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RICHARD DAVIS AWARD

For the Top Conditional Jockey riding at Cheltenham, Chepstow, Hereford, Ludlow, Stratford, Warwick and Worcester during the period 6th May 2019 – 26th April 2020

(Sponsored by the Cheltenham & Three Counties Race Club)

Scoring: a Winner 10 points, a Second 7 points, a Third 4 points, a Fourth 2 points.

Latest placings (up to and including 4th February 2020)

1 st	Connor Brace	239 pts
2 nd	Jonjo O'Neill Jr	183 pts
3 rd	Ben Jones	143 pts
4 th	Bryan Carver	107 pts
5 th	Charlie Price	86 pts



Richard Davis was a talented jump jockey tragically killed in a fall over fences in 1996.

This award is named in his memory.

Tipster Competition

With the recent introduction of a Bi-Monthly Newsletter club members can find the up to date standings on the website at the beginning of each month as always as they will now not be published in the newsletter. Should you have any questions about your entry, or its status, please contact Tony Coleman, either on 07795 146242 or by e-mail at tonyandles@aol.com, who will be only too pleased to assist you.

The Adventures of Dodge and Pacha

By Lucy Sharp

So, you may have all noticed that I have been slightly quiet this winter. I gave the boys the winter off to relax and just chill. I like to give horses just out of training a good break before they start their new life so Pacha has now had a good 8 months off from when he retired with a little walking in the summer months when the sun was out.

They are now back in work and in full swing, getting ready for different things.



Pacha is in the process of getting ready for hunting. In February we have the local hunt meeting on the family farm so we are going to make our debut then. One of my friends is bringing her youngster out too so we will have a good day galloping around the countryside. He has been hunting a few times in the past and loved it. He had to go hunting in the early days when he made the change to go hunter chasing. Everyone that rode him, completely loved him and had some great days out. Very much looking forward to going out with him.

Dodge is on his normal path for this time of year. We are getting ready for The Cheltenham Festival. We have been invited back again this year to take part in the RoR parade on the first day. We are very much looking forward to going back after attending the parade 2 years ago. We missed last year unfortunately as it was just too hard with everything going on with the

flu crisis. But, onwards and upwards. Off we go again... full steam ahead.



Dodge was also asked a couple weeks ago to take part in ITVs 'where are they now' segment on the opening show. We had great fun filming our clip for the show and we were honoured to be asked to take part in it due to his win in the Clarence House Chase in 2015. It indeed brings back some amazing memories and made me want to look back on some breathtaking photos that were taken by some brilliant photographers. That, was the best season of my career in racing for definite.

See you all at Cheltenham.
Love Lucy, Dodge and Pacha x



New Years Day at Cheltenham

with a difference

By Katie Miller

New year's day racing at Cheltenham is always a special day. Whether it backing a winner or just having a nice day out with friends, it's always a good days racing.

For me, this New Year's meeting was a bit different. The Inner City Farm my Dad and I volunteer at, the St James City Farm and Riding School in Gloucester provided animals for the youngsters visiting the Family Fun Zone to meet. The 'big beasts' and the ponies had to stay at home but we had rabbits, guinea pigs, chickens, owls on display. We also brought up the Equisiser used by our pony racers; our young visitors were able to put on some silks and ride their own Cheltenham winner. The Farm was busy all day; Dad

and I popped in a few times during the afternoon to help out and chat to the visitors. My favorite part was definitely the Equisiser, even if I am not very good at it. As the resident National Hunt experts we were asked for a few tips from our volunteer colleagues – not that we managed to pick out many winners for them! The other nice part of the day is meeting up with friends and wishing them a good new year. We bumped into loads of people; many from the race club, as well as the friends we have made at the Course itself. It was also lovely to catch up with Debbie and Ian of #GoRacingGreen. It's amazing to think that last year this initiative did not exist yet in less than 12 months it's resulted in several

courses setting aside 'quiet' areas for race goers with mental health issues and providing training for staff. You may have caught Debbie talking to Oli Bell on ITV over the Christmas. No matter how early you arrive the first race always seems to spring up on you and take you by surprise. Today was no different, we almost missed it!! I am very glad we didn't though as it was very exciting with Imperial Alcazar and Paddy battling it out with Protektorat and Harry. It was nip and tuck all the way to the line with Paddy just getting pipped on the line but eventually, and in the opinion of some, controversially being awarded the race following a Stewards Enquiry. For the second race Dad and I were joined by a young Portuguese lady who is studying in Gloucester and volunteering with the Farm. This was her first experience

of a British race track and I enjoyed showing her around and picking out the horses and jockeys to watch out for. I picked Cogry out for the Markel Insurance Handicap and he gave me a great run finishing 2nd to Doing Fine trained by Neil Mulholland. We had a great day with the club visiting his Yard a few seasons ago.



