

NEW YEAR 2019  
ISSUE 3

# RACING REFLEX

NEWS-REVIEWS-INTERNATIONAL-TIPPING-BLOODSTOCK-INTERVIEWS



## **GLORY HUNTERS**

**THE RUNNERS GOING FOR GOLD**

**PLUS: PHOENIX TOUR AND HOBBS Q&A**

COVER AND  
INSIDE PIC BY  
CAROLINE NORRIS



# NEW YEAR, SAME REFLEX MAGAZINE

We're back in 2019 after getting off to a flying start at the tail-end of last year. Due to a busy festive period for our team and our fantastic contributors we decided to combine our content from December and January into a New Year issue. We have listened to our National Hunt readers' calls for more content and in this edition we look at some of the emerging horses in the Cheltenham Gold Cup as well as a Q&A with in-form trainer Philip Hobbs. Horse welfare is an important issue across both codes and we have an article looking at how the new one-fit hurdles are improving safety for horses going over the obstacles. On the international scene the Dubai Carnival is getting under way and we are thrilled with the amount of people who are taking part in our online tipping competition (in collaboration with EIBloodstock). You might find a few pointers in our Phoenix stable tour which reveals a couple of likely runners.

**The Racing Reflex team**

# ALL ABOUT THE NUMBERS

**13** LENGTHS KAUTO STAR BEAT  
DENMAN BY TO WIN THE 2009  
GOLD CUP

**25** THE WEIGHT IN KILOGRAMS OF  
A ONE FIT HURDLE

**50/1** PRICE OF TONY MARTIN'S  
ANIBALE FLY IN THE  
CHELTENHAM GOLD CUP

**42,000**

THE PRICE IN DOLLARS PHOENIX PAID FOR  
THE IMPRESSIVE WALKING THUNDER

**£700,000** SANDS OF  
MALI CAREER  
PRIZE MONEY



LOOK OUT FOR VIDEO CONTENT ON OUR  
WEBSITE BY @JAYHALESZY

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# GOLD CUP SPECIAL

## GOING FOR GOLD

WITH THE BIG STABLES PLAYING THEIR HANDS OVER CHRISTMAS THE GOLD CUP PICTURE IS STARTING TO TAKE SHAPE, DERRY ALLDRITT WRITES

### NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

The King George and Savills Chase provided National Hunt fans with some fantastic viewing over the Christmas period.

In England, all the attention was on Nicky Henderson's Might Bite, who was heavily fancied to win the race for a second year in a row. His old adversary Native River was coming into the race at Kempton carrying the expectations of followers who watched the Tizzard-trained stayer grind it out to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup last March.

But those who were looking for a similar finish to the famous Cheltenham race were left disappointed. Few judges had Clan Des Obeaux down as the likely winner of the Boxing Day feature but he beat the odds, and he did it impressively. It was the seven-year-old's second crack at a Grade 1 over fences out of novice company and he took to the task with some aplomb.

His efforts have put him right into contention for the Cheltenham Gold Cup with some bookmakers slashing the odds on the Paul Nicholls charge to as low as 9/1 for the big race. But questions remain over his ability to stay the extra 2.5f, while coping with the famously arduous Cheltenham hill and stiff finish.

Over in the Emerald Isle, the big Irish trainers were testing their best stayers in the Savills Chase at Leopardstown. Willie Mullins has made no secret about his Gold Cup intentions for Bellshill, who many had their eye on going into the 3m race on December 28. But it was stablemate Kemboy who catapulted himself into the limelight under an impressive ride from David Mullins.

With the likes of Monalee and Road to Respect in the race - two horses who have shown their class in Grade 1 chases - it was going to take something special to cause an upset in this one. David Mullins made an enterprising move to the front with a whole circuit to go in the race and it paid off to great effect. Kemboy was not for catching despite the proven ability of the horses behind. An eye-catching display and now an unignorable player in the market, with best-price 9/1 on offer for the improving six-year-old.



**THE MARKET**PRESENTING PERCY  
(9/2)**NATIVE RIVER**  
(5/1)CLAN DES OBEAUX  
(9/1)**KEMBOY**  
(9/1)ROAD TO RESPECT  
(12/1)**THISTLECRACK**  
(14/1)AL BOUM PHOTO  
(16/1)**MIGHT BITE**  
(16/1)BELLSHILL  
(20/1)**SIZING JOHN**  
(20/1)BALKO DES FLOS  
(33/1)**BRISTOL DE MAI**  
(33/1)DEFINITELY RED  
(33/1)**UNSEEN, STILL KEEN?**

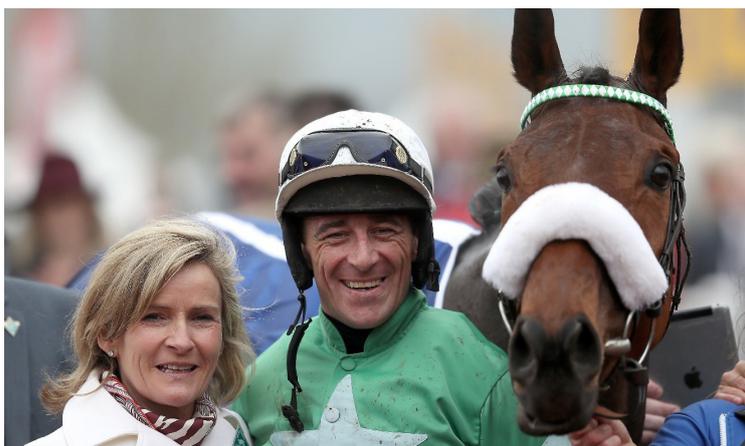
At the head of the market is last year's RSA winner Presenting Percy. The eight-year-old, trained by Patrick Kelly was an impressive winner of Novice's race last spring, proving he can handle the Cheltenham track, beating Monalee by seven lengths. The horse has not been seen on a racecourse since. Which raises alarm bells considering the consistent racing campaign which seemed to be perfect preparation for last year's festival. An unexplained absence and a step up from novice company may be enough to put some punters off at 9/2, despite the obvious talent of the horse. Hero of the 2017 Gold Cup Sizing John has had a difficult time of it since the season he flourished as a stayer. Trained

by Jessica Harrington, Sizing John had a great education chasing down Douvan over shorter trips before stepping up to 3m+ and showing his true ability over the Cheltenham fences. He returned in 2018 without looking like the same horse and was ruled out of last year's Gold Cup after suffering a fracture. Word from the yard is that all is well with their stable star but he was taken out of the action at Leopardstown over Christmas due to ground concerns. Sizing John is currently 20/1 in the market for this year's Gold Cup and if the Harringtons can get him back on the racecourse and back to his best he could prove to be an attractive betting proposition in March.

