

# Racing loses a legend

The numbers alone make Lester Piggott unique. His first winner when aged just 12. Champion apprentice at 14 and his first Classic by the age of 18 amongst his total of 4,493 winners. Too tall to be a jockey but nonetheless a supreme stylist with an innate sense of pace and timing. He rated the Breeders Cup on Royal Academy as his sweetest win - achieved at the age of 54, just 10 days after serving his time in prison for tax evasion. My personal memory was watching him in a run of the mill handicap at a rainy Warwick where he dropped his horse out to be trailing the field by nearly 15 lengths - but was in front only when it mattered. Genius that'll never be matched.



Lester on Royal Academy 'my sweetest moment'

## Did you know?

HM The Queen has enjoyed more than 1,600 wins with the horses she's owned

## A smart deal for racing?

Newmarket MP and former Health Minister Nick Hancock has given hope that the government may bring forward the long overdue review of the levy which is the funding mechanism for racing. Unbelievably the bookmaking industry has got away with being able to make their contribution to the levy based on their profits rather than turnover. As any accountant can tell you, it's easy to manipulate profits but not so turnover. Review of the levy is all about ensuring that racing gets a fair price for the product from which the betting industry clearly benefits so much. The current arrangement shows that racing in the UK has rapidly become the poor relation when compared to any other racing jurisdiction. Hancock raised the issue recently in the House of Commons calling on ministers 'to ensure that the levy is increased and reformed sooner than is currently proposed'. Gambling minister Chris Philip responded by saying that 'powerful representations are being actively considered'. Hancock subsequently reports



MP Nick Hancock with Smart Deal

that he has received very positive feedback adding 'Things are going well and there are also straws in the wind that show we've got to keep pace with our international competitors'. This is all happening at a time when there is a wider review on gambling generally which has also raised concerns about gamblers possibly needing to comply with affordability checks which some think will see betting much reduced. The other fly in the ointment is that the longer any changes take that the gambling industry will seek to demonstrate that racing is a significantly reducing area of income compared to other sports and events. Meanwhile a campaign for reform is being highlighted with the help of an unarmed three-year-old in training with William Haggas named Smart Deal.

## What were they thinking of?



The firework display set off shortly before the start of The Derby

It was unbelievable that Epsom organisers on Derby Day arranged for a massive firework display to be set off shortly before the start of The Derby. Even though the runners had reached the start at the far side of the track several were clearly disturbed by the noise and large cloud of coloured smoke that billowed above the stand.

More worrying was what it was like for runners in other races stabled at the course. What a cretinous decision to allow such a thing to happen and it really defies belief that anyone would even contemplate such a display in the presence of highly tuned and nervous horses. Whatever happened to common sense?



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# WINNING POST

THE REGULAR NEWSLETTER FROM HOMEBRED RACING

SUMMER 2022



## Study The Stars steps up!

Although already a winner over a mile it's true to say that Rocky's results had been mixed. Trainer George Baker studied his pedigree and after also analysing his stride patterns determined that he'd been running over the wrong distance. Once stepped up in trip to 12 furlongs for the first time Study The stars was beaten in a head bobbing

photo-finish at Kempton. He then made no mistake at Wolverhampton showing the field a clean pair of heels under top weight and champion amateur Simon Walker. George said: 'The step up in trip has been the making of him - and hopefully there's plenty more to come!' So plenty more to look forward to over the coming summer months!



Trainer George Baker

## National Racehorse Week

This year the nationwide celebration of the racehorse will take place between 10th and 18th September. Many racing yards and studs will be open for the general public to see, first hand, the levels of care provided by dedicated staff. 2021 was the first year of this initiative created to showcase how racehorses are so well loved and cared for and has proven to have had a positive impact on the perception of horse welfare.

## Did you know?

Fastest speed achieved by a racehorse is 43.97mph recorded by Winning Brew in the USA on May 14th 2008.