Now I have to say like quite a few people I was hoping that Champ was going to win the Paddy Power Broken Resolutions Already Dipper Novices' Chase and it looked for a while that I'd have my first winner of the day. However a crashing fall opened up the race for Magic Saint ridden by Danny Cook and trained by Sue Smith.

It was a great relief to see Champ and Barry up on their feet. I was delighted that Garo De Juilley came fourth for Sophie Leach and Paddy. Sophie has been a great supporter of the Farm and its pony racing so it's always great to see them back in the Winners Enclosure.



So onto the fourth, The Paddy Power Handicap Chase with as top class field of 12 very good horses looking to take home the spoils. Oldgrangewood, Saint Calvados and Lalor all come so close to winning, which made for an epic photo finish. It's always amazing when there are so many horses in a photo finish and I think that that may be one

of the closest finishes I have ever seen. This time the Skelton's came out on top and our Portuguese friend got to hear a real Cheltenham roar.



I lost Dad at this stage!! To be fair he had to go back and help out in the Family Fun Zone, so I watched it with Debbie instead.



The Paddy Power 69 Sleeps To Cheltenham Handicap

Hurdle included lots of big names including Might Bite, Beware The Bear and the greatly name Who's My Jockey. The winner, Skandiburg, ran a good race under Gavin Sheehan for the Olly Murphy team. It was not to be Might Bite's day; he'll always be a favorite of ours; hopefully Mr Henderson can get him back to winning ways soon. Dad was hoping that Quel Destin would do the honors in the Dornan Engineering Relkeel Hurdle as its in his Tipster Competition team.



Sadly for him the points slipped by this time (good news for my team though!!) with Summerville Boy winning very well for Tom

George and Jonathon Burke and second for Roksana and Dan and Harry Skelton.



We missed the final race as it was back to the Family Fun Zone to help put the animals back in the horse box. It was won by Audacity for Warren Greatrex and Gavin Sheehan. Overall it was a very good days racing. We saw some great races, met lots of friends, chatted to lots of folk in the Fun Zone and for the first time ever stroked a rabbit and held a bantam at a race course!

Here's too many more happy days racing in 2020.

A Day Out At Sandown By Dick Purcell

A Grand Day Out

Saturday 4th of January your Chair and I met up at Tewkesbury on a gloomy morning and set off down the M5 for the South West.

We had no particular reason for attending Sandown Racecourse save for the chance to watch the Grade 1 Tolworth Novices Hurdle with 50 grand up for grabs and the Class 2 Veterans Handicap Steeplechase with the princely sum of £100000 in prize money with 46K to the winner. OK, reason enough I think.

As the few who know me, and the many who know Sarah will vouch, neither of us are good talkers so it was a complete surprise when I missed the M4 exit for my usual route to the course.

With fingers firmly crossed we took the alternative route via the M25 and the A3 to Esher and the course. Fortunately the motorways were recovering from the New Year along with their users and I got away with it.

We arrived on Portsmouth Road Esher to find the sky almost as grey as the Tewkesbury one with the London skyline virtually hidden. Within minutes however the cloud dispersed, the far off Wembley arch sparkled, and we had wall to wall sunshine for the rest of the day, in the

local parlance “Cushty”!.

The first a Juvenile Hurdle was won quite easily by the Henderson/ Nico Palladium the odds on favourite.

It ended up a four horse race when Michael Scudamore’s Mr Chua failed to appear due to travel problems and it soon became three when Emma Lovell’s Zarafshan fell at the first. A pity because she seemed quite upbeat about the four year old colt. The heavy ground was not the best for four year olds.

Race two was a Class 1 Mares Hurdle won comfortably by the Paul Nichols/ Harry Cobden grey Silver Forever the only contestant of the four who seemed to cope with the conditions.

The same combination also took the next with Mercy Mercy Me easily holding off Dr Newlands 7/4 favourite Dashing Perk in a pretty ordinary Handicap Chase.



