who will be maximising revenues from ticket sales, hospitality and non-raceday income. At Limerick, there are additional roles of track foreman and heads groundsman with the CoC roles being slightly different in Ireland.

As most readers will be aware, shortage of runners is rarely a problem in Ireland whereas in the UK the GM and CoC will often spend a lot of time reviewing fixtures/races where there have been poor turnouts. Generally speaking, uncompetitive cards with small fields will attract fewer racegoers with a negative knock-on effect to the finances of the tracks concerned.

Emma's tip for any budding GM's is to establish a solid track record in commerce as without this experience applicants are unlikely to be offered the role.

Previous equine-related experience will certainly assist in running a racecourse although many GM's do get offered roles without such a background and are expected to 'learn on the job'. Emma was previously involved in show jumping, pre-training and breaking-in horses. She also rode in one point to point race but decided that one race over the obstacles was enough!

On moving to Limerick in January, Emma initially had some reservations about how she would be received there. However, she has found that the team and the locals have been extremely welcoming and friendly.

Sedgefield will always hold a strong place in Emma's heart though and she still regularly watches meetings there on TV and still keeps in touch with her old colleagues.

Besides keeping the bosses happy and the customers happy Emma said one of the hardest tasks of the GM is keeping the jockeys happy and quipped that 'Some days they will even complain about what colour the grass is'. She then countered that by saying that if she was hungry most of the time and spent all afternoon being followed round by two ambulances that she might be moaning a lot as well!

Before finishing our chat I asked Emma if she had any fancies for the upcoming Grand National. In response Emma recalled that it was her grandad that got her interested in racing at a young age and he used to study the form for hours and rarely got the big race winner. However, her grandma used to pick her 'once a year' Grand National flutter by looking at the colours and choosing the ones she liked most. Much to grandad's chagrin, grandma managed to find ten consecutive Grand National winners using her methodology!

Emma will be using the same method as grandma this year and hinted that red and yellow colours were likely to feature! She will also be looking out for any rides taken by Brian Hughes or Sean Quinlan who she regarded highly from her days at Sedgefield.

GORDON ARMISTEAD'S CHELTENHAM REVIEW

Tuesday Supreme

However impressive Constitution Hill was on heavy ground against some average sorts in the Tolworth he was mighty impressive here. The owner evidently wants to take on Honeysuckle at Punchestown this season but the trainer is not noted for doing things like that.

Jonbon again got warm before the race but ran his race. He is a year older than his stable mate so I imagine he will be chasing next season. With his owner he is more likely to go to Punchestown than Aintree.

Kilcuit just didn't have the pace while his stable mate Dysart Dynamo had too much and will need to settle to go on. One mistake was enough to stop Mighty Potter very quickly.

Arkle

Not the best Arkle ever but a good winner in Edwardstone who has turned into a very reliable performer. No doubt he will go to Aintree before trying to take on the big boys next season. Gabynako was a surprise supplementary entry having looked a stayer but jumped much better than on his recent runs. Where he goes from here will be interesting. Blue Lord will be lucky to be competitive in open company at this level. There is a good mares chase at Fairyhouse for Rivière D'Etal.

Ultima

His early season races hadn't worked out and he isn't anywhere near straight forward but Corach Rambler wove his way between two maidens to take this. I am not sure the form of this will work out well in the future. Neither Lostintranslation or Noble Yeats showed much before they go for the National.

Champion Hurdle

All very straight forward for the super star mare who just does them with a burst of speed between the last two flights. In spite of having won one and a half grade ones this season this was easily Epatante's best run since she

won this two years ago. My own bet of Zanahiyr each way never looked in any doubt and his starting price of 28/1 was just amazing. Tommy's Oscar was found out while as suspected Teahupoo appears to need the mud.

Mares Hurdle

Marie's Rock's turn of speed was there right from the start when she won her novice at Haydock in December 2019 but it seemed her temperament had got the better of her before she came back to form this season. I didn't think the win at Warwick was good enough to win this but she had too much toe for Queens Brook who improved for her Punchestown run. Mrs Milner in third was unlucky being badly hampered two out. Burning Truth's jumping isn't going to allow her to be competitive at this level.

Boodles

Gaelic Warrior looked twice the size of many of his rivals but there looks a bit of work to do if he is going to go left-handed in the future. With a classic winning full brother it is safe to say winner Brazil's flat rating of 84 for Aidan O'Brien was disappointing. He was value for a bit more than the bare form here having been twice badly baulked by the runner up.

National Hunt Chase

A very poor turnout and all had something against them. Stattler had not looked a real stayer last season but maybe he was just too weak as over fences he certainly got this trip well. Run Wild Fred has a high rating but finishes second too many times for comfort. Vanillier just hasn't taken to fences.

