

# An accident waiting to happen?

It was alarming to see the number of drones hovering over the course at Bath's opening meeting of the 2021 season. These are being used by professional punters to provide images a few seconds ahead of live TV feeds to give them the edge over bookies when placing 'in running' bets. The increase in the numbers of drones being used has obvious safety issues when being flown over crowded racecourses for racegoers as well as horses and jockeys. It also interferes with any planned legitimate use by broadcasters or race officials who may use drones to follow the action. Mid air collision could prove catastrophic. Racecourses are struggling to deal with the issue as very often these drones are being

Drones give in-running punters an advantage



flown from public rights of way well outside the racecourse itself. ARC Racing, who manage many UK courses, say that apart from safety there is a clear issue about unauthorised filming and broadcast of images

which are the property of the racecourse. The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for controlling use of drones and the hope must be that such activity can be stopped before there's an accident that forces their hand.

21 year old David Egan sweeps to victory in the world's richest race



# Changing of the guard?

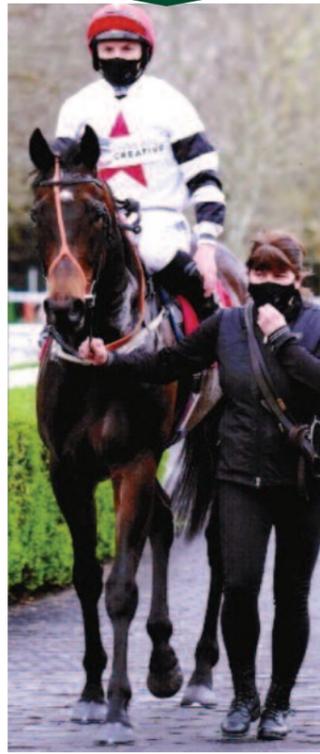
We've all become very familiar with all the top prizes being regularly scooped up by just a handful of riders. But not so at the start of 2021. The Saudi Cup and the Sheema Classic - combined worth £10 million to the winner and the two most valuable races in the world were both won by 21 year old David Egan. This young rider, regularly piloting horses for

Sylvester Kirk and who won for us on Lafontaine, is destined to have a stellar time during the rest of this year. It's at a time when Hollie Doyle has also really shaken things up in the racing world and one can only wonder if the likes of Oisin Murphy and Ryan Moore are now looking over their shoulders to see where the next challenge might be coming from!



## Snapshot

Study The Stars being led back to the winner's enclosure by Jan Procter after his first win at Kempton Park.



## TV audiences hold up...

Although down on the last televised running, armchair spectators for the 2021 Grand National were still well over 8 million, just a million less than for 2019. Interestingly, some 4 million also tuned in to watch the 'virtual' version of the race - many no doubt hoping that it would help choose the winner the following day. Sadly for punters, the virtual race had a completely different result to the real one which proved to be another win for the irrepressible Rachel Blackmore.

## Contact us

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# WINNING P ST

THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER FROM HOMEBRED RACING SPRING/SUMMER 2021

Study The Stars comfortably landing the odds at Kempton Park



# Star performance!

After a series of frustrating runs when Study The Stars should have won, he at last earned a well-deserved win at Kempton over a mile, ridden by PJ McDonald. There was no early pace and our boy tracked the leaders before mounting his challenge in the straight

where the race developed into a sprint for the line - Rocky quickened in great style covering each of the last 3 furlongs in 11 seconds to land the odds for favourite backers. In reality the result was never in much doubt. Trainer Sylvester Kirk said 'He's only just coming to

himself now and changing fast to fill out and strengthen up'. The style of his win suggests that he might well be suited to a drop back in trip and holds out the prospect of lots more excitement this summer. You can view video of the race on our YouTube channel.

# Lambourn Open Day goes virtual



The dreaded virus put a stop to the 2021 Lambourn Open Day for the second year running. Normally, this popular day is attended by over 10,000 visitors on Good Friday. But this year The Peter O'Sullivan Lambourn Virtual Open Day went online with video clips, interviews and articles. Each trainer had a page providing a 360 degree tour of their yard and suggestions of horses to follow. Fundraising was online via a silent auction and raffle to benefit stable staff and their families.

# New deal on prize-money

The concern that 80% of prize-money is won by just 4% of the racehorse population has resulted in agreement that it should be more widely spread amongst the runners. From March 27th the distribution of prize-money is to better support the grassroots as racing continues to try and recover from the pandemic. This will mean that winners earn less but placed horses will get more. Prize-money has long been a bone of contention for the industry but, a bit like the music industry, it attracts many wannabes who just share the passion and hope to make it big. There has to be some doubt whether anyone is attracted to horse racing in the extremely remote chance they'll make money - as the old saying goes "there's only one way to make a small fortune - start with a bigger one". Racing's currently meagre rewards spread even more thinly hardly seems a formula to achieve the stated aim of retaining more owners and attracting new ones. The new prize-money distribution is: Winner 53.3%, runner-up 26.7%, third 13.3% and fourth 5.33% (only a committee could have come up with such silly numbers!). This new arrangement will provide an additional £7.5 million to owners of placed horses.

# Did you know?

There were 48,697 races last year. 17,148 over jumps, 18,200 flat and 12,487 on the all-weather.



Two-year-old colt by Russian Revolution

## Widening our interests...

Sarah's daughter, Catherine, has always been keen on horses and looked after and competed with our Monksfield mare Pastures Green who retired to the Homebred Stud and lived to the grand old age of 35. Catherine emigrated to Australia over 10 years ago and has continued her horsey interests with her partner Marty in a 2-year-old colt to be trained by Kris Lees near their home in Newcastle. As yet unnamed, he's by leading new sire Russian Revolution out of a dual winning mare Knit n'Purl.