**WHAT DOES OUR PANEL THINK? PAGES 6-7**

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A CONSISTENT  
CAMPAIGN WAS  
PERFECT PREP



# GOLD CUP SPECIAL

# CONTENDER



## THE PANEL

### GERAINT WILLIAMS @RACEOLLY

Coneygree is currently a 66/1 chance for the Cheltenham Gold Cup 2019 and I feel is worth a play at those odds each way. His form at Cheltenham reads 11313 winning 2 grade 2s and a Gold Cup. The latest 3rd came after a 350 day break and a wind operation and was enjoying himself in the King George last time out before a slight injury scuppered those chances. That was his first run against the cream of the crop for a while and you could take plenty of encouragement from it. Looks likely to run on Cheltenham Trials day on January 26th from which we will learn a lot more. Another bold show there will likely see the 66s lapped up and all systems go for the big one.

### JOSHUA STACEY @THERACINGJOSH

I'll be cheering home champion jockey Richard Johnson on Native River. Last year's winner was never travelling well in the King George and still stayed on in eye-catching style to finish 3rd. Stamina is his forte & he will relish every yard of the two extra furlongs of the Gold Cup.

### WILLIAM KEEJAY @KEEJAYOV2

If we see Anibale Fly before the Festival, perhaps in the Irish Gold Cup, then Tony Martin's charge, third last year, would be of real interest. He ran a fine race there to take third and with Might Bite having given up the game, appeals as being overpriced if he can make it again.

### KITTY TRICE @KITTYTRICE

Clan Des Obeaux produced a career-best performance when landing the King George VI Chase and, as a seven year old, still has further room for improvement. The Paul Nicholls-trained gelding was a respectable second in the Caspian Caviar Gold Cup last term and doesn't have much to find on the protagonists.

# CONSENSUS



## RYAN @RYANOTHX

Road to Respect is my idea of the Cheltenham Gold Cup winner at the moment, he's proven over the course when winning the Plate in 2017 & the soft ground was against him in last years renewal. His run in the Savills Chase at Leopardstown was monstrous considering he nearly came down twice but stayed on strongly at the finish. A good ground, fast paced 3m2f around Cheltenham should suit him to perfection.

## HARRY KEARNS @HKEARNS98

With the Gold Cup wide open and questions marks over plenty of the entrants, at this point it's not hard to make a big case for Native River who ran well in the Betfair and stayed on eyecatchingly in the King George. A return to Cheltenham and more emphasis on stamina is sure to suit and he may be tough to beat for the likes of Presenting Percy who is yet to have a run this season but would be the obvious danger if repeating his RSA performance of last year.

## MIKE SCOTT @MIKESCOTT90

Anibale fly at 33/1 I believe he has been massively overlooked by the bookmakers. He's a lightly raced nine-year-old that finished 3rd in the Gold Cup last year and 4th the national. He clearly loves a marathon, and has blown away the summer cobwebs over 2m in December. Might Bite looks 20lbs worse than last year, native river hasn't pulled up any trees this year but I see him as the main danger. Once the Irish Gold Cup comes round and as long as Anibale Fly doesn't stink the place out his price will probably be 16-20/1 - if he wins he could be close to single figures.

## NEIL WATSON @WATTYRACING

To win a Gold Cup you need staying power and you also have to be able to fight when things get a little rough and just like last year Native River can easily defend his title and pick up a second Gold Cup for Colin Tizzard. His two starts this season have been respectable but Cheltenham plays to his strengths which is all important for the race where everything matters and where dreams really do come true.

# JUMPS FOCUS

## HURDLES CAN BE RIGHT FIT

A NEW DESIGN FOR HURDLES CAN HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON HORSE WELFARE, AMY NICHOL WRITES



In 2013, Newton Abbot became the first racecourse to trial an innovative new hurdle design. The new hurdles consisted of the usual timber frame with a custom fitting close-cell foam pad frontage rather than the birch we have seen for so many years.

The 'One Fit' hurdles were designed by the BHA's Senior Inspector of Courses, Richard Linley. Newton Abbot hosts a summer jumping programme on quick ground, with horses travelling at a faster pace, fallers and injuries were more frequent at this course.

Managing director of the course, Pat Masterson, was eager to bring the course away from conversations about injury rates so agreed to trial the new hurdle. The sport has a duty to protect both runners and riders and these new hurdle designs have certainly taken a step in the right direction. The benefits of the new design include a reduction in superficial injuries (such as cuts that could need stitching) and faller rates. Other courses soon followed suit, with these hurdles now being used at Kelso, Exeter, Ascot, Taunton, Bangor-on-Dee, Uttoxeter and Cheltenham. Since this type of hurdle was first used, the BHA have gathered participant feedback as well as the necessary data on faller and injury rates. Slight improvements were subsequently made with regards to the shape and weight of the hurdle based on feedback received. The faller

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ALL COURSES SHOULD TAKE NOTICE IN ONE FIT HURDLES AND INVEST

rate over hurdles has reduced by 1.59% (56 fallers from 3525 runners) which represents about 90 to 100 less falls on average each year in hurdles races.

Positive feedback from veterinarians examining horses after races and positive feedback from jockeys should ensure that these hurdles are soon seen at every racecourse in the UK. With more courses using the One Fit hurdles, this would provide continuity for horses and become a common sight for them when participating in a race as Sam Spinner's trainer, Jedd O'Keeffe believes that these hurdles are to blame for the poor performance last time out. He

believes the horse has taken a dislike to the new hurdles which have only recently come into use at Ascot. The horse was spooked by the obstacles causing him to jump awkwardly and subsequently unseat Joe Colliver at an early stage in the race.