Wednesday

Ballymore

After the track records of day one this was proper winter ground.

I was surprised when Sir Gerhard was aimed for this but it proved a wise move and despite pulling early on his jumping was much better than at Leopardstown and he again beat Three Stripe Life. He is already seven so it will be interesting to see if they go chasing with him or aim for the Champion Hurdle. Three Stripe Life looks a chaser. It wasn't a deep race.

Browns Advisory

The trip and ground proved no problem for L'Homme Press and his jumping was much better than all his rivals. On this he will be a genuine Gold Cup contender next season. Ahoy Senor is still not fluent at his fences and hangs. He still has plenty to learn. Gailliard Du Mesnil has improved with every run and going up in trip. Still without a win he could be back for the National Hunt Chase next season if he doesn't win the Grade 1 at Punchestown. Capodanno's jumping let him down as did Farouk D'Alene's.

Coral Cup

Not many got into this. I had backed Ashdale Bob and Jack Foley soon had him in front. Just turning for home I was very hopeful but he just wavered going to the last. He didn't really take to fences but the stable was not in form at the time so maybe he is worth another go next winter. It seems a long time since I backed Commander of Fleet when he won the Grade 1 at the Dublin Racing Festival and he looked a star going forward. He pulled up lame at that years Punchestown and since his return he has been very in and out but anyone following him blind has been rewarded at 50/1 and now 40/1. Runner up Fastorslow improved for the extra trip and has not had many runs but they include a chase win at three at Auteuil.

Most of the rest of these are handicapped up to the hilt.

Champion Chase

It all fell apart but Energumene is a really top-class animal. There has to be more to Shishkin's performance than just the ground as he looked ill at ease from the first stride and barely jumped a fence. Perhaps something will come to light but if it doesn't his appearances will be limited in the future. Just as much of a surprise was a non-completion for Chacun Pou Soi who usually jumps for fun. He and the winner will no doubt head to Punchestown while if he recovers Shishkin will go to Sandown on the last day of the season for a race that should be abolished. It was retirement for Politologue and maybe Put The Kettle On will head to the paddocks as she has shown so little this season.

Cross Country

Also into retirement goes Tiger Roll. Gordon Elliot's efforts to get him right for the spring each year have been amazing and there were great scenes in the unsaddling enclosure after the race. Winner Delta Work has been well below his best and will head to Aintree where he has eleven stone three and while he won't be on my short list he will certainly be a contender. The other National contenders all failed to get round.

Grand Annual

Global Citizen hadn't run over fences for over a year and his last two efforts behind Tommy's Oscar and Goshen over hurdles where just O.K. Runner up Andy Defresne doesn't race very often and might end up something of a twilight horse but might be worth another try at two and a half.

Champion Bumper

This could well have been a high-class renewal. Facile Vega has the speed he showed at Leopardstown and now we know he goes on heavy. Runner up American Mike is by Mahler so is likely to be a stayer when sent jumping. There will be winners over jumps from right down the field and even some of those who were pulled up should have a future.

Thursday

Turners

No British runners to try and pick up some big place money behind the big two. It is to be hoped that the last fence fall will not put Galopin Des Champs off his spectacular jumping style. I don't imagine before the season started it was the intention for Bob Olinger to come here off just the two chase starts so things cannot have been completely straight forward. Hopefully we will see him again this season. After El Barra won at Limerick on the Sunday before this run I had him down for the two and a half novice handicap chase at Punchestown but he burst here.

Pertemps

Lots of supposed plot horses all beaten by the seemingly thoroughly exposed Third Wind. Maybe this is a case of one of the horses that the British handicappers are now dropping quicker than they used to. He had gone down twelve pounds since April last year and I don't think that would have been the case previously.

I had had Tullybeg in mind for this race from last autumn but he never really recovered from being badly hampered by a faller at the fourth and Denis O'Regan let him come home in his own time from three out.

Ryanair

Allaho was just far too good for his rivals and victory was never in doubt. There is no two-and-a-half-mile race at Punchestown so let's hope he ends up at Aintree. Janadil in second is a hard horse to find a race for that he can win. Shan Blue was just not good enough while Conflated was never going like he did At Leopardstown and was well beaten when falling.

Stayers

A good and wide-open renewal and Danny Mullins again showed what a good front running jockey he is on Flooring Porter. It's hard to say the rest didn't run their races although the outsiders Home by the Lee and Koshari were closer than might have been expected. It will be interesting to see what they do with Champ next season but most of these may be back for this next season. Wouldn't it be good if the winning connections of a Royal Ascot winner celebrated like Flooring Porters?