Race four was not a complete surprise when Nigel Twiston-Davies and Jack Savage clung on by a short head in the Class 2 two mile Handicap Chase with Locker Room Talk. The decision not to run him at Hereford the day before was a sound one, but only just, with Ben Pauling’s Delire D’Estruval

so close. How good to see Ben’s stable going so much better. On to The Tolworth Hurdle where despite the sensible pace conditions again played a part and Colin Tizzard and the again excellent Puppy Power took the race comfortably with 5/4 Fiddler on the roof who stayed on very strongly to prevail by 6 lengths. Gavin Cromwell’s Irish raider Jeremys Flame looked about to give him a race but a mistake at the second last put paid to that. There may be better days for that one.

Next was the one we were looking forward to the most, the oldies and not so oldies taking one another on over 3 miles in some testing ground. What a shame that the lovely Horatio Hornblower came to grief at the 16th when a close up third and what a joy that he ran on with much enthusiasm thereafter.



What a finish, Anthony Honeyball and young Rex Dingle with favourite Jepeck won by a short head from Sean Houlihan on Bob Bucker’s Regal Flow who held off Robbie Power on the fast finishing Theatre Guide with Richard Johnson on the

tiring On Tour back in fourth.

A great race justifying the trip in six and a half thrilling minutes of sheer enjoyment.

The lucky last, I wish, was supposed to go to Nicky Henderson with the fancied and well weighted Gunnery the 9/4 favourite. It did go to Mr Henderson but it was 14/1 Mill Green ridden by Jerry McGrath who held on by three quarters of a length from Mr Tizzard’s Eldorado Allen and Robbie. The owner and breeder of the winner Mrs Rita Brown was clearly delighted by the success in the winners enclosure.

A grand day out over we drove past the floodlights of Kempton Park as the evening racing was about to start, sorry I’m far too old for two meetings in a day, absolutely nothing to do with all weather racing honest !.

Couldn’t miss the M3 this time and back in Worcestershire before 6.30, if you have never been give Sandown a try, the railway fences, the pond fence and the unique double last mean so much more when you have witnessed them in the flesh.

We also laughed an awful lot.

Editor will agree with this :)

We Are Nearly There

By David Massey

As this will be the last article before we all head to the Cheltenham Festival in March, I suppose, as a pundit, I ought to do a bit of punditing and try and find a winner or two.

Now, I could concentrate on the big races but you'll be sick to the high teeth with opinions about them by the time March comes around (and you can read my thoughts about them on my other writing outlet, dailypunt.co.uk anyway). Instead, here's a few that are carrying a few of my ante-post pounds in some of the other races. If so much as one of these drops in, I'll be delighted. Read on, dear reader...

Tuesday - The Ultima Handicap

It's a race that's been kind to me over the past few years and last year I found the 1-2. I'm hoping to repeat the dose with Big River, trained by Lucinda Russell. Let's get the negative out of the way first - he'll almost certainly hit a fence on his way around, just as he did in the race last year when seemingly getting outpaced and weakening at the time. He never travelled at all after that and was effectively tailed off three out, yet once his seemingly bottomless stamina kicked in from two out, he was rattling home and passing them for fun up the run in. At the death he's been beaten just over six lengths - another furlong and he might well

have won!

Since being equipped with cheekpieces two starts ago, he's travelled and jumped a lot better - unlucky to be brought down when cantering in the Borders National at Kelso and then making no mistake back there last time out, staying on well to beat Ami Desbois, the pair clear.

That earned him a 5lb rise in the weights, so he comes here 2lb higher than last year, but I believe he's a better horse. He will need some cut to been seen at his best, but a clear round and he ought to be there at the business end.

Wednesday - Boodles Handicap

Plenty of guesswork required as to what will actually run at this stage, but at 40/50-1 I'm willing to chuck a few quid at Repetitio. Nigel Hawke has done very well with him, and he's definitely happier since being equipped with a hood, which as expected, has settled him down much better and he's finishing off his races much better. His third to one of the Triumph favourites in Allmankind in November was a good effort, but he bettered that with a battling win back at Cheltenham in December, beating his elders.

He'll want further in time and the fact he's already had seven starts will be enough to put most off, as he's simply more exposed than the majority of the

field, but one thing he will do is run right to the line. Ideally there's a bit of cut in the ground, then he can put his stamina to good use.