Further benefits of these hurdles include a lower cost to the racecourse in the long run with regards to breakages. The most common part of a hurdle damaged during a race is the top bar, the One Fit hurdles foam frontage prevents the top bar from being kicked out, therefore costing less financially and in staff time. The hurdles also weigh much less than the traditional birch hurdles (38kg), weighing 25kg, making the hurdles easier to put in place and repair for ground staff at the course.

Jamie Stier, director of race day operations at the BHA said that initial indications are showing the One Fit hurdles are having a "positive impact" on faller and fatality rates. He also said that "the padded hurdle has produced faller rates that are lower than the national average on all racecourses that are using them".

With these trials yielding successful results on all racecourses using the One Fit hurdles, all racecourses should take notice and invest. The hurdle was designed to improve the safety of both horses and jockey, and that it has done.

# FEATURE: STABLE TOUR

# ON THE RISE



## Phoenix

THE THORBRED

ALEX BANKS LOOKS  
AT OWNERS WHO ARE  
SETTING THE BAR HIGH  
FOR THE NEW SEASON

Phoenix Thoroughbreds have been making a hugely significant investment into the horse racing industry, from their racing stock to their breeding stock, they have been influential at the sales ring. Phoenix Thoroughbreds and the Phoenix Ladies have got a nice amount of horses in the UAE right now, looking to target all of the big races, including the UAE 2,000 Guineas. Phoenix are known to be a UAE syndicate for people to invest in, it'll be interesting to see how their fare in Dubai now and if they can make a big impact, that many of us think they should be making - a lot of horses from the States and American pedigrees, they should have a fantastic chance with their new three-year-olds. Looking to become a staple in Dubai, Phoenix could be in for a strong first year with both syndicates and could go on to achieve something very special - a Classic under their belt - along with a Dubai World Cup as they are going double pronged into it.

**Stable tour pages 10-11**





THE PHOENIX TEAM - PICS FROM PHOENIX THOROUGHBRED TWITTER PAGE @PHOENIXTHOROUGI

## Phoenix Ladies

### **Ariette Du Rue**

#### **Street Sense x Fastbridled (Unbridled's Song)**

A \$100,000 pick-up for Phoenix Ladies, this early born filly has run the once thus far, finishing 8th to Al Shamkhah in a maiden over 7 furlongs for Ahmad bin Harmash, by 12 lengths on debut, she was green as grass and it would have been a good learning curve for the filly. This filly is a half-sister to Cymric, a Kitten's Joy gelding who is rated on a mark of 109 and won nearly 200,000 in prize money, with him finishing 3rd to Championship back in 2017 in the Zabeel Mile.

### **Lady Winslow**

#### **Winslow Homer x Speaking Role (Singspiel)**

In the same race as Ariette Du Rue, this filly was incredibly far behind Al Shamkhah when behind by 29 lengths, which was just a learning experience for her and you'd expect better from her moving forward. A \$25,000 purchase for Phoenix Ladies Syndicate, she is by a new stallion in the form of Winslow Homer, being out of a Singspiel mare, with me enjoying Singspiel as a broodmare sire, with the likes of Too Darn Hot and that fantastic family - this filly will be better in time.

### **Walking Thunder**

#### **Violence x Street Show (Street Boss)**

The star that everyone has come for - a natural on the dirt, Walking Thunder is 3 from 3 at the moment, winning his maiden by 5 and a quarter lengths, a month later he would go onto win a shade cozily by 4 and a half lengths at Meydan in a Conditions event, proving to be one for the Classics going forward. A \$42,000 pick-up from Q Bar J Thoroughbreds, this son of Violent has been nothing but professional and a credit to the bin Harmash yard; he's incredibly exciting going forward and will head to the UAE Derby.

### **Superior**

#### **Majestperfection x Tiz Fate (Tiznow)**

Another unbeaten colt here, Superior was another from the Phoenix Ladies Syndicate who they were incredibly keen on, he managed to win first time of asking when beating Martial Art by half a length for Conor Beasley and another who looks like a real nice one going forward. Purchased for \$50,000 in the States, a dirt pedigree through and through, he looks like one could be a big horse to follow throughout the rest of the season, just like Walking Thunder.



GRONKOWSKI

### Phoenix Thoroughbreds

#### **Axelrod**

##### **Warrior's Reward x Volatile Vickie (Elusive Quality)**

Phoenix are really going for the Dubai World Cup with a two-pronged assault of Axelrod and Gronkowski, Axelrod is a dual Grade 3 winner in the States, winning his 2nd of the two by 4 lengths and he finished 2nd to Mckinzie in the Pennsylvania Derby by a length and three quarters and then would go onto contest the Breeders Cup Classic, going down only 8 lengths to Accelerate. Jadhav has picked up a couple nice ones here, I would suspect the Al Maktoum Rounds would be first on the agenda for Axelrod.

#### **Gronkowski**

##### **Lonhro x Four Sugars (Lookin At Lucky)**

Gronkowski is well known for his 2nd to Justify by a length and three quarters, a 4 time winner in 10 runs, he has never done it on the big stage, unfortunately. A Listed winner in the UK, he was impressive on the synthetic tracks but unfortunately it never translated to America, which is a bit of a problem, if he runs on the dirt in Dubai. That being said, classy on his day is Gronkowski and you'd have to think he would be looking at the Dubai World Cup, along with Axelrod, with the Al Maktoum Challenge Rounds being targeted first. Exciting.

#### **Sands of Mali**

##### **Panis x Kadiania (Indian Rocket)**

Sands Of Mali is a recent acquisition for Phoenix Thoroughbreds, the Group 1 Champion Sprint Stakes winner is a Group 3, 2 and 1 winner now, with him being one of the most consistent horses in training. A mark of 118 and earning near enough 700,000 in prize money, this colt is going to go for the Al Quoz Sprint, with being a lover of any ground, you'd have to think he wouldn't want it more than good-to-firm considering his best runs have come on soft. The Al Quoz and then the Diamond Jubilee, it's exciting to see how this colt can go for his new owners.



