

June 06

The last newsletter before I, like the horses, go out to pasture for a few weeks to re-charge the batteries ahead of an autumn renewal. Not that administering to the needs of Jump For Fun members is a particularly onerous chore, but with racecourse activity about to be suspended for the summer after Ace Of Club's anticipated second outing, there will be an associated lull in proceedings, albeit brief before we start all over again on the gallops in August.

Membership

At the time of writing we have 27 fully paid up members, somewhat fewer than originally hoped for, but a solid enough start and certainly a figure from which we can build for the new season. As ever in life, a few who said they would, haven't done so, at least not to date, so membership numbers could certainly benefit from additional commitment.

With the benefit of hindsight the initial "target" figure of 200 members has proven, thankfully, to be somewhat fanciful. From conversations I've had with members a revision downwards to a figure between 50-80 would now appear to be the preferred optimum, this based on retaining a more informal "club" atmosphere wherein members get to know each other well and a more manageable administration load for me! The latter factor is obviously dear to my heart as keeping 27 people abreast of running plans has sometimes proved to be a bit fraught and that's been with only one horse (now two) to concentrate on. It's a fact of life that the administration factor will be inextricably linked to a) the number of members and b) the number of horses and thus a more containable membership total aligned to hopefully 3 JFF horses would probably fit the bill all round. So this is what we're now hoping to work towards.

As far as keeping members informed of JFF news, running plans etc it would assist me if I could in future accomplish as much of this as possible by email. Currently I have email addresses for less than 50% of the membership and therefore have to rely on mobile phone or home numbers for the remainder. It's when nobody's around to take my call that it becomes really interesting! So if you have email facilities and I don't yet have the details it would help me considerably if you'd let me have them.

9 Months In...

In many ways it seems much longer since Jump For Fun took its first tentative steps, but as we look back on our first 9 months of action it's a reasonable time to take stock and review the progress to date of JFF and, more importantly, the horses.

Ballyshan

Our flag bearer and the apple of stable lass Jo Collinson's eye. "Sean" had a highly promising first season in our colours and will hopefully build on this over the winter of 06/07. He ran 6 times over hurdles, this after missing the previous season with a tendon strain, and was only once out of the frame when being committed to run on ground far too quick at Newbury. His record for the season was;

Runs	1st	2nd	3rd	U/P	Prize Money Won
6	1	3	1	1	£7,153*

*excluding trainer, jockey, stable etc deductions

There aren't too many horses who show this sort of return and consistency in their first season and he provided us all with some fun days out as well as the thrill of our first visit to the winner's enclosure. A rating of 120 and the excitement generated by Cheltenham entries added further to the enjoyment and after returning from Newbury very sore and jarred up the news from "Sean's" holiday home in Ireland is encouraging with regard to a return to training at Naunton later in the summer.

To quote Nigel Twiston-Davies, "Had a wonderful season; we think anything he has done this year is a bonus as I'm expecting him to be a better horse over fences. We will be looking at a novice chase once we've dusted off the cobwebs and the ground is right".

Certainly I've always thought that Ballyshan's style of jumping would be better suited to fences and this season novice chasing would appear to herald an exciting new chapter in his development, albeit as an 8YO. What we do know for sure is that he must have a lot of juice in the ground to show his best form and therefore I can't imagine that he'll be risked again unless the word "soft" appears in the going. All being well, and granted decent rainfall, he should be back in action in the autumn.

Ace Of Clubs

Just the one run to date (maybe two by the time you read this) in a bumper at Worcester where he ran a race full of promise to be 3rd on ground that was pretty taxing for a 4YO's introduction. Being a son of Supreme Leader he's likely to prefer genuinely good ground and was additionally unfortunate at Worcester to come up against a highly regarded (£80K) purchase from Paul Nicholl's yard, Beau Michel. Some of you may have seen that the 3YO half brother to this one, also French bred, changed hands at Doncaster sales last week for £170K! So the form appears pretty sound and the stable like him a lot.

Nigel Twiston-Davies: "Delighted with this first run. I think he'll be a much better horse on good ground. Hopefully one more run, then holidays, and looking forward to novice hurdles in the autumn".

Ace is certainly a handsome, imposing individual and Jo was probably as pleased as the JFF members present at Worcester to receive the Best Turned Out award,. However, that well known adage, "best turned out never wins" was again proved to be the case, though the thought is that Ace Of Clubs visit to the winner's enclosure won't be long delayed and by the time he takes his summer break (at Naunton) he might even have made it.



So we have 2 horses full of promise to go to war with later in the year and the feeling is that both purchases could prove to be relatively cheap in the context of bloodstock prices generally. Certainly their respective purchase prices of £20K (Ballyshan) and £22K (Ace) would be some way below their current market value were they to go through the sales ring. This certainly isn't the plan, but as an asset in the JFF balance sheet our 2 horses have a value some way in excess of their purchase price. So, if nothing else, it would appear that JFF has bought well thus far.