Thursday - Pertemps Network Final

Those of you that follow my ramblings elsewhere will know that Rapper is one that's been on my radar for some time now, ever since his sixth behind The Some Dance Kid at Bangor back in 2018, and a race like this is always where I pictured him ending up.

And if Henry Daly has a plan to get him here, then it's working out rather well. His run over a trip too short behind Duke Street at Cheltenham blew a few cobwebs away, and then he was taken to Market Rasen to win his qualifier for the Final. And win it he did, showing that stamina was clearly going to be his long suit with a game, galloping effort, constantly responding to Richard Patrick's urgings. Then back to Cheltenham for a run on New Year's Day where again, despite constant pressure on the front end in the latter stages, he kept finding until the tailed-off Sakndiburg came with an irresistible wet sail in the last 100 yards. Nevertheless, that was an improvement again, and the 3lb rise he got will just about get him into the foot of the handicap.

He acts on all ground, is still improving, stays well and acts at Cheltenham. What's not to like for 33-1?

Friday - Gold Cup

Oh, alright then. I'll put one up for the big one.

If I told you there was a horse in here that was proven at the track, stays well, was tough, genuine, and on his latest start ran near to his career best, you'd be interested, wouldn't you?

Now if I tell you that you can have a double-figure price about him, that makes him even more interesting, yes? What's the catch David, I hear you cry? Well, it's not really a catch, but we probably need soft ground, which is why we are getting the price we are.

However, having said all that, Native River (for it is he) will get away with good to soft, but you simply wouldn't want it on the quick side. But that's really the only negative I can currently find with Colin Tizzard's evergreen 10yo, and of course, winner of this back in 2018. In the 2019 event he never travelled a yard, but still refused to lie down and stayed on for third. A change of headgear first time up this year saw him thrash Frodon at Aintree, and it does look like, as he's got a bit older and wiser, that he needs stronger headgear these days. But if he gets his ground, there's no way he's going off a double-figure price. Worth chancing, with so many other factors in his favour.

Enjoy the Festival!

John Hales Article

It is always very exciting when a young horse has a run of success especially so close to the Festival. Maire Banrigh has now won 5 on the trot including being unbeaten over fences. She is due to run this weekend and I will forward my article after racing on Saturday. Lisa and I want to break our record which stands at 5 consecutive wins by "One Man" If Maria Banrigh wins her next race she will have won 6 consecutive races. It will be an exceptional gelding who beats her giving her 7 lbs. Also Protektorat is due to run at Cheltenham this Saturday and we think a lot of this horse. I cannot wait to see him over fences. It is now Sunday evening and I was very pleased to see Maire Banrigh achieve 6 consecutive wins. She

again was outstanding with an impressive round of jumping and accelerated away after the last fence to win this listed race. We have decided to target the Arkle at the Festival with an entry in another race (to be decided) as an alternative option. She has speed with a Stayers pedigree and now we can start to dream. Why not The King George next Boxing Day and the Gold Cup in 2021. Could she be the first mare since Dawn Run to win the Gold Cup? It will be an outstanding gelding who can give her the Mares Allowance of 7 lbs. The name Maire Banrigh is a Celtic name and translated is Queen Mary. I am sure the Irish racing fraternity will now be following her with interest. In addition to Maire Banrigh we will have Politologue in the Champion Chase and Protektorat in the Coral Cup.

I thought that Protektorat ran well at Cheltenham on Saturday giving weight away and we were very happy with 3rd place. He will have every chance at the Festival. Politologue has it all to do in the champion chase but I cannot forget his magnificent performance last year when he finished a close 2nd to Altior. We are behind with some of the young horses due to bad ground conditions and I do not believe we will have more than 3 horses at the Festival.

We are still waiting to see Fidelio Vallis, Eclair D'ainay, Flash Collonges and Grandads Cottage. There has been speculation that the Festival will go to 5 days but I am personally against that change. The most important aspect is to maintain the quality of the standard would drop because you are already seeing our best horses. Let's now hope we can all enjoy the Festival with good weather and racing conditions



Club Night

Ben Pauling Evening at the CTCRC

Late November and time for the last club night of the year. David Massey was in the chair and the guest this month was Ben Pauling and his secretary Hannah Vowles. So after a brief introduction the first question of the evening was “what’s been going on in November”? Ben explained that he doesn’t like getting his horses in too early but after sending horses to Plumpton which did well it became apparent things were going wrong. Berboru a horse Ben believes should be rated in the 130’s rather than 111 was a good example as it blew up when it should have been winning. After much searching for reasons and lots of food testing he discovered his feed was low in potassium. The levels should be around 2% but was found to be around half of that. Now it has been sorted he is confident the horses will be back up to form by early December.