Plate

Eleven of Cool Cody's last twelve runs have been at Cheltenham and in spite of his wins he was only eight pounds above the mark he had back at the start of the sequence. Imperial Alcazar could have picked up easier money chasing home Bob Olinger earlier in the day. Spiritofthegames has run here even more times than Coole Cody without winning but has picked up £140K in prize money over fences despite only one win from eighteen goes.

Mares Novice

Probably no super stars here but Love Envoy made it six from six so we will see how she goes in the future. Runner up Ahorsewithnoname is still a maiden over hurdles with a rating of just 121 while Grangee in third gives a guide to how they equate to the geldings. Nurse Susan in fourth was the youngest of the close finishers and might have more to come. Favourite Dinoblue was very short after one run at Clonmel and faded tamely.

Kim Muir

I had the winner Chambard down as pretty untrustworthy before this season with a stack of second places but he has been totally different this term. He was hardly the plot horse some look for in this race having gone up nearly two stone in the ratings. Runner up Mister Coffey hasn't won a chase and the trip seemed to improve him but he needs to jump better.

Friday

Triumph Hurdle

The form really stood up here with Fil Dor just half a length nearer to Vauban than at Leopardstown with the winner having too much speed. Pied Piper ran his race in third while Icare Allen was just closer then at Leopardstown and Il Etait Temps pulled too hard and did well to finish so close. The winner will need to improve his jumping to be a Champion Hurdle contender. Fil Dor will need a trip.

The British were well seen off.

County Hurdle

We will have to wait to see how good State Man is but he is much better than the rating of 141 he ran off here. A Grade 1 novice at Punchestown the next step. Colonel Mustard was twelve lengths off Sir Gerhard at Leopardstown but only three off State Man here getting just the pound. That however does not take into account just how easily

the victory was here. Signs of life from Ballyadam back in fifth while Surprise Package couldn't follow up from Sandown but six places each way still brought a return.

Albert Bartlett

With the two favourites not being involved in the finish it would be easy to underestimate this but the first two home The Nice Guy and Minella Cocooner should both make good novice chasers next season. Ballygrifincottage is an unusual sort having won three Irish points before going to the sales but he too will make a chaser. Ramillies again made mistakes and might not have got home. Hillcrest never went a stride which has happened before to horses that return quickly having slogged through Haydock's mud while Ginto was still going well when his leg went between the last two flights.

Gold Cup

It was only in the last few strides that those fighting for third closed any of the deficit to Minella Indo so he wasn't slowing down much on the run in. A Plus Tard showed a turn of pace after the last that is very rare over three miles two. It will take a good one to beat him next year if he turns up in this form but amazingly he is not favourite. Galvin is in the National with top weight and it will be interesting to see if he goes there as he has had a light enough season and that was his original target.

The Henderson yard had talked up Chantry House again but he looks a very shady character now.

Hunter Chase

The pace really sorted them out here. I was against Billaway who struggles through his races but he found just enough. The second and third probably took each other on too far out. After last year Billaway probably won't go to Aintree and by all accounts the runner up Winged Leader won't either.

Mares Chase

A better second edition with more depth. Elimay is tough while Pink Legend was a lot better than the horse I backed at Aintree in December. After a novice won this last year Willie Mullins tried again with Concertista but inexperience found her out. Mount Ida is evidently Grand National bound but even the easier fences there will find her out if she jumps like she did here.

Martin Pipe

The novices outnumbered the older performers here and plenty will go on to do well many of them over fences. The winner Banbridge couldn't win in three points and was tailed off in his first bumper before finding his form over the summer last year. Like the winner runner up Cobblers Dream also pulled up in his first point. Hollow Games hasn't lived up to his initial promise but maybe he will over fences.

Fourth home Freedom to Dream summed up my week. Most of my bets were in the handicaps and while I didn't have a winner I still had a very good profit with the placed horses.

VIRTUAL GRAND NATIONAL – Past Results

For those looking for guidance/inspiration from this year's 'virtual' race here are the results of the last five races with the actual results compared. Starting prices are as per actual race (when run) with the finishing positions after horse's name:

2017: 1st Cause of Causes (2nd) 16-1; 2nd Pleasant Company (9th) 11-1; 3rd Vieux Lion Rouge (6th) 12-1; 4th Vicente (Fell) 16-1.

2018: 1st Tiger Roll (1st) 10-1; 2nd Chase The Spud (Pulled Up) 25-1; 3rd Total Recall (Pulled Up) 7-1Fv; 4th Houblon Des Obeaux (Fell) 25-1.

2019: 1st Rathvinden (3rd) 8-1; 2nd Tiger Roll (1st) 4-1Fv; 3rd Jury Duty (Unseated Rider) 10-1; 4th Anibale Fly (5th) 10-1.

