

**December 07**

**Newbury Nightmare!**

I'll start with an apology to Newbury attendees for my non-appearance after Ballyshan's race last Friday. Having arranged to have a drink with members and conduct the post mortem in the Owners & Trainers bar I arrived at the appointed venue only to be confronted by a Jobsworth who showed remarkable judgement by refusing to let me in. Seemingly I didn't have the correct bit of cardboard and despite showing him my ROA membership he insisted that I trek to the racecourse office and then return with the designated means of entry. At this point the rigours of a trying day caught up with me and I told him his fortune in fairly Anglo Saxon terms, sufficiently so that it immediately became apparent that there was little point in my returning, badge or no badge. So I'm sorry that I wasn't around to help drown sorrows and share the disappointment.

I think we're all agreed that we simply put a line through Newbury, as just about everything that could go wrong did, and the whole day was a non-event. There was nothing wrong with the going - I walked the back straight with Billy before racing and it was perfect jumping ground - but it wasn't really soft enough for our lad and, in keeping with the day generally, the threatened rain arrived as soon as our race was over. The shenanigans at the start when Sean got rid of Paddy and did half a circuit before being caught didn't exactly help either. It would be an exaggeration to say that he bolted, but none the less I've never yet seen a horse get loose and run his race. Most tellingly though, was the fact that when the starter eventually got them underway Paddy missed the break and never had the horse where he wanted him at any point in the race. The plan was to be handy on the inner, not right out the back on the outer, and those within earshot would have heard Paddy apologize on dismounting for "as bad a ride as I've ever given a horse".  
Oh well, we've all had better days!

Ballyshan is absolutely fine and I've agreed with Nigel that as we didn't really get a run (Sean wouldn't have blown a candle out afterwards) we'll find another 3m hurdle as soon as we can before contemplating another possible crack over fences. So we have 3 likely options during the countdown to Christmas and these are Cheltenham on Fri 14th (another Pertemps qualifier which might see him out of the h'cap), Bangor on the 19th (0-135) and Ascot on the 21st. Of the three Bangor is possibly the most likely at this stage but it's probably safest to make a diary note of all entries.

The only good thing to come out of Newbury is that by running we are automatically qualified for the Pertemps Final at the Festival in March, although whether we'd be in the handicap proper off a mark of 120 is by no means certain. Also, to add insult to injury, I've just found out that the handicapper has left Sean's mark unaltered so an anticipated drop of a lb or two hasn't materialised. Perverse, or what?

Should you travel to Newbury again and end up in the Owners/Trainers bar remember to pass on my best to that nice man. That apart, here's to a better run next time.

Regards,

**Bob Sims**

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