This setback hasn’t stopped the fun though. Ben has been training now for 6 years and likes a bit of fun but doesn’t like grumblers or sicknotes, they might as well clear off quickly as there is no place for them in the yard. Hannah met Ben 13years ago in Lambourn. She got into racing via horse insurance which she got into after her A levels. Through this, and a chance meeting with Pat Eddery she moved onto running Pat’s racing syndicate. Bens

route into racing started early as he is a farmers son and from the age of 11 was riding seriously. However after getting barbed wire in his eye a few years later he ended up in hospital where a rookie doctor discovered a hole in his eye. After surgery and a period of 7 days lay face down he was turned down for his jockeys license by the ‘notorious’ Dr Turner, which didn’t go down too well with Ben. It did however give him the drive and determination to get into training. He got a job at David Redvers on the flat it became boring reading sales catalogues so went for an interview with Nicky Henderson who forgot that he had arranged it. After initially giving the job to somebody else Nicky did offer a position to Ben. On his first day he was greeted with “are you the new useless assistant”? And “ I hope you can drive a horse box “? At this point, not wanting things to get off to a worse start, our guest may have told what is known as a lie! Things soon settled down though but Ben did notice that there wasn’t much fun in the yard. This was the year Punjabi won the champion hurdle and only four people celebrated. Tom Symonds was the other assistant in the yard and whilst they formed a firm friendship they were different characters. On the first day they met Ben suggested a pint after work and Tom asked if he could in future let him know on a Sunday as he liked to plan his week. Ben obviously had an effect on Tom though as on a morning after a celebratory night

nobody in the yard could find Tom. He wasn’t at home according to his mum but she did track him down to a local police station as he had been found fast asleep in a lay-by by an off duty copper.

On the horse front the yard has high hopes for Bright Forecast who has had heart problems but is now ok and going chasing after finishing third in the Ballymore. ChessPlayer is a bumper horse who will be aimed at Aintree and Punchestown in the spring. There are also hopes for Unai, a Munir and Souede owned horse, and The Captains Inn who likes heavy ground. Hannah likes Nadaitak, mainly as he is stabled close to her office and has a lovely temperament.

Ben likes to buy young horses himself as agents charge around 5% and has a number of 3 year old store horses. The yard can hold up to 84 horses in total and after a bit of discussion with the landlord now has round and uphill gallops.

The final part of the evening was to give us a horse to follow for the season and both Hannah and Ben agreed that Ravens Tower would be worth following. So with good horses and loads of laughs guaranteed it seems like the Pauling yard would be a fantastic place to be involved with.

Mike



Stable Life at Jonjo O'Neill Racing

By Jo O'Neill

14th November: On a dismally dark wet Thursday, I took Bhutan to Ludlow. Jonjo's youngest son AJ came in the lorry as he was on board! We had the craziest journey there with flooded roads. Water cascaded off the fields, spilling out of clogged ditches; one car lost its front number plate through a flood, it was left floating in the wake! At one bend, there was a Road Closed sign. AJ and I looked at one another: "Go on," he said and, due to the higher ground clearance on the two-box, we didn't flounder.

I must mention how amazingly kind Bhutan (Boo) is: a gentle dapple grey with a sweet disposition. I was absolutely delighted when Boo won, giving AJ his first ever winner. I felt proud to have led him up, like he was my little brother (I did take him and Jonjo Junior to see the last Harry Potter film a few years ago!) Even more proud was mum Jacqui, who clapped us in. As I charged up to them, AJ gave me a big smacker, muddying my face and making my bobble hat sit skewwhiff. Yet, it didn't matter – it was a fab afternoon, and Boo got lots of fuss! By the time the three of us loaded up, it was pitch black, but the roads were easier to negotiate, the floods having subsided a little.