WALKING THUNDER

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YOU'D HAVE TO  
THINK,  
GRONKOWSKI  
ALONG WITH  
AXELROD,  
WOULD BE  
LOOKING AT  
THE DUBAI  
WORLD CUP

# THE BIG DAY OUT

AFTER SCOOPING A PAIR OF TICKETS FOR THE TINGLE CREEK COURTESY OF RACING REFLEX, ADAM HLOBIL WAS LIKE A PIG IN MUD...

COMPETITION TICKET GIVEAWAY

As if the privilege to write for this magazine was not enough, I also had the good fortune to win the Twitter competition run by the Racing Reflex team to win a pair of Premier Enclosure Tickets to the Friday of the Tingle Creek Meeting.

Whilst the early morning promised doom and gloom, the ensuing weather was an indicator for my luck for the day ahead. The sun shone, and the air was crisp around Sandown Park. The overhead conditions made no impact on the ground conditions which were described as heavy, and stayed so despite the sunshine. There was audible squelching as the juveniles rattled past down to the start. It seemed to make no difference to French import Torpillo as he gracefully eased clear of the rest of the field on the bridle to give the

double green of Isaac Suede and Simon Munir another winner, and another promising talent.

I would love to say that the selection of Warthog was an inspired bit of analysis on my part, but the carnage that ensued in the race puts pay to those pretences. The strapping grey went to the front early and was never headed after that, but what happened behind was a stirring tale of misfortune. Eight horses failed to finish, with three fallers, three unseating their riders, and two pulling up. It is hard to pick out a horse that was not hampered, with loose horses causing havoc, even affecting the free galloping Warthog on the front end. Despite wincing at every fence, I was able to enjoy the satisfaction of a 16/1 winner, as all the other horses were up and walking away. Gracefully,

I spied a better price for my pick at a different bookie to the poor fella I relieved of £110.

The Grade 2 feature certainly did not garner much fanfare but in the conditions, Alan King's Alsa Mix stood out like a sore thumb; this time, I could pat myself on the back for a clever bit of race analysis. The mare had her 5lb allowance, in heavy ground, against a bunch of horses that had not really proved much as far. The trainer's form in the race was also highly enticing, as he had four wins in previous renewals. As expected, she travelled three deep on the rail the whole way around, saving every inch, and asserted quite convincingly in the straight. Another winner, and another double figure price at 12/1; as favourites were beaten, I collected more and more from the bookies.

The last race had a

hot, highly tipped favourite in the form of Richard Spencer's Thistimexnextyear, but my better half spotted a little anomaly amongst the prices of some horses; Kestrel Valley was priced up at 9/1 on William Hill, but Paddy Power had the filly at an astronomical 33/1. In a Novice hurdle with very little substance to any form, a 4th and a 3rd place seemed like useful form. With Stan Sheppard taking off 3lbs, the filly was given an easy time of it out front, with a 10 length lead around the turn into the back straight. The enterprising ride was looking like it may be rewarded, as Kestrel Valley looked to repel the challengers for about 100 yards, before he was headed and the two in front drew clear. But at the 28/1 taken, a third place was tidy each way profit to round off a great day. The ride was enterprising and strong, and the filly may well have more to come in a slightly weaker novice hurdle.

Altogether, it was a phenomenal day enabled by Racing Reflex, with a wallet full and the bookies skinned to boot.

LOOK OUT FOR MORE TICKET COMPETITIONS ON TWITTER @RACING\_REFLEX





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# RACING LEGENDS: KAUTO STAR

## STILL STARGAZING

JOE SMITH LOOKS BACK AT A KING GEORGE AND GOLD CUP HERO



On 29th June 2015 the racing world was in shock. Two time Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Kauto Star had died. At 15 years old and in retirement he was taken from us way to early. Enough has been said about his death and we would like to remember him for the champion he is. He is the horse that put jumps racing back into the public eye, he captured the hearts of a nation.

Born in France in the year 2000, not many would of expected L'Extraterrestre, as he was known in France ( translates to extraterrestrial) to have such a magnificent career.

Brought by Clive Smith for 400,000 euros in 2004, he was sent to Paul Nicholls to what would prove a highly succesfull partnership.

It was arguably in the 2006-2007 season where he was at his most poetic best. He won the Old Roan Chase by 21 lengths before trying the 3 mile trip for the first time in the Betfair Chase. 3 miles was no problem as he won by 17 lengths. Such was the ease

of the win, he ran again two weeks later back over 2 miles in the Tingle Creek to again win easily. There was not a thing Kauto Star could not do that season.

A busy year ended with victory in the King George Chase on Boxing day. A race that Kauto would eventually make his own in coming years. On to the March showpiece, the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Kauto powered up the hill before hitting the final fence. Being the brave horse that he was, he stuck his head down and was not to be denied. Kauto had reached the pinnacle! That was to be short lived. Fast forward to 2008 Gold Cup and Kauto had a very worthy rival in stable mate Denman. The match was on. The public got Cheltenham fever with scarves,badges and flags. The match everyone expected didn't really materialise as the tank Denman destroyed Kauto by 7 lengths.

The following season, connections of Kauto Star were not going to back away from a fight. At christmas he won

a 3rd consecutive King George Chase before trying the unthinkable. No horse had ever regained the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Kauto was no ordinary horse though as he pulled clear of rival Denman to win by 13 lengths. By this time, Kauto Star was the face of national hunt racing and his colours were seen at race courses up and down the country.

On Boxing day 2009 Kauto won a 4th King George chase by a massive 33 lengths. Breaking Arkles 44 year old record of a 30 length victory. Back at cheltenham for the 4th consecutive year, he fell at fourth last fence when looking very laboured.

Within the next year, Kauto lost at his beloved Kempton in his attempt to win a 5th King George before finishing 3rd at another Cheltenham Gold Cup. The word retirement began to do the rounds as by this point he was ten years old and had achieved evrything there was achieve.

When news broke that Kauto would be back in training and would line up



RUBY WALSH PUNCHES THE AIR AFTER WINNING THE KING GEORGE ON KAUTO STAR - A BOXING DAY TREAT FOR RACING FANS, RIGHT KAUTO SHOWS HIS JUMPING SKILLS ON HIS WAY TO WINNING THE ASCOT CHASE

in the Betfair Chase at Haydock, many people raised their eyebrows. Everyone wanted him to return to form but the chances were slim. What followed that day at Haydock will long live in the memory. He brought the house down. A confident Ruby Walsh sent Kauto off in front and never saw a rival the whole race. The tactics were spot on as he saw off everyone including the reigning Gold Cup champion Long Run. The sheer joy on the face of Ruby, Clive and Paul was an absolute delight to see. Kauto had proved his doubters wrong and once again gave racing a memory to never forget.

