



## THE NEXT GENERATION

By GINA BRYCE

### Be there...

#### JANUARY 1

##### Dipper Novices' Chase, Cheltenham

Start the New Year as you mean to go on, enjoying top class racing at one of the best courses in the country.

#### JANUARY 23

##### Irish Champion Hurdle and Arkle Novice Chase, Leopardstown

Cheltenham clues aplenty when the best of the Irish jumps scene take centre stage for this top class display of Grade 1 racing.

#### FEBRUARY 12

##### Silks Ball, Centaur, Cheltenham

As if you should need an excuse to attend the biggest ball of 2011, proceeds will go to Racing Welfare. For tickets email [silksball@racingwelfare.co.uk](mailto:silksball@racingwelfare.co.uk) or visit [www.racingwelfare.co.uk](http://www.racingwelfare.co.uk) for more details.

#### FEBRUARY 26

##### Racing Post Chase, Kempton

Beat the February blues with a brilliant day of racing headlined by what often proves to be an informative trial for the Grand National.

## Adding the NGC voice to Champions' Series debate

Debate on Racing For Change's proposed Champions' Series has reached fever pitch. Given that everyone from heads of state to the groundsman's dog has been roused to pass comment, it seems an apt time to add those of the younger generations to the mix, as represented within the TBA's Next Generation Committee.

Jane Hedley, yard manager at Mark Johnston's Middleham stable and Chairman of the committee, is one of 12 members dedicated to carrying out the aim of encouraging and retaining a younger audience to the bloodstock industry to help ensure the future health of British breeding and racing. Like many others involved at the coalface of the sport, she concedes that there has never been a greater need for action at all levels of participation.

"I have been involved on the front line and the atmosphere has never been as bad as it is now," she says. "I work for probably the best run

business in the country yet we are suffering and I know the situation is a whole lot worse in smaller yards."

The seriousness of the situation is one of the few things on which all parties can agree, but the route to improvement represents a much greater challenge.

Hedley believes that: "We need to modernise and move with the times but I think it can be done without changing racing. It is not the product itself that needs changing but how it is communicated to people."

### WHAT'S HOT

#### AP McCoy backers

Well done to those that voted in Sports Personality of the Year and no excuses for the rest of you!

#### The Dubai Carnival

The long hard winter has finally come to an end for Flat fans as the action heats up in the Emirates.

#### Glamorous winter racing attire

Flat caps and fur hats off to those that do warm in style.

### WHAT'S NOT

#### The December cold snap

Not only because Michelin man is not a look anyone can make attractive but no racing equals no revenue and plenty of costs. Not ideal in the current climate.

#### Late abandonments

A hard one for all involved but an early call is definitely a good call where possible.

#### Not so glamorous winter racing attire

Chic it may not be but full marks for effort...



While agreeing that we need to protect what he coins "the heart, charm and heritage of our sport," committee Vice-President Daniel Polak argues that there is not only a need for change but also time to see the full effects, saying: "Those in charge of the sport for the past decades, racing folk, haven't prepared racing for the challenges it now faces. Initiatives suggested and changes brought in have been done in a recession, and certainly haven't been given any, let alone enough, time to be fully judged, weighed and measured."

Opinions may differ on how change is to be carried out but in a similar vein to the current direction of the political leaders of this country, compromises must be made and a united front created in order to be able to react to this crisis appropriately.

As Hedley highlights: "Who will be drawn to a sport run by squabbling parties and populated by increasingly disillusioned participants?"

Polak also adds weight to the argument, adding: "Perhaps the short-term changes introduced by Racing For Change may have lacked real impact or improvements at this stage, but within the wider austerity of the times I don't think we are going to be able to solve this issue by holding a coup."

All are confident, however, that there are many ways in which smaller entities can work to secure racing's position through attracting more racegoers which will, in turn, result in higher revenues at the courses and have a knock-on effect as far as increasing participation in the breeding of racehorses.

One way in which the committee has sought to improve people's experience of the sport has been through the 'Ambassadors' Scheme' that has been helped into motion by Racing For Change. The scheme is designed to create a network of young people interested in racing and through the organisation of educational days at the races, the sales and at stud farms, to further and encourage their involvement in the sport. Committee member James Read believes schemes such as these offer a way of celebrating and sharing all that the sport has to offer, instead of what he calls the "endless navel-gazing, self-hate and depression" that the industry indulges in. He says: "It gets us nowhere and undermines the huge assets that racing and breeding has."