2020: 1st Potters Corner 18-1; 2nd Walk In The Mill 16-1; 3rd Any Second Now 10-1; 4th Tiger Roll 5-1Fv. (No actual race in 2020).

2021; 1st Cloth Cap (Pulled Up); 2nd Kimberlite Candy (Pulled Up); 3rd Any Second Now (3rd)15/2; 4th Burrows Saint (4th) 9/1. The actual 11/1 winner, Minella Times, was 5th in the virtual race.

ITV usually screens the virtual race on the Friday before the 'real thing' on the Saturday.

On The Search For The Yorkshire Wonder Horse

The search is on for the Yorkshire Wonder Horse! Go Racing In Yorkshire in partnership with leading Yorkshire equine supplier, mcivors.co.uk, is leading the quest.

£100,000 will be shared between the owner, trainer, jockey and yard of the first horse to win at all nine Yorkshire racecourses between Saturday 26th March 2022, the start of the flat turf season, and Sunday 31st December 2023.

The competition is open to all racehorse trainers across the country and both flat and jump races will be included, with the nine qualifying Yorkshire courses being; Beverley, Catterick, Doncaster, Pontefract, Redcar, Ripon, Thirsk, Wetherby and York.

John Sanderson, acting Chairman of Go Racing In Yorkshire commented;
“This feat has not been achieved in Yorkshire before and while it’s a significant challenge, we believe this is possible – in 2020, Main Point, trained by David Pipe, won at nine different courses in 11 months. £100,000 is a great incentive to encourage owners and trainers to run their horses at the Yorkshire tracks. We are thrilled to launch this exciting and unique initiative where hopefully a remarkable sporting story will unfold across nine racecourses resulting in the crowning of the first Yorkshire Wonder Horse.”

Jason McIvor, of www.mcivors.co.uk, added,
“We’re celebrating our 50th year in business and historically, the racing community, along with agriculture, has played a significant role in our success. This is a great opportunity to be able to give something back to an industry that has been integral to our growth and we’re thrilled to be part of it.”
Malton based trainer, Nigel Tinkler is keen to target the bonus,

“Anything that encourages people to run their horses in Yorkshire and racegoers to attend meetings has got to be a good thing. I think this is a great initiative and we’ll definitely be targeting it. It will probably suit a middle-distance horse and we may have to alter our training methods a little to encourage our horses to stay a bit further.”

Another Yorkshire trainer excited by the bonus is Ruth Carr, she said,
“This is something that all owners can target and makes a large prize pot available for all abilities of horses, we just need to find the right races for them. Hopefully we’ve got something progressive enough in the yard to tick off the nine courses before next December.”

In addition to the £100,000 bonus, McClarrons Sport, who brokered the deal, Wm McIvor & Son and Go Racing In Yorkshire will combine to donate £5,000 to Racing Welfare should the challenge be completed.

Tom Landale of McClarrons Sport said,
“We are delighted to have been able to facilitate the Yorkshire Wonder Horse bonus. McClarrons Sport specialise in the insurance of sports related bonuses and it’s great to be able to support a creative performance bonus mechanism covering every racecourse in our home county. Our experience tells us that this will be hard to achieve but it’s not impossible and we hope to see the bonus won.”

The race to be the Yorkshire Wonder Horse starts next month and full details, including terms and conditions can be found on the Go Racing In Yorkshire website.



RACING SYSTEMS FOR AINTREE FESTIVAL 2022

BY PHIL EVANS

All of these systems are available on the club website www.northernracingclub.com 'Racing Systems' tab with results tracked throughout the year and updates posted most months. Whilst the data covers a 4/5-year period in most instances, where a shorter period is covered this will be stated. All data assumes a notional profit/loss at starting prices against a £1 stake for qualifying selections. Data correct as at 21/3/22 and covers all Aintree meetings (not just the festival meetings). The NMRC Aintree 'Festival Guide' will be updated just before the meeting starts on Thursday April 7th.

The key positive trends are as follows:

**IRISH TRAINED RUNNERS IN UK +£94 (3+ years - Irish trained runners).

***TRAINER PAST WINS +£45.57 (Races which the trainer has won once/twice before in the last ten years).

**FIRST RUN SINCE WIND OPERATION +£39.5 (3 years+).

The key negative trends are as follows:

*TRAINER TRAITS -£38 (Trainers who have won a race at least three times in last ten years).

**BLINKERS FIRST TIME -£19.66 (Includes Blinkers, hoods and visors only).

*DAYS LAST RAN -£16.5 (Covers races won at least three times in last ten years by horses who have had a similar break/preparation since last run, often in the same race)

*This information is available from the NMRC website.

** This information is available from most online racing websites & racing papers.

***For past winners details I use either Betturtle or Irish Racing websites.

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