Thoughts soon shifted to Kempton, Boxing Day and the King George Chase. Long Run was sent off favorite as bookmakers put a line through his loss to Kauto at Haydock two months before. There have been many great moments in racing but in our eyes, this race trumps them all. The old boy would not be beaten as he jumped like an absolute stag and bravely battling all the way to the line. He became the first

horse to win the King George 5 times and in doing so, leaving an emotional Kempton crowd in tears of joy. Rubys reaction after the race, hugging Kauto Star is a picture perfect moment and sums up the chemistry between them. Commentators words as he crossed the line " And Kauto Star is still the King", are words that should be associated with Kauto Star forever.

The temptation to win a 3rd Gold Cup proved too much. It wasn't to be as he was pulled up after the first circuit.

Never has racing witnessed such an atmosphere. The whole Cheltenham faithful applauded him mid race as he slowly made his way back to his stable while his rivals fought out a finish. Retirement came later that year. Kauto had achieved everything. Brave as a lion, ultra talented and a poser in front of the cameras. Everyone has their own Kauto Star memory. There is many to choose from , as his career went on for 12 years, winning 16 grade ones. He was at the very top level for 10 years. We will

never see a horse like Kauto Star again. He was simply magnificent. Simply the best ever. Simply, a horse of a lifetime.

“  
AND  
KAUTO  
STAR IS  
STILL THE  
KING

# WORLD'S YOUR OYSTER JOAO...

INTERNATIONAL JOAO MOREIRA

AS ONE OF THE SPORT'S BEST JOCKEYS, 'THE MAGIC MAN' HAS RIDDEN AT THE MOST PRESTIGIOUS MEETINGS ACROSS THE GLOBE, BUT WHERE WILL THE BRAZILLIAN GO NEXT? JAMIE LINDSEY WRITES

Brazilian born jockey Joao Moreira has become a major force in the world racing scene over the past 5 years, simply known to millions as the "magic man" for his dazzling feats performed in the saddle, including going through a whole card in Singapore back in 2013 (8 wins from 8 rides). Moreira is, however, now at a little bit of a crossroads in his career - having dominated in Hong Kong up until his great rival Zac Purton won a tremendous battle to be crowned Champion Jockey back in July, Moreira packed his bags and announced the Japanese racing association would be giving him a short-term licence to ride in the land of the rising sun. That licence would be made full time if he could pass a Japanese written exam, which according to some other foreign jockeys based in Japan is very tough. Sadly, for Joao, he failed the exam and had to rethink his plans for the future.

After much speculation about where he would be riding in the future with Australia and Europe mooted as possibilities, the news broke that he would be returning to Hong Kong to be stable jockey for the powerful John Size stable. It was not a move that massively

surprised me, although I can't help but feel that it may be a backwards step. He has achieved nearly everything in Hong Kong winning all but a few Group

Ones and winning the Jockeys Championship three times. Moreira is also one of only three jockeys to win all four Hong Kong International races, which he achieved in the space of just three years. It will be intriguing to see how long he stays in Hong Kong.

So, where in the future could we see the superstar Jockey plying his trade?

## AUSTRALIA

Down under could be a possibility as he has ridden plenty there and very nearly won the 2016 Melbourne Cup, which I know is a race that is high on Joao's bucket list. He would get plenty of support from trainers and owners with his high profile and I know Godolphin are keen to use his services whenever he is in town. It would also mean that he can be riding

maybe four or five days a week compared to two or three days in Hong Kong, Australian racing is very competitive, and it could see the level of Joao Moreira's riding improve even more.

## EUROPE

Riding full time in Britain is something that Moreira has spoken about at length before, a double at this year's Shergar Cup may only have enhanced his appetite to try his hand in Britain one day in the future. Wouldn't it be fantastic to see the "magic man" riding against

the likes of Frankie Dettori, James Doyle and renew his rivalry with Ryan Moore? The man many people see as his arch rival in in the world's best Jockey debate. With a high profile here, I'm sure Joao would get a lot of support from trainers and big owners such as Godolphin and Juddmonte could be his allies if he were to go full time here.

## BACK TO JAPAN

Despite not passing the Japanese written and speaking exam Joao's time in Japan was asuccessful one, winning many races, when last month he picked up his first Group One onboard the filly Lys Gracieux in the Queen Elizabeth Cup. I know that he is massively popular in Japan where jockeys are treated like rock stars and if he can improve on his Japanese, he would be a big full time signing for the Japanese racing association. He has already built up relationships there too, so a return to the land of the rising sun would make sense.

Where do you think Mr Moreira could be off to then? Will he stay the high-flying man in the East or is Britain abounds for the top level jockey? I personally would love to see the rivalry between Joao and Silvestre de Sousa become a thing, two Brazilian juggernauts in the saddle who will do anything to win a Championship - i ntriguing little battle on our hands.



“

JOAO WOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT OF BIG OWNERS IF HE WAS TO GO FULL-TIME IN EUROPE

# HEROES OF HAYDOCK

Neil Watson takes a fond look at his local course and reflects on some of the track's standout performances

Fans of horse racing who have a course local to them and attend a lot during the year will gradually over a long period of time get to know regular horses in various qualities of class that tend to appear a few times during the season and develop a bond with the course and with that will come another bond to with the regular racegoers.

My local course Haydock Park is a place I've been a regular at since July 1996 when I made my first tentative steps into the world of work and as such I've also been a member probably around 1998 if my now much older memory serves me right.

Over those years I have seen many a course specialist from flat handicapper to jumpers at the highest end of the game and I want to share with you some of those that I've seen.

First up and in all fairness a complete no brainer here it has to be Kauto Star, without doubt the one horse that the Haydock crowd have enjoyed seeing on a real emotional roller coaster journey, Four Betfair Chases and that emotional afternoon in 2011 when he recorded his fourth victory that sent many (myself included) into an emotional breakdown as he produced a masterclass in steeplechasing.

