



Tackling the misc onception

I THINK it is reasonable for me to say that, throughout my 30-year career, I have been more open than most about the way we train the horses and run the business here. From 1994 onwards I have written regular columns – first for The Sporting Life; then the Racing Post; briefly The Times; Horse and Hound; Al Adiyat; and most recently the Kingsley Klarion. I have expressed my views on all manner of topics and earned a reputation for being outspoken at times but I have also, over all those years, covered most details about the regimes and systems which I have developed or adopted. If I haven't covered it, it has surely been touched on in the countless interviews and documentary pieces or in one of the two books written about me and my stable.

Assumed

Yet, despite this, there are still enduring misconceptions about the way I train horses and the reasons for our success. Most common of all is the idea that I tell every rider to jump off and make all and, no matter how often I explain that that is not the case, it is still assumed to be so.

Last year, in a Racing Post feature, Richard Fahey said that I delegate to my yard managers and that he is much more 'hands on' by comparison. He has not, as far as I can remember, ever been here and so, while I would never deny that I had to learn to delegate to grow the business to its current size, it showed me that Richard had a, commonly held, image of my yard that was not based on any real knowledge of the facts. I keep meaning to ask him what

magic allows him to be 'hands on' with the 293 individual horses that he ran last season because my arithmetic told me long ago that, if I tried to do it by the old methods of walking round every horse, all my time would go in walking from box to box and no animal would have my hands applied to it at all. A system had to be developed so that I could run things my way, but I don't deny that I gave up riding them myself when I left Bank End Stables in Lincolnshire and mucking them out soon afterwards.

Once you have trained the horses and got them fit, the next step is to enter them in races and select the race which gives you the best chance of winning. As with everything else, I decided from the outset that we must pay the utmost attention to detail in doing this and so I have employed every aid that I could find to ensure that no stone is left unturned. However, it seems that my openness about the systems we use and the fact that I have always used a computer system to aid in the selection of races has led to many having the ridiculous notion that we just make blanket entries and declarations.

An owner who has been with us for more than 25 years recently referred to my 'automated methods' and then admitted that he 'had a perception of a computer-driven process which forced automated entries for all eligible races'. Nothing could be further from the truth and it made me realise that, at the risk of giving away some of our secrets, I had better tell you all a bit about the process of making entries at Kingsley Park.

I assume that virtually every trainer now makes their entries online so, in that sense, everyone now uses an automated system but I have used a, freely available,

software package called Easy Entry for more than 25 years.

It is a tremendously helpful piece of kit but it is, of course, only as good the information you put in and we have to start by entering relevant information such as age, sex, form, handicap ratings, auction price, median auction price, etc. and this is now done by our office team under Jacqui Connor. I then, personally, put in my preferred distance range and make selections for certain types of races e.g. sellers, claimers, Listed races, Group races.

All details of the weekly Racing Calendar are fed into Easy Entry and then, once a week, I, having had suggestions from every yard manager who, in turn, will have sought suggestions from every member of the team, make the final decision on which horses we will look to make entries for. Then the Easy Entry system sorts those horses into all eligible races which fit the criteria that we have set.

But the process has only just begun. I then sift through every race, edit that list of eligible horses, and our 'Entry Diary' is printed in hard copy. It is then taken by one of the racing secretaries and she will manually add to it on a daily basis with up-to-date details on how many current entries the horse holds, whether it has been declared, most recent form, owner preferences, yard manager suggestions, headgear or equipment requirements, and many other details.

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I then take this document and mark on my proposed entries, usually at breakfast each morning. It is then passed to Charlie and/or Deirdre for checking and further suggestions and, after that, to the racing secretaries. But they aren't ready to make the entries just yet. First they call all yard managers to tell them of my proposals and our head vet, John Martin, or his assistant. Queries arise from these last checks and

those are brought back to me for a final decision before the entry is made.

Now, if time remains before the 12 noon deadline, they start phoning owners to tell them of our proposed entries in case they disagree. And, just in

case we can't get hold of the owner, we subscribe to, and pay for, Weatherbys' text messaging service on behalf of all our owners so that they are informed of all entries and declarations that have been made for their horses. Maybe this adds to the impression that there are a lot of entries and that they are handled by automated systems.

One owner complained last year that he was getting too many phone calls from our office – one to tell him about yesterday's runners, one to tell him about declarations, one to tell him about entries – and a load of text messages repeating the same thing. 'Why', he said 'can't you just wait till it's all done and put it on one email?' Others, of course, want as much information as possible.

How about staying further?

THE BHA's initiative to promote the breeding and racing of stayers has had plenty of coverage, including in the Klarion. I am very much a supporter of the principle but have great doubts about some of the methods they are employing.

As part of their plan they put on nine maiden races in 2016, run over seven furlongs or a mile, for two-year-olds sired by a stallion who won over a mile and a quarter or more. They plan to extend the series this year.

These races were won by sons and daughters of Lawman, Frankel, Giant's Causeway, Cacique, Shamardal, Motivator, Street Cry, Casamento, and Rip Van Winkle.

Of these, only Motivator could be considered as a proven influence for stamina.

Only two of the winners have been tried at beyond a mile since and only one, our own Time To Study, has won beyond a mile and he is by – you've guessed it – Motivator.

Meanwhile, the progeny of many proven middle-distance sires such as Cape Cross are not eligible to run in these races.

I trained the winners of two of the nine races and, if they put more on, I'll make the most of it, but these races are not promoting the production of stayers. If they want to do that, they need to put on staying races, not seven-furlong races.



Jukebox Jury and a natural cover

Owner & Breeder magazine is a must this month. Turn to page 61 to see Jukebox Jury with his companion Pastis who is in foal to him from a natural cover. The leading stallion owners of Britain and Europe would, no doubt, tell us that their stallions are too valuable to have them running free with another horse. There is an argument to say that they are too valuable to treat them any other way. The Gestut Etzean in Germany (where Jukebox stands) should not be viewed as an oddity, where stallions have companion mares, but as a pioneer of a better way of doing things.