The other point to be made is that we've also had luck on our side. Horses, especially jumpers, are prone to injury/ailments that can keep them off the track for long periods. To date we've steered clear of any problems in Jump For Fun and long may this continue to be the case, but in this regard luck is

that all-important yet unquantifiable, factor. When your horses stay fit and well and continually, bar once, finish in the first 3, you almost start to expect it, don't' you?

Without tempting fate it would be remarkable if Ballyshan and Ace Of Clubs sailed through another season trouble-free which is another reason for trying to add a few more members and look towards a 3rd purchase.

Where To From Here?

With this newsletter you'll have received an individual statement of account which has been tailored around the date you joined, the prizemoney won since joining and your share of this relative to the other members who were on board at the time. You'll also see a balance sheet detailing income and expenses since inception which indicates clearly that we need to add members, certainly if we're to add a 3rd horse to the JFF stable. So if you know of anyone with a spare £2K who wants to buy into a ready made racing club with the prospect of fun and success over the coming months then you know where to send them. Regrettably there is no introductory fee!

Before too long the question of renewal cost will raise its head, particularly for those who joined across the formative Oct/Nov period last year. Understandably you'll be wanting to know what are the likely implications of a further 12 months involvement with Jump For Fun and I only wish I could tell you! Equally understandably I'm afraid I can't at this stage give a precise figure in this respect, but hopefully the following will help.

New members will continue to pay £2,000 for their first 12 months with a major part of this initial outlay going towards buying the horses, or in our case the 3rd horse. The fact that we already own 2 horses of some potential will hopefully be seen as a benefit in adding to our membership base. Beyond this a simple calculation shows that of the £54,000 generated by subscriptions to date, £42,000 has been spent buying Ballyshan and Ace Of Clubs, which leaves precious little for training costs, entry costs, transport, jockeys fees, marketing and sadly nothing at all for administration!

We still have one or two bills to clear so additional income from new members and membership renewals is vital, but the key question is, "how much should the latter figure be?" This is slightly chicken and egg as if we knew how many extra members would join before the year end and what the renewal numbers might be it would be easier to calculate a figure. However, a start point and reasonable indicator could be the anticipated cost of keeping Ballyshan and Ace Of Clubs in training for a further 12 months from November. The average "all in" cost per horse is circa £16K per annum assuming no prize money return (N T-D's weekly rate is £288) and thus for the existing 27 members to keep the 2 current horses in training for another year would cost £1,185 each. This, of course, assumes no prize money won and we all hope that there'll be plenty, but we can't really build this into the equation. So the early indicators are that renewal fees will be in the £1,000-£1,250 range but the definitive figure won't be available for a while yet. To assist with this I'll be attempting to glean news from you on likely renewal prospects once we get into the autumn, but meantime I would, as ever, welcome your input on the way that Jump For Fun is run and structured generally. Good points, bad points, value for money, involvement, things you'd like to see etc. It's your club and we'll endeavour to deliver the impossible and keep everyone happy. The horses have done their part, anyway!

The Stable

Indisputably a disappointing second half to the season when the number of winners returning to Naunton dried to a trickle. The official end of the season (April 30th) saw the stable tally of winners at 59, which considering the end of calendar year total highlights the decline in form of the yard since January. Undoubtedly, in my view anyway, a stubborn, undetectable virus was at the root of the problem and we can only hope that this takes its leave across the quieter summer period. Certainly a number of inmates simply weren't getting home despite looking well in themselves, an ailment probably not dissimilar to that which befell Jonjo O'Neill's yard a few miles away the season before. There's no miracle cure and as with other aspects of racehorse ownership patience is a virtue. Thankfully from the JFF viewpoint both Ballyshan and Ace Of Clubs don't appear to have been greatly affected, but in a yard with 80+ inmates it's obviously impossible to isolate carriers even if you knew who they were in the first place.

New Stable Jockey

Readers of the racing pages will be aware that Carl Llewellyn has taken up the reins as trainer at Mark

Pitman's Lambourn yard, which virtually signals the end of his presence on board future Twiston-Davies runners. Stepping into the role of stable jockey, therefore, is the established and familiar figure of Antony Evans, who's been a feature at the yard for a few years both as conditional and fully-fledged number 2. His elevation is well earned and he's certainly up to the task of following in illustrious boots.

Owners Lunch

Nigel will be hosting his annual lunch at the stables on Sunday July 2nd and JFF members are cordially invited to attend although it's a popular event and therefore demand usually outweighs supply. Should you wish to book a seat at the buffet lunch accompanied by copious refreshment and then an opportunity to buy another horse please let me know and I'll attempt to organise accordingly. I'll be away on holiday in The Scillies where it might just be a little quieter.

Well, that's about it for the moment although as I finish off these notes Ace Of Clubs looks a possible for Uttoxeter tomorrow, ground permitting. By the time you read these notes let's hope that the JFF prize money coffers will have been given another boost. If I don't see you at the races, enjoy your summer and I look forward to catching up with you when we're back in action in the autumn. We've a lot to look forward to with our horses.

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