Over hurdles the Nigel Twiston-Davies trained The New One has five wins from five starts at Haydock including most recently when landing his fourth Champion Hurdle Trial, a real battler who has a decent strike rate in the north west as he also has an Aintree Hurdle to his name too.

The Last Fling trained by Sue Smith cemented his love affair when landing Edward Hanmer, Peter Marsh and then a Grand National Trial in the 1999-2000 season, sadly he lost his life in the 2002 Grand National but left a huge impression on Haydock regulars, his 2000 Grand Trial win is on YouTube and worth watching as he put in a performance that left many stunned in the way he won.

Saint Ciel trained by Frank Jordan wasn't the highest rated hurdler around but loved Haydock, in total he won eight races over hurdles and one on the flat with his last race in December 2001 at the young age of 13.

General Wolfe was originally trained by the Ludlow based eccentric Captain Tim Forster then subsequently Venetia Williams before finishing his racing days with Tim Dennis, in 1998 and 1999 he landed both Peter Marsh Chases which were two of four wins over the same course and distance.

“

## A BOND WITH THE COURSE DEVELOPS

Closing Ceremony from Emma Lavelle's stable picked up three Haydock wins in the 2014-15 jumps season with his most notable victory being the 2015 Rendlesham Hurdle, lightly raced since, this was a horse I loved to see race around here.

From the rough and tumble of the winter game we switch to the flat brigade, now more a select bunch here due to the fact I follow the jumpers more than the flat but I do appreciate good horses in either code.

James Fanshawe had a course regular here in Warningford, a tough as teak 7f specialist who only ran a handful of times here but won two



John Of Gaunt Stakes over 7f in 1999 and 2002, always a nice horse who gave his running all the time he ran.

Hayley Turner scored her first ever Group winner in the saddle at Haydock when steering Barshiba to land the 2010 Lancashire Oaks, this was a repeat win after landing it back in 2009 under Paul Hanagan, now a broodmare she is the proud mother to Arabian Queen who landed the International at York in 2015 at 50-1!

One course regular in middle grade 1m handicaps in the 90s was a horse called Band On The Run, in total he ran 27 of his 100 races at Haydock winning three of them, he also kept decent form at Doncaster too but Haydock is where he is best remembered.

Back in 2017 Harry Angel graced the Haydock turf twice, first up when bagging the Group 2 Sandy Lane Stakes over 6f in May before returning in September to win the Group 1 Sprint Cup over the same trip.

And finally we come to the most loved of all racehorses by all fans, The greys.

Haydock has seen its fair share of greys over the years and quite a few since I first set foot on the course in 1996 and here are a smattering of some of the ones who have gone on to better things or have earned a

place in the hearts of the fans who became smitten by them in all their glory.

First up we have one of the classiest seen in Suny Bay, four times a winner over the course with wins in the National Trial, Tommy Whittle and Two of the old Edward Hanmer Chases, he is also best remembered for his two runner up spots in the 1997 and 98 Grand Nationals plus a Hennessy which was the late Sir Peter O'Sullevan's final race commentary.

Silver By Nature showed up five times at Haydock in his career with two victories in the Grand National Trial, sadly he died as an 11yo but was the apple of Lucinda Russell's eye, a popular chaser who relished the 3m4f of Haydock in the soft.

Our penultimate horse is the wonderful grey One Man, winner of many races at the highest level with his most famous win being the 1998 Champion Chase he ran three times at Haydock picking up two novice chases and a Tommy Whittle where he put in one of his best ever rounds of jumping, sadly he lost his life in the 1998 Melling Chase just a few weeks after giving John Hales one of the most memorable moments in his life at Cheltenham, a sad postscript to a chaser who dominated the mid 90s

And finally we come to one of

my favourites, Neptune Collonges, Victorious by the shortest of short heads in the 2012 Grand National, oddly he only ran twice at Haydock in his career, first up he took the 2006 Prestige Novices' Hurdle over 3m before a gallant runner up in the 2012 Grand National Trial before going on to land the real thing upon which he was retired straightaway in the colours of John Hales.

So there you have it, a selection of some of my most favourite horses that I've been privileged and witnessed to see at my local course in the past twenty years or so apart from One Man.

Racing has many wonderful things that means so much to everyone who follows it and we should always take time out once in a while to go through those old racecards and get taken back to those days where you remember seeing a particular horse that stood out in your eyes whether it be a sunny afternoon on the flat in high summer or getting drenched in the rain at the height of the jumps season and long may those days continue for as long as they can.

NEIL IS A RACING ENTHUSIAST AND CAN BE FOUND ON TWITTER @WATTYRACING



# A MAN IN FORM...

ALEX BANKS  
SPOKE TO  
PHILIP HOBBS  
ON HIS  
LOVE FOR  
NATIONAL  
HUNT AND  
SOME  
HEAVIER  
ISSUES IN  
RACING SUCH  
AS THE WHIP



Q & A

**Q** What is the stable like? We see on Twitter about cakes a lot, but could you give us some insight into certain pivotal people?

**A** We started training in 1985 with 6 stables and now have 108 stables, with 3 gallops (Woodchip, polytrack & grass). Johnson White has been the assistant trainer for over 20 years and Seanie the travelling head lad has been with us over 25 years. We have two long standing head girls and our secretary Jo has been with us over 10 years. Having loyal, long standing staff is essential for the business.

**Q** Any big targets for the season for any of your horses?

**A** Rock The Kasbah will hopefully make it to the

*Aintree Grand National in April.*

**Q** What is it about National Hunt that first got you gripped?

**A** I grew up on the family farm and rode in point to points and then professionally for 10 years

**Q** Any darkhorses to look out for this season?

**A** Zanza and Deise Aba, both won races at Chepstow and could be nice young horses. Ebony Gale and Evidence De Thaix are also nice horses.

