



George Baker - forced to retire

George finds his feet again

George Baker memorably bypassed Royal Ascot to ride our own Celestial Bay to her maiden win at Warwick. At 6ft tall, George Baker was never a conventional flat jockey. One of the sport's most likeable individuals overcame his height to become, quite literally, one of the weighing room's biggest success stories. Now he is overcoming the effects of a serious head injury to rebuild his life, this time with the help of the Injured Jockeys Fund. For an uncomfortably long time, from February's end into March's beginning, we feared for the man who at Doncaster in September enjoyed the greatest moment of his career when galvanising Harbour Law to

Classic glory. Baker had been airlifted to hospital following a pile-up on ice at St Moritz. He was left in a critical condition with bleeding on the brain. After emergency treatment in Switzerland, and with the Injured Jockeys Fund reacting with customary speed, the winner of 1,364 races was moved to London's Wellington Hospital. The charity has spent many thousands of pounds on their famous patient. It has all proved to be so very worth it. "I cannot thank the IJF enough," says Baker. "Literally nothing has been too much trouble for Lisa Hancock and the team. They have organised everything and helped me with everything."

Barry Hills' golden rules of betting



Barry Hills - trainer and gambler

Barry Hills is one of only 5 British trainers to have sent out over 3,000 winners. It was a success built on betting which enabled Barry to buy South Bank Stables in Lambourn in 1959 and set up as a trainer having previously worked as head lad for John Oxley. Barry suggests that his big betting days are now behind him but it's said he regularly supplemented his

"For five weeks I was unaware of what was going on. During that time the IJF supported my wife Nicola so much. I cannot thank them enough. I go on about it all the time, but I really mean it. "The IJF has been so good. Nothing has been too much trouble. It has been so reassuring to have the IJF on our side. To have had such a great support network has been a massive help. "It has obviously also helped me that I'm young and fit, but by being so quick to and then through everything



that has been done for me since the accident, the IJF has been instrumental in my recovery. I really do think the IJF is the reason I have come out of this so well. I'll be indebted to it forever." It was not only at the Wellington that Baker was given the A-list treatment he deserves. The IJF made sure he received everything he needed there and has done so thereafter at Oaksey House. "When I was a bit 'goo-gaa' in the London hospital I used to call it 'the hotel'," adds Baker. "It was a super-duper place, absolutely fantastic." "The physical rehabilitation I've had is massively important, but being helped to deal with this mentally has been a very big thing. In a situation like mine, you need the best treatment. I got it."

income by £60,000 a year - at the expense of the bookies. He says that his rules for betting included:

- never betting at odds on
- never bet each way
- if the odds are big, have a bigger bet
- don't back other people's horses or horses you don't know about

His closing remark "Never do anything silly, twice!"

Hope over expectation



Brigadier Gerard

One of the great truths in racing is that there's absolutely no guarantee that great racehorses will produce other great racehorses. Breeding racehorses relies on a bit of knowledge and science, but also a great deal more luck. The great battalions of Coolmore, Darley and Godolphin now dominate the industry - and that's exactly what they've made it... breeding on an industrial scale using their stallions that few others can afford at £100k + fees. But as bloodstock expert Tony Morris observes - "it takes the best mares to make great stallions". Thankfully, some of the greatest racehorses come from the most surprising pairings - the legendary Brigadier Gerard being a case in point. His parentage looked unlikely on paper to ever produce anything of merit. Similarly, Green Monkey, costing \$16 million at the Kentucky sales was superbly bred but could scarcely put one foot in front of another! It's the unlikely opportunity to realise a dream that keeps the sport full of hope and optimists destined to lose. Similarly, great racehorses retire to stud commanding huge fees. But when reality dawns after a couple of seasons when their offspring are shown to be no more than average, they are all too often consigned to history and covering mares for no more than a few hundred pounds. So keep living the dream!

Did you know?

50% of the UK horseracing population is imported.

WINNING POST

THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER FROM HOMEBRED RACING

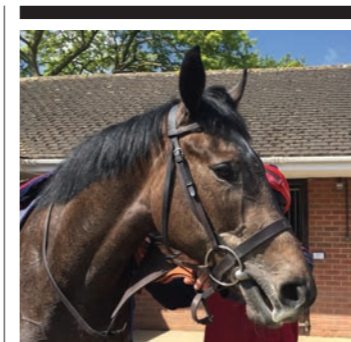
WINTER 2017/18

Celestial Bay (foreground) and Delagoa Bay now in at night prior to foaling



Countdown to foaling

Homebred's multiple winning mares are both due to foal in the next 9 weeks - so are now in at night and turned out in the day. Celestial Bay is due to Due Diligence, Europe's Champion sprinter, and Delagoa Bay to Group winning sprinter Swiss Spirit who's enjoyed a great start to his stud career in his first season. In the last couple of weeks both mares will be moved to their foaling boxes where they can be monitored by CCTV to ensure we're on hand when their foals arrive. Both mares are now considerably tubbier since last seen in racecourse action earlier this year! We'll keep everyone posted on progress...



