

September 06

As our Club heads towards its first anniversary and the new jumps season begins to establish itself with both the media and ourselves it's time to dust off the P C and attempt to re-engage the brain in order that you've a reasonable steer on what the next few months hold for you.

The summer months have been very quiet for the stable, even allowing for the fact that Nigel and his team are not particular admirers of summer jumping. Following the disappointing second half to the 05/06 season when many of the yard's runners patently struggled, an intensive review was undertaken covering all aspects of the stable's husbandry. Feed has been analysed and boxes steam-cleaned. Even the trainer's wallet was vacuumed in an attempt to eradicate bugs that thrive in dark, airless places. The early signs are that all these efforts have been worthwhile because thus far the horses are looking and working well and the few runners that have been sent to the track have, by and large, performed pretty well. So as we head into the peak months of "proper racing" there are grounds for hoping that the Naunton malaise has been largely, if not totally, laid to rest.

Jump For Fun's numbers continue to grow

It will come as no great surprise to learn that membership across the summer period has been pretty much in tandem with the stable's activity, namely not much to report. However, numbers are now nudging the 30 mark and since the last newsletter it's good to welcome Mike Harding from Addlestone and Michael Blake from Oxford to our ranks. Seemingly there are a few "fence sitters" from the original literature still making up their minds and hopefully some of these will help swell our numbers further as the season gets into its stride. Certainly the aim remains to build numbers and income to the point where we can purchase and run a 3rd horse under Jump For Fun's auspices, but we'll need to attract a minimum of 50 initial subscribers to achieve this. Many existing members have indicated that they are happy with this level of membership as it makes for a more relaxed and intimate atmosphere and I'm optimistic that we can achieve this. Certainly there'll be no dissention from me in administering to a slightly reduced membership base!

What of our horses?

Both Ballyshan and Ace Of Clubs played their part in getting Jump For Fun off the launch pad in promising mode, the former particularly so with his record of only once being out of the frame in six outings. So what plans for the coming season and what have we to look forward to?

Ballyshan

It was originally intended for "Sean" to be back from his summer holidays in Ireland by now, but his return to Naunton has been delayed by intermittent lameness in a hind leg. My feeling is that this problem first manifested itself in his last run at Newbury when, on ground that hindsight indicated was probably too quick, he walked away very stiff and sore. A few weeks at grass in Ireland seemed to provide the remedy, but earlier this month he was seen to be lame behind which necessitated scanning and a resultant course of injections to help ease a calcified joint. Ballyshan is, at the time of writing, responding well and continues to exercise on the walker so his general fitness is not being affected and the feeling is that he'll be back at the yard sometime in the next 2-3 weeks. In many ways this minor setback is of no great significance as he won't run until we get genuinely soft ground in any event. Originally I anticipated his first outing might be in December but now it's more likely to be January so hopefully his programme won't be too adversely affected. He remains a horse to look

forward to with a season's novice chasing firmly on the agenda. For those who may not get to see Timeform's respected Chasers & Hurdles annual, the summary of Ballyshan makes for encouraging reading and is as follows;

*8yo b.g.Synefos(USA) - Bramble Leader (Ire) Supreme Leader. Hurdles rating 114.
Tall, angular gelding; second foal; dam unraced out of a half sister to fairly useful chaser up to 2.4 miles, Solvag; runner-up in maiden Irish point in 2004; progressive hurdler; winning maiden at Chepstow in January by 7 lengths from Kildonnán; unsuited by decreased emphasis on stamina final outing; will stay beyond 3m; acts on heavy going.*

Personally I don't believe that the stamina reference had much to do with his performance at Newbury. He ran there as though something was hurting him and, as it transpires, it was!

Ace Of Clubs

Not being purchased until quite late in the season and being only a 4YO he only had the one outing when, as you know, he ran a highly promising 3rd at Worcester behind an expensive hot pot from Paul Nicholls' yard. He wasn't turned away until the end of May and therefore summered at Naunton, returning to training early in August. Thus far he's had a trouble-free preparation and is expected to be ready to run around the middle of October. Unlike Ballyshan, the feeling is that he'll want genuinely good ground so it's unlikely that he'll be committed on anything too soft and he's also a horse with a future as long as he stays sound. It will be a novice hurdles campaign this season preceded by possibly another run in a bumper as a pipe opener with again considerable grounds for optimism that he can deliver some fun and rewarding days out for us between now and next Spring.

I was at the yard last Friday (Sept 22nd) and saw Ace work second lot in the company of Imperial Commander, who's no slouch. The pair of them worked well and Ace has certainly developed physically over the summer months. Fergal confirmed that he should be ready in 2-3 weeks, ground permitting, and I'm really looking forward to seeing him back on a racecourse.

Club Activities

Aside from keeping the membership informed of entries and running plans I'll also be endeavouring to organise stable visits/get-togethers, much as last year, as well as race days at different courses and implementing any other ideas that you may have. The website www.jumpforfunracing.co.uk has recently been updated so try and keep abreast of that if you're able and if not then I'll rely on the good old Royal Mail to keep you in the loop.

Remember also that there are Club sweatshirts available in 4 sizes and they are just the ticket for those mid-winter trips to the Naunton gallops when you've otherwise only got the hot air that wafts from Fergal's mouth to keep you warm.

I'll aim to organise our first stable visit sometime in October and will be back in touch in this respect shortly.

Best wishes, meanwhile.

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