**Q** What has been your favourite part about training so far?

**A** Rooster Booster;

*Cheltenham Champion Hurdle and Kibreet at the Cheltenham festival as it was AP McCoy's first festival winner.*

**Q** What are your thoughts on this whip situation we have going around?

**A** It is very important to balance the horse and jockey and especially keeping a horse straight into a fence.

*The whips are air cushioned that cannot hurt the horses and will not mark.*

**Q** If you could train one horse past or present, who would it be and why?

**A** It would have to be Rooster Booster, Balthazar King or Alitor.

# DAY RELIVED

AFTER WINNING THE ST LEGER IN 1988 WITH MINSTER SON NEIL GRAHAM LOOKS BACK AND GIVES HIS FIRST-HAND ACCOUNT OF A SPECIAL HORSE AND A SPECIAL OCCASION

As I drove the half mile from my cottage in the Berkshire village of West Ilsley to the stables, that were owned by Her Majesty the Queen, on that rather dreary and damp autumn day, little could I have realised what a milestone Saturday, 10th September 1988 was to be in the life of an ambitious, 28 year old trainer, who was due to have his first classic runner later that day. I had spent the last eight years serving my apprenticeship with Derek Kent at Funtington, William Huntingdon in Newmarket, Ian Balding at Kingsclere and John Gosden in California before being asked by the Earl of Carnarvon to assist Major Dick Hern at West Ilsley. The Major's prolonged stay in hospital with serious heart problems and complications from his injuries, sustained whilst out hunting several years before, had prompted the Jockey Club temporarily to place the licence in my name, so that someone in situ would be responsible and could be held accountable.

West Ilsley Stables housed one hundred and eight of the best bred horses in the world with pedigrees that were matched only by those of their owners, many of whose lives had been

engrained in the history of the turf. The horses included Nashwan, who was to go on to victory in the 2000 Guineas and the Derby the following year and Prince of Dance, who was to win the Dewhurst Stakes, Group 1, at Newmarket later that autumn. The owners ranged from the Queen, Lord Weinstock, the Earl of Carnarvon, Dick Hollingsworth to Sheikh Hamdan al Maktoum and his brother, Sheikh Mohammed al Maktoum to name but a few.

Saturday morning meant that there would be horses to gallop both first and second lot and, therefore, Willie Carson, as the stable jockey, would be in attendance. Firstly though, there would be the daily routine of catching up with Geordie Campbell, the long-standing head lad, to check that all the horses were okay after the night and had eaten up all their feed. Then the previous day's runners would need to be assessed; these included Prince of Dance, who had won the Group 2 Laurent Perrier Champagne Stakes the day before at Doncaster, making him one of the leading two year olds in Great Britain and a serious hope for next year's Derby. He was trotted up in the yard to check he was sound and

then weighed to see how much weight he had lost from his exertions.

Next, at 7.30 precisely, the horses would pull out of their boxes and make their way to the indoor ride, where I would be waiting for them and watching to see how they all seemed and were behaving. After trotting to warm them up, I jumped up onto my favourite hack, Mandate, and led the string off to the gallops, where we would meet Willie Carson. He sat on five of the horses in their galloping work both first and second lot, offering me afterwards his, as ever, invaluable feedback. I remember little of the detail of the morning now but I do remember very clearly, as we headed back down the track to the yard with the horses steaming in the damp, morning air, that in the field on my left several magpies flew off but I did not stop counting until eleven of them had disappeared into the distance. I have never been able to discover if eleven has any significance in mythology but they certainly presaged good fortune for me.

Willie and I were flying to Doncaster in Willie's six-seater Cessna, piloted by Bilko, who was a gift to any caricaturist with his over-sized handlebar

moustache. The journey only took about an hour but, to our huge disappointment, it started to rain as we got close to Doncaster. Minster Son was an athletic, long-striding horse, who appeared to relish fast ground and seemed to struggle to get any traction on rain-softened ground.

The afternoon passed slowly, waiting for the main event of the day, the Ladbrokes St Leger Stakes, the third leg of the classic racehorse's triple crown but, eventually, about three-quarters of an hour before the race Minster Son arrived in the pre-paddock. He was accompanied by Buster Haslam, the travelling head lad at West Ilsley, who had served for some forty years at the yard and whose name was a byword for reliability and experience, and his lad, Ginger. As I leant over the rail, watching him go round, he looked magnificent: lithe, powerful and on really good terms with himself. Minster Son had won the Gordon Stakes at Glorious Goodwood last time out and had never raced beyond one and an half miles but we had always thought that the St Leger trip would bring out the best in him.

**READ PART TWO IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE**

# A HOT SUN MET



INTERNATIONAL PREVIEW

## AS SOUTH AFRICA GEARS UP FOR A GREAT DAY OF RACING, CHRIS TOFFA SANTOS LOOKS AT THE RUNNERS

The Sun Met is the culmination of the Cape Town season and is one of South Africa's biggest race days yearly as many racegoers from all over the country show up to see some of the country's finest thoroughbreds in action.

There are many great horses on the honour roll and whomever wins it this year will be joining an elite group of champions. The day itself sees many feature races, which provides a lovely under card before the big knockout of the main event. There are a total of 4 Group 1s on the card as well as 2 sales races that are packed with quality.

The first of the sales races is the CTS 1200 in which 20 horses will be trying their luck at landing the R2.5 million rand first prize. Cirillo, having won the Ready to Run sales race earlier in the season is many peoples favourite after his last start saw him finish 4th in the Gr.1 Cape Guineas. He drops back in trip to a sprint and therefore may be a little vulnerable here. Van Halen is the only Gr.1 winner in the field and should he get back to his best over a distance he will enjoy, he could be very dangerous. Another two

to consider are Mastagambit and Seventh Sea who look unexposed and are progressing the right way after finishing 3rd and 4th behind Pleasedtoomeetyou who takes his place in the Gr.1 Cape Flying Championship Later in the card.

**Selction: Mastagambit**  
**This will be his toughest ask to date but he looks the most progressive here and must have an outstanding chance in this if he continues on his upward curve.**

The second of the sales races the CTS 1600 looks to lie between the 3 powerhouses of One World, Chimichurri Run and Twist of Fate who finished 1-2-3 in the Concorde Cup (Gr.2) at the beginning of the season. There are doubts that Chimichurri Run truly stays the 1600m while Twist of Fate has been kept on the boil for a long time now and this could be a bridge too far. One World was looking like something of a super star before being beat by Soqrat as well as Twist of Fate in the Cape Guineas, however if he brings his A game, I think he wins. The biggest danger to the top 3 could be Silvano's

Pride who put in a spectacular performance in behind Front and Center in the Fillies Guineas as she represents the fairer sex in this contest. Of the others, Vardy is on the up and after running into tons of traffic in his last start, the run can be upgraded.