16th November: I was delighted to go to Cheltenham with Prefontaine. Even though he hated the ground and finished 7th, it is always an amazing place to go. I was also pleased to be there for my friend Gemma McQuillan from Nigel Twiston-Davies', for 'her' beloved Splash Of Ginge retired after pulling up in the

Bet Victor Gold Cup. She came and found me afterwards to tell me, all smiles that he retired in one piece. Gemma and Ginge have always been a double act and I recall helping her one Saturday years ago put on his bridle at Wetherby. Happy retirement Ginge – what a servant you were!



23rd November: Soaring Glory won an Ascot bumper well. He's a talented young horse, who will hopefully go far. A lot of credit goes to his groom Georgia Plumb, who has ridden him every day, including her Sundays off.

One evening stables, I worked round my horses as usual and was shocked when walking into Arrivederci's stable he pinned his ears flat back, glowering at me. Arrivederci (or Lucky as I nicknamed him) is the sweetest, friendly horse. I did a double take, seeing the dapples on this grey were different. It was definitely not Lucky but Bean In Trouble masquerading as Lucky. Both had been ridden that morning by jockeys and must have been swapped over accidentally when coming off the walker. (That's a

good example why we check each horse's microchip number before taking them racing!)



November's Employee of the Month went jointly to new recruits Sydney Smith and Megan Petrie. Coming from the Northern Horseracing College, both have made brilliant starts to their new job. Megan, 17, is here as a yardie, has also started to run the 'spa', treating the horses with magnetic rugs and in the solarium. Sydney, also 17, has worked hard, been cheerful and has improved her riding lots. Before going to college, she had never sat on a horse.

2nd December: Jonjo Junior rode out his claim on Adicci at Plumpton. Another milestone ticked off by our hugely talented young jockey.

7th December: At the end of a busy week, Lucky ran at Sandown, back over two miles. Dream Berry was our other runner. Rachel McMahon joined me in the task of shampooing the pair. At least, Lucky is dappled, whereas Berry is flea-bitten white! After forgetting my

grooming kit at Doncaster, I took the accessories like cross noseband, boots, tongue-tie, breast girth and lead rein but forgot a second bridle. Fortunately, all was ok – we just cleaned Lucky's and added the vital bits. I was just fortunate that the first runner didn't fall and damage the bridle. Rachael and I had a brilliant day, with both horses finishing second. We laughed a lot, especially about my ability of forgetting things.



10th December: At Fontwell, on another wet, cold day, I took Quarenta. He is looked after by yardman John Dina, who is not a driver so I luckily stepped in. Normally, in 2-3 runner races I lead up the underdog – in the past, It's A Gimme finished second (or is it last?) and so did Prefontaine this season. I wasn't very optimistic but Quey won – hacking round behind the pacemaker and passing him out just after the final fence. It was lovely to lead in a winner for his owners, Sir and Lady Broughton.

Have all my days racing been wet and cold? December 12th definitely was – so grey and abysmal that I deemed it too cold to wash grey When You're Ready. He is also another of John's horses – and our only runner at Taunton, so I got to take him for his first run over hurdles.

I asked the valets if Dickie Johnson could weigh out early so I could saddle in the stable yard. Forty-five minutes before the race, I waited alongside Alex Walters (head of travelling to Jamie Snowden), gossiping and having a laugh when her jockey Gavin Sheehan and Dickie strolled past, carrying their big bags and Costa coffee cups.

"Do you want an early weigh out?" Gavin asked Alex.

"And you?" Dickie asked me. They both dashed into the changing rooms. Moments later, Dickie stood on the scales in boots and breeches, topless, body protector and silks in hand. A woman made of less sterner stuff than I would have had heart palpitations. For an 'older' jockey, Dickie is very muscular and fit!

When You're Ready jumped well, ran on really well to finish fourth and was a pleasure to lead up. So, in spite of the bad weather, we had a good day together.

14th December: The sun shone up at Donny, but it was bitterly cold. Prefontaine (Stevie) ran in the juvenile hurdle and danced round the paddock. Normally I practically drag him! Yet, he was enjoying the sunshine and looked pretty enough (despite wearing blinkers) to win the best turned out. Sadly, he came last on soft ground he loathed – hopefully it will dry up soon!

19th December: I took Notawordofalie (Tabitha) to Exeter. It was so wet and cold, and I led her up in torrential rain. Her tiny hooves skittered through the puddles in the parade ring. Tabby did win the turn out, but I could imagine the sponsor just quickly picked the first plaited one! She finished 6th, running ok on ground that was awful. After three races, the rest of the meeting

was abandoned.