It is certainly a huge challenge, but as Polak concludes: "If we as a committee and as young people can help attract, direct, inspire and educate people on the sport, at a young age when impressionable, then we can play a vital role in making a difference." It is an opinion on which the whole committee can't fail to agree.

To find out more about the work of the TBA Next Generation Committee, visit us on Facebook or at [www.the-ngc.co.uk](http://www.the-ngc.co.uk)

## Q&A



**A former stud and stable staff award winner, Roisin Close has recently set up her own farm, Bucklands, where she will be standing her first stallion in 2011, Hellvelyn**

#### How did you first get involved working with stallions?

My first stallion job was at Tweenhills Stud for David Redvers and when I started I didn't even know the job involved looking after the stallions! I had met David at the October Sale at Tattersalls but when I called the stud a week later and organised to go for an interview, David was stuck in London so one of the grooms showed me around. I accepted the job without actually discussing what it was and it wasn't till I started that I realised it was the stallion man job.

#### What experience had you had in the industry prior to going out on your own?

I fell into thoroughbreds by accident. I was studying at Hartpury College of Agriculture (incidentally it is right next to Tweenhills) on a three-year Stud Management Course, which included a work placement. A family friend, Dr David Powell, who worked at the Maxwell Gluck Institute in Lexington, Kentucky organised for me to work at Taylor Made Farm in Lexington. They were two of the best years of my life, working with some of the most influential bloodlines in the modern thoroughbred. I stayed there for 18 months and completed their intern programme.

When I returned I decided not to go back to college and instead went to work for Ted Voute Sales, working all the UK sales. I then took a job as stud hand at Lanwades Stud, working for Kirsten Rausing.

#### How did Bucklands come about?

It has always been a dream to have my own farm and I used to keep an eye out for any promising places in the neighbourhood. Bucklands Farm is situated on the opposite side of the village to Tweenhills and when I saw it was for sale it was an opportunity I could not miss. I owe huge thanks to my parents and their help in enabling me to buy the farm, and their continued support is greatly appreciated.

#### Who has had the greatest influence on your career?

'Daddy' Joe Taylor. He was the manager at Gainesway Farms and father of the Taylor brothers who own Taylor Made Farm. He was a remarkable man and an inspirational teacher. He saw the best in everyone and knew how to get the best out of you. I am honoured to have known him.

#### What have been the big challenges since going out on your own?

It has been a daunting few months since I left the security of a full-time job and with the thoughts of everything my family has put in to help, my greatest concern was not to let them down. But thanks to them, my friends and customers, I have a really great farm and some very nice horses that call it home.

#### Why is Hellvelyn an exciting sire?

Hellvelyn (*below*) is a real athlete and he has superb conformation coupled with a great temperament. I think he will produce tough, precocious progeny like himself and his sire Ishiguru. He is so similar to Ishiguru in looks and attitude that I don't think he could fail to make a great stallion.

#### What are your hopes for the future?

I couldn't have hoped for more than I have now, the chance to stand a new exciting stallion like Hellvelyn and my own farm where everything I do and achieve is a direct result of my work, and the support and faith of so many fantastic people.



## Talking Point...

### What in your opinion are the key credentials that make a good National Hunt stallion?

#### Richard Kent Mickley Stud



"I always look for a good, sound racehorse that hopefully raced for a good few seasons, preferably at distances between ten and 12 furlongs, but no further. Size-wise I would say 16.1hh or bigger and I prefer a bay or brown horse. They always seem to do better and it is difficult to sell a chesnut, particularly a chesnut filly.

"I like a horse from a good sire line that is proven to produce sound, genuine horses with good temperaments. Bustino blood is always a positive as that line seems to have produced plenty of good jumpers."

#### Simon Sweeting Overbury Stud



"I look for a combination of pedigree, confirmation, racing ability (including

hopefully some precocity) and soundness (of both wind and limb), and then see what his foals look like!"

#### Susan Corbett Girsonfield Stud



"I don't think science, race distance or genetics can be a definite plan! I choose a stallion with good bone and a track record that points to stamina. It is easy to decide once the progeny of a stallion have won. If we take Bahri, he is starting to get National Hunt results, yet he won over six to eight furlongs. I believe the secret is that his progeny have the stamina to stay; the trouble is that it takes so long to prove.

"Despite taking pedigree, conformation and race record into consideration, taking a gamble has still got to be a factor in any National Hunt stallion choice, especially in unproven young stallions."