**Selction: One World**  
**He is a class horse and I am willing to forgive his flat performance last time out.**

The first of the Gr. 1s for the day is The Cape Flying Championship which sees some of the best sprinters in South Africa lock horns. Trainer Brett Crawford holds a strong hand here as he has the top rated Bold Respect who looked as if he was coming back to his best after finishing 3rd behind stable mate Pacific Trader in a pinnacle plate. Crawford's other runner, Search Party finished 4th in the same race and could also be a factor here. Kasimir looks to have matured into a seriously good sprinter and you can leave out the Snaith stable on a big day like this at your own peril. The aforementioned Pleasedtoomeetyou is the sole 3YO

in the race and although it looks tough task against the older horses, we don't really know how good he is as of yet after only one start since being gelded. Rebel's Champ represents the Johannesburg challenge and while he has been near unstoppable back home, travelling to Cape Town can sometimes be a tricky thing for a young stable like Paul Peter's to master.

**Selection: Kasimir**

**He has showed his class already this season and he is beginning to realise his potential as a top class sprinter.**

The Cape Derby has been badly affected by the sales races this year and looking at the field it may be a substandard renewal. Thanksgiving is the highest rated and boasts some cracking Johannesburg form from the Dingaans.

He has a good draw and should enjoy the extra distance here. If he travels well he must rate a huge runner. Bunker Hunt and Belgarion look to be the two leading lights for the Snaith stable and although they had very different fortunes last time out in the Politician stakes, I don't think there is much between them. Belgarion finished 3rd behind Twist of Fate in a race that should prove to flatter the winner in time while Bunker Hunt lost his jockey as the gates opened. Herodotus has been aimed at this since breaking his maiden and I can't give up on him now. He does look as if the trip will suite down to the tee and got going late in the Politician stakes last time where he finished 5th. Santa Clara and Helen's Ideal represent the fairer sex here and look at the two, Helen's Ideal looks to have the right profile about her for a race like this however she would need to step up on what she has shown. Lastly, young trainer Gareth van Zyl has his first taste at a Derby with Ovation Award who brings some very decent form to the table. He has already been beyond the trip of 2000m and he could be the surprise package.

**Selection: Herodotus**

**I cannot give up on him now, he has been aimed at this for a long time and although this is a deep race, he could be the one to walk away victorious.**

The newly sponsored Bidvest Majorca Stakes sees last season's superstar 3YO filly Snowdance, meet this year's

superstar 3YO filly Front and Center. Front and Center is yet to taste defeat and after winning the Fillies Guineas impressively, it would be no surprise should she come out of this with her record unscathed. Snowdance has a poor draw to contend with here and she may find it hard to dominate from there as she usually likes to do. Thus I make Lady in Black the main danger. Lady In Black looked as if she would sink Oh Susana earlier this month in the Paddock Stakes however the brilliant Richard Fourie got the job done on that occasion and jockeyship may tell the tale again in this one.

**Selection: Front and Center**

**She is unbeaten and the way she has won her races, suggests she can stay that way. A lovely pedigree and a lovely filly. Lets cheer her on!**

The big one of the day, The Sun Met! Do It Again is the even money favourite and given the way he and Soqrat powered away from the rest of the field in the Queen's Plate earlier this month, one can see why bookmakers are taking no chances. He looks the one to beat but let's see if we can uncover some each way value.

The champion miler Legal Eagle finally succumbed over a mile and lost his unbeaten record over the trip when beaten by Do It Again and if he were to win this over a distance he has never fully cracked, it would definitely be from left field. The stable is suggesting that he will be ridden from off the pace and I personally think that was his undoing in the Queen's Plate. He likes the stalking position which makes it hard when he is drawn wide.

Another that has come through the Queen's Plate and into the race is Undercover Agent. He got caught up in a speed battle last time and came out on the wrong side of it. It would be interesting to see what tactics are adopted here as he may be a live wire.

Hat Puntano looks to have lots to do to feature here. He looks a horse stuck with a high rating and nowhere to go.

Made To Conquer has been rather disappointing since returning back to Cape Town after running 2nd in the Durban July. He looks to have lost his spark and has been convincingly beaten in all his starts.

Milton is the likely pace angle and although he has caught fields napping from the front before, I don't

see it happening here. Nice day out! for connections.

Kampala Kampari will need to find another gear to be involved here although he did run a very big race last time out where he was just nabbed on the line late by Double Mint.

Rainbow Bridge is a horse with a whole lot of talent but his inability to settle doesn't help his cause. A pacemaker was used in the Queen's Plate to hopefully help his cause but he still wasn't able to conquer his opponents. He gets the services of superstar Marcus and he may be allowed to stride here from a good draw. That is dangerous, just think back to Hill Fifty Four, we could see something similar.

Tap O' Noth is capable on his day but from draw 13 he has his work cut out for him. Not for me in this race.

Eyes Wide Open is another horse that has gone seriously off the boil since his great 2YO career. He has been off color of late and will struggle.

Doublemint won a good race last start as he fetched Kampala Kampari when the race looked lost but he will need to go to the next level to feature in this race. I'm not saying that it is not possible but it does look unlikely.

The defending champion, the darling Oh Susana. She comes into the race this year off of a Gr.1 win and if I think back to this time last year she was completely written off by me as she simply could not do it on paper. She has turned into a dream horse and she is looking to make history as the first filly to win the Met back to back. Fayd'herbe gets the ride on her and she looks to hold every chance of completing the historic feat.

**Selections:**

- 1. Do It Again**
- 2. Rainbow Bridge**
- 3. Oh Susana**
- 4. Head Honcho**

Do It Again looks very hard to beat here after a sizzling performance last time out and its hard to see any of his opponents turning the form around. Rainbow Bridge is likely to get a typical Marcus ride which could prove oh so dangerous if allowed to dictate. Oh Susana can show her class once again and should be taking home a stakes cheque while Head Honcho could be the odds play after doing nothing wrong coming into the race. I know its boring, but the bookmakers look to have this one spot on.

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