

November 06

A fairly brief newsletter this time round dictated by a combination of factors, time constraints at my end being not the least of them. Also, with both the Club horses likely to be on a racecourse again imminently there's a requirement to update members on running plans, fluid as they always are!

Stable Visit

It was good to see around 30 Club members at the yard early on November 10th to watch the horses work prior to the usual high cholesterol breakfast at The Hollow Bottom. On a reasonably clement morning a number of new and old faces made their way to Naunton and were rewarded for their trouble with coffee served by Emma on the gallops and the sight of Ace Of Clubs and Ballyshan continuing their progress towards the winner's enclosure - we hope! Most then made for Cheltenham for the afternoon's racing where for me, at least, it all started to go wrong courtesy of sizeable investments over the weekend on Fundamentalist and Imperial Commander. However, Naunton Brook helped me out of a hole at Hexham a few days later and the stable horses, by and large, continue in good form.

We'll aim to structure another visit to the yard in the early part of the New Year, probably on the countdown to the Festival, and I'll be back with a proposed date when we next go to press.

Ballyshan

"Sean" has come to hand slightly quicker than anticipated and is now not far off a run. The original expectation after his delayed return from Ireland was that he'd be ready for a racecourse just before Christmas but the likelihood is that this will be advanced by about 3 weeks. He schooled over fences last Thursday (22nd) and worked well on the gallops the following morning prompting Nigel to propose an entry in a novice chase (3m2f) at Warwick on December 3rd, which the more astute of you will realise is this Sunday. As ever, it's only an entry at this stage but there's a reasonable chance (as long as the ground's soft) that he'll take it up. So you may want to check your diaries and let me know if you're likely to attend so that I can get a reasonable idea of badge requirements.

I wasn't present to watch the schooling but apparently it went very well and Club member James Jessemey was on hand to see Ballyshan negotiate the larger obstacles safely. So it would seem quite probable that he'll be back at Warwick on Sunday and if not there his chase debut won't belong delayed. Incidentally, I'm happy to report that the lameness in a hind leg which delayed his return to Naunton has not manifested itself since.

Ace Of Clubs

"Disappointing" is a reasonable enough word to describe Ace's initial run over hurdles at Wincanton on the 16th. With the considerable benefit of hindsight I wish now that we'd gone elsewhere for his debut over timber as circumstances combined to make it a forgettable experience for both horse and supporters. Stable mate Star Double was equipped with blinkers for the first time and left the gate like the proverbial s--t off a shovel and with lots of pace up front Wincanton is not a track where the leaders tend to come back. Add to this the fact that Ace missed the break and then frightened himself with a sketchy jump at the first flight, thereafter jumping indifferently and never really threatening to get involved in proceedings. Beforehand the race had looked of only average quality and it was also expected to split into 2 divisions, but it ended up with a larger than anticipated field (16) and

contained a few useful types. We would probably have been better suited to Ascot the following day where only 7 runners went a much more sedate pace, but it's always easy after the event! It would be best just to put a line through Wincanton and start again, which is the plan.

There's certainly nothing wrong with his bumper form (!st and 4th have won since) so we'll be looking for another novice hurdle this side of Christmas and I'll be specifically asking the stable to avoid running against another horse from the yard! Interestingly Ace also had treatment from the stable chiropractor on his return so could have been feeling something in his back. Certainly his schooling at home was infinitely better than on the track. Oh well, as somebody once said, "that's racing".

I hope to see many of you at the races in the next couple of weeks - please contact me if Ballyshan's declared for Warwick and you want to go - but if not I'll be one of the first to wish you the compliments of the season and good wishes for a happy and healthy "winnerfest" in 2007.

Best regards,

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