21st December: March Is On (nicknamed Marty) ran at Ascot. It is another place I always love to go – it's so smart, down to the race day stewards wearing bowler hats! Marty was running well, loving the soft ground but he was hampered and nearly brought down by another runner stumbling in front of him. The main thing was that Marty was unhurt.

Jonjo Junior later won a Lester for Conditional of the Year. All the awards are voted for by his fellow jockeys and this was a massive achievement.

Owners Sir and Lady Broughton sent the yard four Christmas sponge cakes, which flavours included chocolate, millionaire's, lemon and carrot! Each was beautifully iced in their green and red colours. It was such a kind generous gesture and definitely started Christmas off early!



The night of the 23rd was the staff Christmas party! Initially, everyone met up in the owners' suite for the pre-party! Here, the alcohol flowed freely and then we piled onto the bus that took us into Cheltenham to the bar Aquavitae. We had another fun party with lots more drink, and there was a limbo pole, Jenga,

beer pong and a photo booth. The photos started off quite proper, then the poses became less classy as the night went on. Any girl who went in with Harrison past 11 o'clock was very brave! Even head lad Johnny Kavanaugh ventured in and there was a vision of him going very low at the limbo, proving he is supple!

Christmas Day proved crisp, cold and sunny. Having been Santa and Mrs Claus the past two years, I was rather half-hearted and wore an elf's hat this year. Katie Stubbs wore a jolly jumper but got too chilly and put her coat on. Work experience lad Jack Wilmot wore his red woollen jumper all morning. I was lucky that Christmas Day fell on my afternoon off, so I spent lunchtime onwards celebrating and eating at my parents' house.



On Boxing Day, superstar mare Annie Mc won under Jonjo Junior first time over fences at Wincanton. She is a credit to her groom Florin 'Fred' Mirea, who calls her his Princess and her regular work rider Matty Gill, who copes very well with her bounciness at the bottom of the gallops.

On New Year's Eve, Ionut Gabriel Ungureanu (Gaby) and I set off for Scotland with Extreme Force and As You Like (Ruby). The horses were ridden out first lot, then we set off. I drove the initial stretch to Tebay services,

where we watered the horses and had lunch ourselves. Gaby took over the driving until about half an hour from Musselburgh, when we refuelled. It was my first visit to Musselburgh, so I was excited to tick another racecourse off. It took just under eight hours. The welcome was lovely from the yard manager and we unloaded in frosty conditions. It was freezing, creating rumours that racing might be off. We wrapped the horses up with extra layers and drove to the Premier Inn, where we were staying. A luxurious room each! After checking the horses once more, we settled down. Sadly, there was no Hogmanay celebrations for us, and I was tucked up in bed by ten!

I was up at 5:45 to feed and was utterly surprised when the frost was gone! It was a balmy 6° and racing would definitely be on. I really enjoyed my stay at Musselburgh, plus the track was smart and delightful. Everyone was friendly and welcoming, and there were bagpipes playing. EF ran well to finish third, but Ruby was slightly disappointing to finish 7th (he has since gone on holiday).

2020 started off well for me when on the 4th Arrivederci (Lucky) won over hurdles at Wincanton – his first win since his Hereford bumper. It was my only ever winner at the track and I felt proud of my boy. He is learning to settle and jumps so well. He is handsome too and won the best-turned-out, but I put that down to him being grey. It was a really lovely day as Maypole Class finished second in his race. The only aspect that marred it was I had not avoided an illness that had swept through each hostel in turn. Everyone was knocked sideways by the bug and, over the next couple of weeks, no one really escaped it.

Industry Interview

As part of our ongoing interaction with personnel within the industry, jockeys agent, Dave Roberts kindly agreed to contribute to our newsletter.

Dave writes -

After thirty-three years as a serving jockeys agent I consider myself to be one of life's very lucky people. Working in a sport that I totally love; national hunt racing has been a major part of my family's life from a very young age.

In the early days when taking on jockeys Dean Gallagher and Richard Guest, I never expected to be as fortunate as I have been in dealing with several of the very best national hunt jockeys that have ridden on my watch. In the early days I became not just agent but friends with the jockeys I managed and several of those relationships have lasted for decades. During that time you build up very strong

bonds and you experience many highs and lows but my motto in life has always been 'never say never' and this is what I hopefully reflect to my jockeys.