## World Pool paying bigger dividends

The international collaboration of racecourses, including in Britain and Ireland, is resulting in much bigger payouts for punters. From the 17 World Pool events that took place in Britain and Ireland last year saw £363 million paid into the pool. This helped create better value for customers betting on the Tote providing a 15% higher return compared to SP. In 2022 there will again be 17 World Pool days to include The Derby, Oaks and Royal Ascot. Returns from World Pool to racecourses increases prize money and helped it exceed pre-Covid levels. When betting with the World Pool there is a wide selection of

The 2022 Derby



bets from win and place to multiples including Trifecta, Quinella, Swinger and Treble. For more details visit [www.tote.co.uk](http://www.tote.co.uk)



## The future is bright - but not orange

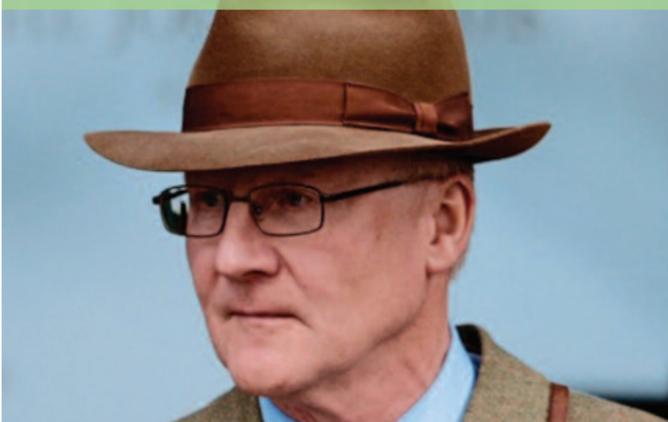
Stratford was the first jumps course to introduce new white markings on jumps to help make jump racing safer. Horses have reduced colour vision compared to us and studies have found that changing the wood and vinyl padding of take-off boards, guard rails and top boards from orange to white

significantly increased visibility and jumping performance. After Stratford's trial, the new markings will be rolled out across all jump tracks by the end of August. The number of fallers has reduced by a third over the past 20 years and this new initiative aims to ensure even further reductions.

# Better safe than sorry...

The controversial issue of racecourse watering reached a crisis point at the end of May when 4 meetings suffered abandonments due to the unsafe state of the ground. One of the meetings in question was Haydock Park where Study The Stars disappointed on ground described as 'a pudding'. Earlier in the week advance going reports had varied from 'good to firm, on which our boy was declared, good to soft, soft (good to soft in places) and ultimately good'. But after only two races it was abandoned due to the unsafe and slippery ground. Definitive guidance about watering is provided to courses by the BHA as follows: The purpose of watering is to maintain the moisture level essential for good turf husbandry in order to achieve optimum resilience and a suitable, consistent racing surface for the horse. Watering is inadvisable within 24 hours of racing when there is a danger that rainfall could result in extreme ground in the period immediately prior to the meeting.

Haydock's clerk of the course Kirkland Tellwright 'in a terrible muddle'



Haydock Park's clerk of the course, Kirkland Tellwright, inexplicably decided to water the course despite forecast rain which fell on 2 consecutive days prior to racing. When interviewed by the media after the abandonment, Tellwright tellingly said that he was simply trying to 'create' the ideal racing surface. 'Creating' is not part of the clerk of the courses job but to use watering to simply ensure safe conditions. The whole episode caused trainer George Baker to write on his daily blog: 'Up at Haydock,

the clerk of the course getting himself in a terrible muddle. Not for the first time. And the going reports from the track are now pretty much ignored by racing professionals. Which is a ludicrous state of affairs. I'm not sure that we will bother to head that way again until there is a change at the helm'. For 4 meetings to be abandoned at different tracks in such a short period requires the BHA to act swiftly to ensure that courses are not using watering to create artificial, rather than just safe, conditions.

## Great memories of the greatest horse



Brigadier Gerard on the way to the start of the 1972 Eclipse Stakes

It was a privilege to be at the 1972 running of the Eclipse at Sandown Park, a wet day when persistent rain meant it was doubtful if Brigadier Gerard would run on the soft ground he hated. But run he did and I well remember standing with my lifelong pal Mike Palmer hearing the great roar from the crowd when jockey Joe Mercer pulled the Brigadier off the rail to make his challenge and sweep to victory.

Brigadier Gerard was the horse that gives hope to all small breeders that it's possible to breed a champion. His sire Queens Hussar was decidedly moderate with a stud fee of 250gns. His dam was never able to win a race and was out of a mare breeder John Hislop bought for just 400gns. Even his breeder wouldn't have been able to believe that his foal was to become the best horse of the 20th century.

Brigadier Gerard's entitlement to this accolade has been challenged by the more recent exploits of Frankel. But the Brigadier proved himself champion over a much wider range of distances - from 5 to 12 furlongs. His jockey Joe Mercer said 'There's no doubt Frankel is a great horse, but he didn't beat the calibre of opponents Brigadier did, time after time'. Racing is, of course, all a matter of opinion, but Brigadier Gerard is simply the best horse I've ever seen.