Time to look forward...

Our Mastercraftsman filly, Time To Perfection, has already shown plenty of ability and promises more to look forward to in 2018. After three educational runs, Time To Perfection now has a handicap mark which opens up more opportunities for her next season when we expect her to appreciate racing on turf. She was a strong finisher behind Godolphin's Derby entrant on her second run at Wolverhampton suggesting that she'll also appreciate a step up in trip. It looks as though a mile and a half on turf should prove ideal - so fingers crossed for her 3-y-o season!



Chelmsford City plans a new turf track inside the existing all-weather course

City planning turf track

Chelmsford City is preparing to have a new £1.5 million turf track laid within the existing all-weather circuit. The plan is to have work completed by 2019 - but it will need a further year to allow the turf to be raceable. The course also has plans for a

new grandstand that will also include a casino and hotel. These plans open up the possibility of a British first with racing on turf under floodlights and the course is looking to the BHA to provide new additional fixtures rather than re-distributing existing meetings.

Controversy in the wind

The BHA's recent rule change requiring trainers to declare whether horses in their care have had wind operations is likely to be controversial. Wind operations involve various techniques to improve a horse's breathing by removing airway obstructions caused by soft palate or larynx. Whilst everyone in racing applauds the principles of greater openness and transparency, such rules need to be introduced internationally rather than unilaterally. Otherwise there's a real issue of UK trained horses being disadvantaged when taking on overseas opposition.

No chance for no-hopers

The BHA has moved to prevent no-hopers contesting the sport's biggest prizes. This year's Derby was overshadowed by 1,000-1 shot Diore Lia, who although pulled out on the morning of the race through injury, the Diore Lia rumpus provided the impetus for the BHA's rating stipulation. A similar rule will come into force, with a minimum rating of 130 required to run in non-novice Grade 1 chases and hurdles, and 120 for Grade 1 novice chases, in line with a policy already in place for the major races at the Cheltenham Festival and Grand National meetings. Between 2005 and 2016 only six horses contested Group 1s on the Flat in Britain who would have been ineligible under the changes to be introduced. "Introducing a minimum rating for these races has three clear benefits:

- Will help protect the welfare of the human and equine participants
- It will ensure the risk of unsatisfactory results in these races is reduced by taking out the unknown factor and
- Avoid complications that can be caused in running by an inferior horse.



The end of August saw the BHA launch further details of its formal industry consultation regarding the future model for racecourse stewarding in Britain. The aim is to gather views on how to maintain the highest standards of racecourse decision-making as the sport modernises and becomes increasingly complex to regulate. The current model of stewarding involves a mix of Honorary Stewards, who are unpaid volunteers, and Stipendiary Stewards, who are full-time, salaried members of BHA staff.

A Steward's Secretary assists the Stewards on raceday with administrative support. The consultation is to be a two-stage process. The first stage began on August 31 with a wide-ranging, eight-week industry consultation. Detailed recommendations will be developed by the BHA and the resulting options will then be the subject of further consultation, involving the key stakeholders in racing. One of the many concerns is that current stewarding is carried out by people who have no professional

knowledge of racing as a rider, as a trainer or as a vet. This certainly needs to change and there are plenty of retired jockeys who would make good stewards and have a proper understanding of the issues. What also needs to change is that panels of stewards are individual to each racecourse. What's needed is a permanent panel of professionals that can adjudicate across all courses. They will then have a better insight into performance of horses and riders at other tracks. Change is long overdue!

New code for the breeding industry

The current bloodstock code of practice was introduced in 2004, in the days when the Jockey Club was still responsible for regulation. It came about after The Daily Telegraph mounted an investigation into 'widespread financial corruption in Britain's 'kick-backs' and 'sweeteners' running into tens of thousands of pounds being used in the buying and selling of horses, resulting in owners unknowingly paying inflated prices." This in turn followed what became known as the Foodbroker Fancy affair, a court case in which the judge was critical of how a trainer involved in the proposed sale of the filly - which eventually fell through - was offered a £10,000 'incentive' by an agent, who in court agreed to pay substantial damages and costs. The Jockey Club took no disciplinary action, but it did assemble a committee, chaired by Philip Freedman, that produced a code of practice, the first time such action had been taken in Britain. "The aim is to ensure transparency," said Freedman. Sound familiar?



The eighth anniversary of the latest code is coming up but has not been publicly revisited by the governing body; nor has ever been used in anger, whether against licensed or unlicensed personalities. Yet penalties for offences against the code are contained in the rules, and the disciplinary panel can impose fines of up to £15,000 or disqualifications of up to three years. The problem with this topic, as in other areas of racing's murkier backwaters, is one of providing foolproof evidence of malpractice. However, there is sufficient anecdotal evidence from responsible sources to suggest that all is not so rosy below the surface. One vendor wondered why there was little interest in his wares at the sales, whilst others were inundated with enquiries, only to be told, 'You have to guarantee payments if I bring people round.' Meanwhile a highly reputable operator has instructed its personnel that, under threat of transgressing the Bribery Act, they must report any approaches that are less than above board. Since encouraging owners, new or existing, is paramount, it's time for the BHA to take another close look at this code as there's long been dodgy practices involved with buying or selling horses!