I always had great pleasure in taking on young conditionals and amateurs and nurturing them onto becoming successful professionals, that is a very rewarding part of an agent's life and still is very important to me.



In my job I always say it is not like going to work, it is just such a pleasure to work in my hobby. I would say to anyone thinking of becoming an agent, not wanting a lot of sleep is a great asset (luckily I don't still) and also that you won't have much of a social life if you are

doing the job properly; It is very demanding on your time but at the end of the day there are great results and times which can never be swapped.

Within NH racing, I regret very few things but one is I am unable to go racing as much as I would like (about four times a year). I feel the demands on everybody in racing are very high and the amount of racing is enormous, so there are very few moments you can leave the bunker and go out. I hope that one day the demands are lessened and all staff and jockeys are given more breaks to recharge the batteries and recover, I know everyone would be healthier and better for longer breaks in the calendar.

As the new season progresses the number of winners that all my jockeys have on the board is very important to me as I have always judged the success of my own career on the total number of winners. I know that all my jockeys want to ride the big winners at the big festivals

but I judge my performance on numbers. I am nearing another personal landmark in my career in the next year or so and I believe you have to set goals in every aspect of life and my goals are very high.



So now in my 34th season as an agent I see no signs of letting up and feel that with the amazing support from my wife and children and now my first grandchild (maybe a jockey in the future), I will embrace every minute of my blessed career and strive towards the high goals.

I also thank all my jockeys, current and retired, for without them, I would never been able to have had the fulfilling career that I have had.

Gary Witheford.....

.....The Go To Man For Trainers

Obviously we are known for dealing with horses that have stalls issues, we go to trainers' yards all over the UK to work the horses and then follow up by loading the horses at the races and we also deal with stalls tests and run the Barrier Trials at Lingfield and Wolverhampton.

Gary and Craig Witheford are specialist trainers of horses with behavioural issues. Having been known as the 'go to man' for starting stalls issues for many years, Gary has been totally dedicated to his work in racing since he first 'got the bug' at a young age.

With Craig joining the team over 15 years ago, together they have become well respected in the industry. With Gary's repeated hints at retiring (that'll be the day!) Craig is poised to continue the good work so the last couple of years have seen many changes in the business and this continues into 2019.



With an ever-growing demand from Trainers all over the UK, Ireland & Europe, we offer a unique service at trainers' yards all over the UK, dealing with horses that have issues with starting stalls. This also involves follow up attendance at racecourses all over the country for stalls tests and support for tricky cases on a race day.



Gary is also an Official Advisor to the Turkish Jockey Club, spending several weeks each year in Turkey, training the stalls teams, stewards and starters and advising on welfare and safety improvements.

Gary's passion for improving racing also brought about the introduction of Barrier Trials in the UK. These were introduced at Lingfield Park in April 2015 and are organised by Witheford Equine. They have become a key part of many trainers' programmes, with Wolverhampton Racecourse becoming involved in

2019. Gary and Craig believe these trials are key to supporting trainers throughout the UK and the aim is to introduce trials at other tracks in the future.

As specialists in dealing with starting stalls issues, we work horses at trainers' yards throughout the UK and also offer timed appointments for 'walk-through' training sessions at our base near Marlborough. This is followed up by attendance at racecourses to provide ongoing support all over the UK, Europe & RoW.

We used to start hundreds of yearlings at our yard and we also used to travel to John Oxx's yard every year to start all the yearlings for HH The Aga Khan and other owners, which meant that we started Sea The Stars! Amongst the many horses that Gary has worked with are names such as Advertise, Barney McGrew, Battaash, Mawathee, Mutawaq and the previously mentioned Sea The Stars. Gary has also produced a book entitled "If horses could talk" giving a fascinating overview and insight into the behaviour of horse and how he adopts his training of them. More information can also be found on many social media outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram etc under the account title of @garywitheford



Gary and Sea The Stars

The grey stallion with Gary was his beloved Brujo, who we lost in August, he used to travel all over the UK, including racecourses, showing Gary at work so he would be worth a mention as some members may have seen them. He was also on the front page of the Sunday Times magazine with Jilly Cooper, a huge fan of Gary and Brujo! They both also appeared at her book launch at the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park Hotel.



Gary and Brujo

Ben Case Stable Visit In Photos.



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Club Events and Magazine are on the website so please keep checking.