This colt is one of Russian Revolution's first crop which fetched big prices at the sales so it'll be interesting to see how he gets on. Russian Revolution is a multiple Group 1 winning sprinter who secured 7 wins from 9 runs and hails from the family of Encosta De Lago (sire of Homebred's Delagoa Bay). We'll keep everyone posted on news about this good looking colt, now just being backed which will provide new interest from the other side of the world!



Rachel Blackmore victorious in this year's Grand National

## Irish domination sparks handicapping debate

It all started at this year's Cheltenham festival when Irish horses swept the board, leaving the home team wondering exactly what just happened. What happened was remarkable and particularly memorable for Rachel Blackmore who dominated the meeting with 6 wins. But sadly the home team is making noises about unfairness, believing that Irish horses are too favourably handicapped, and Rachel's success in the Grand National only added fuel to the fire. But the weak point in this argument is that the majority of races at the festival are championship races where horses compete at level weights - so the Irish dominance may not be anything to do with handicapping. The Grand National is a handicap, so maybe that's different. Many who study the form suggest that Irish horses, particularly in lower grade races, are better off at the weights with their British counterparts to the tune of 10 - 12 lbs. Form is much easier to compare at the top level where horses regularly compete against each other for the top prizes. But it's doubtful that the handicappers have so suddenly got it so wrong. More likely that jump racing is just better supported in Ireland and the proportion of jump racers compared to flat horses is greater. There also seems a much greater willingness of the Irish to 'have a go' whilst the home team may be too 'risk adverse'. These things, as in most sports, are usually cyclical and in a few years time it may be others who are wondering where all the winners have gone.

## Snapshot

Eaux De Vie (left) and Lafontaine, now on holiday, peering at the kitchen window hoping there's going to be a meal for them too!



## Did you know?

Average field size for flat races is 9 runners - 8 over jumps.

## Who'll be the champ?

This year's flat jockey championship will be decided by whoever wins the most races, on turf or the all-weather, between Saturday May 1st and Saturday 16th October. Will Oisín Murphy retain his crown or will it be a new name on the trophy - Tom Marquand? Ben Curtis is now supported by Britain's most winning trainer - Mark Johnston - which gives him a chance whilst the 'old guard' is well represented by Jim Crowley and the new kid on the block is David Egan. In 6 months time we'll know the answer and hope that one of their winners might be ours!

## Racing's finances in turmoil

Just like other areas of the hospitality and entertainment industries, racing's finances have been hit hardest by the pandemic and also received a further setback when plans for the long overdue replacement of the Levy Board were shelved. The management of British racing has been in turmoil for decades - some would say for much longer - and has displayed an amazing capacity to shoot itself in the foot. How on earth was the Tote ever allowed to be sold to the bookies or TV rights divided up between different broadcasters? It's been a shambles run by committees that can never agree on anything. One thing all stakeholders can agree is that racing is seriously underfunded. It's primarily financed through the Levy Board which secures a statutory payment from the bookmaking industry based on their profits - which is anyway a ludicrous formula since any accountant will tell you how easy it is to manipulate the numbers. But the arrival of Nick Rust as Chief Executive of the BHA



Julie Harrington new BHA Chief Executive

held out some hope that he might be the right man to negotiate a new deal as a major figure from the betting industry. But, almost unbelievably when talks about a replacement for the Levy are on-going, Rust is leaving - another shot in the foot! It's akin to changing the manager at halftime in a world Cup final! The football analogy is relevant in that racing should take a lead from their example about maximizing income from media rights. Football, like racing, has many stakeholders - principally fiercely independent and

competitive clubs - but clear the vision of the Premier League enabled them all to negotiate and speak with a single voice and ultimately enjoy unimaginable new levels of funding. Racing's stakeholders repeat weasel words and platitudes about all working together, but then do their own deals with broadcasters and sponsors. It needs someone with real vision to start knocking heads together... we can only hope that person is Julie Harrington who is the replacement to sit in the hot seat at the BHA!

## Your next dental appointment...



The gag allows the dentist to safely feel to the back of the horse's mouth

For all Homebred horses at home is in July when horse dentist Justin Harcourt is due to visit. Although it looks challenging, horses soon accept the gag which opens their jaws allowing the dentist to safely see and feel right to the back of the mouth for any

problems. Horses teeth need regular rasping to remove any sharp edges that can cause problems by damaging the soft internal cheek tissues resulting in reluctance to be ridden or steered or loss in condition if eating becomes painful. It usually takes about

30 minutes for each horse to be checked and for any necessary work. And just to add insult to injury we usually take the opportunity of mouths being held wide open to worm them too - which is something they don't like either!

## Did you know?

Total prize money has fallen from £163 million in 2018 to £92 million in 2020 - and further since.

## Latest jockey to win in Homebred's colours



Jockey PJ McDonald

PJ McDonald became another in scores of different jockeys to win in our colours when steering Study The Stars home at Kempton to join an illustrious band including champions like Richard Johnson, Kieren Fallon and Richard Hughes. Irish born 'PJ' set out as a jump jockey and won the Scottish National on Hot Weld before switching to flat racing (which was initially just to keep fit during the summer). His first major success on the level was on Clever Cookie winning The Yorkshire Cup, but he's best known as partner of Group 1 winner Laurens. In 2018 he was appointed president of the Flat Professional Jockeys' Association.

## Did you know?

An average of 35% of favourites actually win - a higher percentage on the all-weather, lower in turf races.