Does the crush of the Cheltenham crowd attract or deter?

Is the Cheltenham Festival over-hyped?

James Knight, a senior figure at Ladbrokes, has provided much comment after posting on social media: "The absurd Cheltenham obsession in NH Racing needs to be reversed. There is excellent racing during the rest of the season that's just as good - if not better than - the ridiculously hyped and done-to-death Cheltenham Festival." Does he have a point? Although Homebred Racing was initially all jumping, but is now all flat (largely we think because we're now breeding better, faster horses!), the festival does seem to be all consuming. And although there's a hard core of keen followers, it has, like many other sporting occasions, become more of a social bash - just like Royal Ascot.

Racing's argument is that these big meetings are a great shop window for the sport. True. But how many new followers does this attract - or do the long queues, crush of the crowd, poor service at bars and general rowdiness actually deter people from going racing again? Having been lucky enough to attend Cheltenham and Royal Ascot Festivals I vowed only to return if we should ever have a runner. Far more enjoyable for me are the likes of Newbury or Salisbury - and even Kempton's much maligned evening fixtures on the all-weather! Smaller jump tracks like Huntingdon, Ludlow and Towcester all have something special for the racegoer.

Are the bookies taking a beating?

In the eyes of millions, being a bookie is nothing short of a licence to print money. But away from the mega-corporations of the FTSE 100, the game can be very different, the ordinary men and women who take bets on British racecourses run businesses that are far removed from the popular idea of bookmakers coining it in. One of the first costs facing an aspiring bookmaker is an operating licence costing between £160 and as much as £1,346 if you plan to work more than 200 days. Equipment is by no means cheap either. Bryan Hazell, who has been a bookmaker since 1974 says he spent £13,800 on three digital boards two years ago, while there wasn't much change from £1,000 for the battery.



The stand used by bookmakers - cost another £2,600, while the computer was £640, printer £220 and, perhaps most remarkably of all, those famous bookie umbrellas? That cost in excess of £400. The best pitches at top racecourses such as Cheltenham rarely come up for sale but are estimated to be worth in the region of £250,000, while last year two high-end pitch at York sold for in excess of £200,000. Even after you've bought your pitch you still need to pay for your betting badge

each time you go racing, which is typically a multiple of five or six times the normal admission cost but can be as much as eight times the standard price at big festival meetings. Bookie Joe O'Gorman says: "At [Royal] Ascot for example it's eight times £85 to get in. Some days at Ascot I'll have to win £1,000 before I get any wages." Due to the level of turnover at big festival meetings additional staff are required to handle the increase in custom, with a casual member likely to command at least £150 for a day's wages. "Big days are still as good as ever," says O'Gorman. "But whereas we used to make a living midweek, nowadays we don't. I struggle midweek." In fact, turnover can be so poor between December and

February, bookies were given an attendance allowance to bet at Lingfield all-weather meetings to ensure a starting price could be returned. On a long-term basis, a bookmaker cannot realistically expect for more than 12 per cent of their turnover to be profit. With expenses for an average midweek meeting often eclipsing £300, a layer must take over £2500 in bets from the sparse crowd just to cover expenses - assuming results go their way. In 2002 there were 610 registered on-course bookmakers, yet there are now 415 - a 32 per cent decrease in 15 years. Not many bookmakers enter the game skint, but the revelation is that you might meet a few poor ones on the way out.

2017's winners...

Enable was named 'Horse of the Year' after winning this year's Arc de Triomphe under Frankie Dettori. John Gosden's filly won five consecutive Group 1 races and in doing so also beat Cracksman who was nominated the best three-year-old colt. Predictably Aidan O'Brien was the trainer of the winners in three other categories - Best stayer, Best two-year-old colt and Best two-year-old filly. US Navy Flag, the best two-year-old colt, gives us hope that Due Diligence, to whom our own



US Navy Flag gives us hope for Celestial Bay's mating with another son of War Front!

Celestial Bay is in foal and also by War Front, will deliver the goods! Champion older horse in 2017 was Ulysses trained by Sir Michael Stoute who won an Award of Special Merit from sponsors Cartier.

Corals pay punter £823,000 for a single bet!

An online punter from Leicester placed a five horse accumulator bet on five horses running at Punchestown on a Friday afternoon - but didn't check the results until the following day! He told the Daily Mirror "I've been placing accumulator bets nearly every day for probably 20 years and although I've been close to landing the jackpot a couple of times this is the realisation of a lifetime dream! Funnily enough my dad was a bookie and so I've always followed racing." A Coral spokesman said "There must be something in the water in Leicester! After some big payouts at 5000/1 on



Barcadys landing the odds on the middle leg of the accumulator

the Premier League this is another incredible big win story and just reward for our punter's perseverance!" Just for the record the five winning horses were Das Mooser (10/1), Woodland Opera (9/2), Definite Ruby (7/1), Barcadys (10/1) and, to cap it all, Canadier at 33/1.