

September 07

Hello Again!

As we slip into that end summer/hint of autumn period, and with "proper" horses starting to embark on the road to fitness and "proper" racing, it's also time for me to lubricate the brain cells and get us all back into something resembling N.H. mode for the season ahead.

It's been something of a surreal summer with the vagaries of the English climate ensuring that more meetings were lost to water logging in the last 3 months than across the whole of last winter. This, aligned to the flood re-positioning the trainer's gallops a couple of hundred yards down the hill to Naunton's main thoroughfare, has meant that nature's idiosyncrasies have presented problems for most of us.

None more so, in terms of location, than a number of Club members whose stately piles are based in the S.W Midlands area that bore the brunt of the summer deluge. I live on top of a hill and had about an inch to spare when the water started backing up in my courtyard, so I can only hope that members in the Gloucester, Worcester, and Shropshire triangle also escaped the worst of the downpour. If so, and providing your binoculars also made it onto Noah's Ark, then you'll be wanting to give them a polish for (hopefully) some fun days out over the months ahead. So let's endeavour to bring you up to date with news from the stable and about the Club horses in particular.

Stable News

Readers of the racing pages will already be aware of some changes in the riding arrangements at Grange Hill Farm for the coming season. Paddy Brennan has taken over the mantle of stable jockey and has already successfully applied himself to the task at hand by steering home a good percentage of the yard's 10 winners to date. Paddy joins after a spell with Howard Johnson in the north east and we're looking forward to a long and fruitful association. David England has recovered from his broken leg and will be back riding many of our runners as a 5lb claiming conditional particularly with Marc Goldstein having moved on. Joe Akehurst will get more chances as the yard's main amateur, so providing they all stay fit and healthy we should be well catered for in the saddle.

Most of the horses are now back in and there are currently around 80 to go to war with including some nice young horses. Some of these should be ready to run by the end of the month, ground permitting, so we're hopeful of another good start to the season, a time when we've traditionally been amongst the winners.

Club Horses

Ballyshan has spent the summer in Ireland where he's shared a field with Imperial Commander and the 2 of them arrived back in Naunton over the weekend of September 8/9. As we all know, "Sean's" best form has been shown with plenty of give, so there's no rush with him and it's unlikely that he'll be back on a racecourse until the end of November at the earliest.

Despite last season's abysmal failure when faced with the larger obstacles I'd like to see another crack at novice chases, but much will depend on his physical wellbeing. That he's anything but a

natural jumper of obstacles hardly needs re-stating, with some undetected ailment probably being the root cause. He's had injections for a calcified hock (seemingly with some success) and may need more and this could be the nub of the problem leading, in turn, to his very stiff-backed method of jumping. Not surprisingly this seems to be less marked in soft ground, hence we'll wait for the winter rain and see how he's going on the schooling ground and gallops before attempting to formulate a plan. He's returned looking in good order, but a bit stiff behind, so stable vet Buffy will be looking at him as he settles back in.

I was down at the stables in early August just after Ace Of Clubs had been turned out following his tendon injury at Stratford in February. He looked in good nick, but inevitably is faced with a long period of recuperation and won't, unfortunately, be seen on a racecourse this year. He has time on his side, but the nature of his injury demands 12 months rest and there's little point in rushing him back at the end of the season, particularly when the ground is so variable. So he'll spend this winter out in a field and we'll aim to get him back in training in the summer of '08.

Which inevitably leaves us with just the one horse to campaign this year, unless we push the boat out and add to the string with the acquisition of a third.

Bob Goss emailed me a few weeks ago with news that a dual point winner in Ireland was potentially available at circa £8K. I subsequently spoke to trainer Tracey Barfoot-Saunt about the 6YO chestnut gelding by Hubble Bubbly called What A Prospect. Closer examination of his Irish point form revealed that his 2 wins came from 12 starts and that his performances to date, in relatively undistinguished company, indicated a fairly low limit of expectation. This view was endorsed by Kevin Ross, our Irish bloodstock agent/contact, so we won't be taking this any further, even given the supposedly modest purchase price.

As a racing club of limited numbers (29 at the time of writing) we have to face the fact that a 3rd horse is currently not a realistic option. While funds could just about support the outlay of a horse in the What A Prospect price bracket, the fact of the matter is, of course, that training fees would add an additional £12K-£13K which we simply don't have on the current cost base. A third string to the JFF bow can really only become an option if members are agreeable to jointly fund this via an additional payment.

Your views on this dilemma are inevitably welcome, and when we organise another stable visit in the early autumn it's a subject that can be aired and a consensus view taken. Meanwhile you could call me or email me at bsims@jumpforfunracing.co.uk if you're unable to contain yourself!

Annual Accounts

David Lewis rang me from Oxford to say that he hadn't seen any accounts recently. He's not alone, because they won't be produced until the end of our second year (November) when they'll be distributed either with the next newsletter or in isolation, dependent on how the publishing cycle falls. They'll show that on the current subscription level we can cover the upkeep of 2 horses, but any new addition will require a further cash injection.

Meanwhile, we could obviously benefit from a new member of two so if you know of anyone with a potential interest in jump racing and a few hundred pounds that they don't know what to do with, then I'd be happy to oblige them on our joint behalf. This apart, I hope to see many of you on a racecourse again shortly, but I'll be in touch regardless with details of a stable visit in the course of the next few weeks.

Best wishes until then.

Regards

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