



# Racing Legends: Northern Dancer

No other horse has had such an impact on the thoroughbred – his name appears in almost every pedigree – worldwide. As a racehorse, Northern Dancer put Canadian racing and breeding firmly on the map. As a stallion he has become a legend.

Northern Dancer, by Nearctic, a son of Nearco, was bred by the legendary E.P. Taylor at his stud in Oshawa on the outskirts of Ontario, Canada. Like his grandsire, and his son Nijinsky after him, he was a bully, and often a menace as a yearling. At the sales he failed to reach a reserve of \$25,000 and returned to Taylor's farm at Willowdale, Ontario.

Northern Dancer with the whip, and was sacked. 'This is not a stick horse,' said his trainer Horatio Luro. Bill Shoemaker rode the stocky little colt in the Flamingo Stakes and Florida Derby, winning both, and accepted the ride in the Kentucky Derby. But forty-eight hours later he decided to swap horses and rode the Californian colt Hill Rise. 'I may have made the wrong choice,' said The Shoe. He had. Northern Dancer held off Hill Rise by a neck, in a record time of two minutes flat. In the Preakness, he increased the margin over Hill Rise by two-and-a-quarter lengths, but in the Belmont (one-and-a-half miles) he failed to stay.



Northern Dancer after his victorious 'Run For The Roses' (Kentucky Derby).

In the months after being broken and before moving on to the track, the Taylor yearlings would exercise in an indoor barn as a protection against the cold Canadian winter. Northern Dancer would pull, charge through the string, bump the wall, and do everything in his power to dislodge his rider, usually with success. 'Every time that rough little guy set foot in the barn there was chaos,' recalls his breeder. Northern Dancer began his two-year-old career in Canada winning five of his seven races, and it was decided that he was good enough to take on the best in the States. In November he flew south and promptly beat Bupers, the Futurity winner, by eight lengths over a mile at Aqueduct.

Northern Dancer grew to 15.3hh during the winter, but still looked a sprinter type. Ridden by Bob Ussey he lost his first race of the next season at Florida to Chieftain. Against orders, Ussey had hit

Sadly, after a victorious return to Canada for the Queen's Plate, the little colt injured a tendon at exercise at Belmont Park and was retired to stud. Northern Dancer was syndicated for \$2,400,000 and stood at the Windfield Farm in Kentucky. The sum, colossal at the time, now looks staggeringly paltry. At one stage in the eighties, a nomination to the great stallion changed hands for \$900,000. In 1987, at the age of twenty-six, his stallion career finally came to an end. In the meanwhile, he had sired Nijinsky, Lyphard, The Minstrel, Shareef Dancer, Storm Bird, Nureyev, El Gran Senor, Try My Best, Sadlers Wells and others, to become the most influential sire will not be disadvantaged by a late birthday – which proved no problem to Northern Dancer who was an exceptionally late foal born on May 26.

# Homebred's Open Day 2006

## Some like it hot!

Although the searing heat understandably deterred a few from making a long car journey, the Stud still welcomed a steady stream of visitors on the annual Open Day. An arrival in mid-morning was our unraced 3 year old Keep a Welcome who returned to the yard after completing his roadwork programme with Sheena Hill.

Later arrivals also included a pack of very hot and panting Llanwnnen Hounds who were paraded with a full complement of immaculately turned out mounted huntsmen. The hounds appreciated the cool shade of the trees nearly as much as the riders who also enjoyed a few well chilled beers! Centre of attention was our new filly by Group 1 winner Hamas – entry forms suggesting names for her are now arriving thick and fast!



Homebred Star with owners Jo Houghton and Mike Jagger



Our retired winning hurdler Prince de Galles



Highlight of the day was the arrival of the Llanwnnen Hounds



After a tour of the farm owners enjoyed drinks and a buffet



Cool drinks and a chat in the shade were the order of the day

## Did you know?

100 years ago, the legendary Pretty Polly met with a shock defeat in the Ascot Gold Cup – her last appearance on the racecourse. She was beaten a length by Batchelor's Button who went on to win the Jockey Club Cup at Newmarket proving that the result was no fluke!



Homebred's latest filly foal, with dam Snoury Mantle, was centre of attention



Our promising NH horse Sweep Home was last to leave the party to do some roadwork!

# The going gets harder... thanks to global warming

Racing is no stranger to freak weather conditions. In 1867 it snowed on Derby day – and in 1911 four horses and three racegoers were killed by lightning on the day of the great race at Epsom. But increasingly racing is being affected by a less dramatic but potentially more serious weather pattern – drought. It's amazing to realize that London now receives less annual rainfall than Istanbul or Rome – cities we'd normally consider hot and dry by comparison. Several racecourses are already in areas covered by drought orders banning use of hoses/pipes and irrigation of leisure facilities. Caroline Davies of the Racecourse Association says "The probability of drought orders has increased and therefore racecourses have moved the issue up their priority list, and are actively putting plans into place as to how they deal with it. Obviously, if there is to be a full-on hot summer it raises issues for racecourses in the south-east". Weather guru John Kettleby, who advises Ascot racecourse, is certain that climate change means more drought conditions saying "What racecourses need

to do – and I know that many of them do already – is to harness what water they've got at this time of year. Joe Public in his garden lets a lot of water simply run away. But at places like Cheltenham they have huge tanks underground to look after their water". But even if racecourses can become more self-sufficient in water supply there are critics who say that incorrect watering of courses is creating false, dangerous ground resulting in higher injury rates. As the going gets tougher for racecourses, many will look to the advantages of all weather surfaces – a surface that can be utilized everyday without watering and with minimal maintenance.

## Did you know?

The first to ever train the winners of over £1 million prizemoney in a single season was Henry Cecil in 1985. This milestone was reached through the exploits of Oh So Sharp when she won the St Leger ridden by Steve Cauthen.

# Prize money on the slide

Prize-money in 2005 declined marginally on the previous year, the total dipping from just over £100 million in 2004 to £98.6 million last year. The decline was largely due to the circumstances of the BHB taking a dramatic turn for the worst. Much of the BHB's income had stemmed from the sale of British racing database rights, particularly in Ireland, but, with the disastrous European Court judgement of the previous November, this income dried up. As a result, BHB's contribution to prize-money went from nearly £6 million in 2004, down to only £67,000 last year.

That aside, the main story of prizemoney in recent years has been the remarkable growth of Levy Board contributions. Since the year 2000, these contributions have grown by nearly 82 per cent. It had been hoped during these growth years, that the racecourses would have at least continued to maintain their executive and sponsorship contributions, in which case prize-money would have reached £108 million in 2004, but this turned out to be a naive expectation. As the Levy contributions increased, so the racecourse contributions decreased by roughly the same amount, their

contribution dipping from 2003 to 2004 by £8 million. In an effort to stem this tide, the Racehorse Owners Association came to an agreement with almost all courses at the end of last year that their executive and sponsorship contribution in 2006 would at least match those of 2005, but, now, with extremely gloomy economic forecasts for the industry, it has become apparent that much more will be required of the courses in the coming year. The latest figures on how prizemoney is divided also makes sobering reading. Just 88 horses each won over £100,000 whilst over 7,000 horses won nothing at all.