## Did you know?

The most expensive racehorse was Fusaichi Pegasus sold for \$70 million who won 6 of 9 starts and \$1.9 million in prize money.

## Derby winner - or 3 mile chaser?

The unpredictability of horse breeding was well illustrated by the brilliant winner of the 2022 Epsom Derby, Desert Crown. Horses bred to compete over 12 furlongs on the flat as a three-year-old would be able to stay 3 miles over fences as a six year old - as many others unplaced in Derbys have gone on to do just that. On paper, Desert Crown was not destined to necessarily be the super star he clearly is. His dam Desert Berry was pretty moderate, managing a 60 rated single win on the all-weather. His sire Nataniel, although a son of the mighty Galileo, had also been drifting down the stallion ranks and increasingly being used by National Hunt breeders despite having sired the wonderful Enable. The fact that Desert Berry is related to Juddmonte's Distant View is possibly why this year's Derby winner didn't slip through the net to be making his debut over jumps at Worcester!



This year's brilliant Derby winner Desert Crown

## Mission impossible?

There can be little doubt that racing is in a pretty dire situation, whether it's falling numbers in terms of racegoers, runners or prize money or the regulation of racing itself. But the BHA has proclaimed that's it is to embrace change. Proof of this is publication of a recent job ad in the Racing Post for 'Director of Strategy and Change Delivery'. Applications for this challenge have already closed so we may well be close to hearing who will be 'a proven leader who can build effective, collaborative and productive relationships with industry stakeholders, and who has a demonstrable knowledge of racing and its stakeholder landscape'. Good luck with that!

## Does the early bird always catch the worm?

Not apparently, when it comes to breeding a racehorse. Studs make great efforts to ensure that mares have early foals - earlier the better seems to be the general sentiment. But foals born in January and February very often have to cope with atrocious weather and possibly a complete lack of grazing due to frozen or muddy paddocks. So turn-out time is also limited. Lack of early grazing also affects a mare's milk supply meaning the earliest youngsters simply don't get off to the best start. A study of over 150,000 foals born in Britain and Ireland between 2008 and 2017 sought to establish how early foals fared in their two-year-old careers. Surprisingly, expecting early foals to have an advantage, the opposite was revealed. Those foaled in January were revealed to be at

a distinct disadvantage compared to their March-born counterparts. Not so surprising to some who know that a harsh winter can seriously restrict the development of a young foal by preventing it getting valuable exercise as well as plenty of spring grass. Furthermore, the study showed that fewer January foals even make it to the racecourse as two-year-olds compared to those born in March. And even if they do make it to the racecourse, January foals are less likely to win at two or even later in their career. So it seems that getting a mare pregnant at the earliest possible date is not the best way to go. But the counter argument is that if a mare produces a late foal the chances of getting her to have another foal a year later is reduced by as much as 50%.

Celestial Bay with her March foal Study The Stars



## Snapshot

This is Lafontaine with Eaux De Vie (nearest camera) both looking very good on the spring grass.



Just like her dam Delagoa Bay (winner of 5 races) Eaux De Vie has been a bit of a late developer. Horse dentist Justin Harcourt pointed out a year ago that many of her teeth still weren't through. So we've

given her plenty of time to grow and strengthen up, which she's clearly done, and on his most recent visit Justin suggested that she'll soon be ready to return to training. If interested in shares please get in touch!

## Snapshot

Two racing legends, Lester Piggott and Henry Cecil, so sadly no longer with us.



## Field sizes on the slide

Many different opinions have been expressed about small field sizes, from ground conditions to poor race programming and even poorer prize money. But the issue is not just affecting British racing. Across the pond numbers have dropped too - including a reduction of nearly 10% in the number of trainers who put it all down to the simple fact of fewer horses in training. The BHA seems reluctant to suggest that there's such an obvious cause - but surely it's hardly unexpected since the pandemic when racing was

behind closed doors and then swiftly followed by the financial consequences of paying for Covid. Races with five runners or fewer meant that in August and September last year the numbers became the lowest this century. There's now talk of racing being pruned back by as many as 300 meetings - hopefully not the start of a downward spiral.

## Did you know?

The favourite wins 30 - 35% of the time and the second favourite 18- 20% of races - between them about half of all races.