

Book Review

By John Scanlon

Stitched Up

by Michael Clower

Christel Foord, Self Publishing 2023



THERE'S a fair chance that, as a regular reader of the Kingsley Klarion, you will already have read one of Michael Clower's books. For he is the author of four noted racing biographies – 'Mick Kinane, Big Race King', 'Champion Charlie', 'The Legend of Istabraq', and 'Kings Of The Turf' – all of which were warmly received when published.

Having grown up in Kenya, where he enjoyed some success as an amateur jockey, Clower moved to Ireland in 1973 and became a full-time racing journalist, starting off at The Irish Field.

He then became the Irish correspondent of The Sporting Life, and, when that great title ceased publication, he switched to the Racing Post. Additionally, he contributed to both the Sunday Times and the Sunday Mirror.

Having 'retired' to South Africa in 2006, his love affair with racing journalism continued as he wrote for the Cape Times, and in 2016 he was voted South Africa's Racing Journalist of the Year.

A piece of advice often directed towards aspiring writers is to write about something you know about or something of which you have personal experience. On that score, Clower's choice of subject matter cannot be faulted, for 'Stitched Up' is a story all about the travails facing

Rod Hutchinson, an amateur jockey who earns his corn as a racing journalist with the fictitious sports-all.com.

Recovering from injuries sustained in an explosion at Cheltenham, Hutchinson returns to the saddle in an amateur riders' steeplechase at Newbury. His mount is odds-on, but is beaten in controversial circumstances. In the aftermath, Hutchinson is 'convicted' of not trying and of accepting a bribe, as a result of which his licence is withdrawn.

Hutchinson sets out to prove his innocence, convinced that he has been 'stitched up'. The reader is invited to join in the hunt for the perpetrator or perpetrators behind the plot, as Hutchinson encounters an array of dodgy characters, any one of whom might have sufficient motive to see his riding and journalism careers trashed.

It's a light and entertaining read, very much in the style of racing thrillers down the years in the mould of Dick Francis or John Francome novels. The story does not so much revolve about the racing itself, but Clower's knowledge of the subject matter, and in particular the National Hunt scene, shines through. Any racing enthusiast looking for an entertaining read over the summer holidays will find that this book certainly fits the bill.

One observation I would make is that it's clear that the author has not been living in Britain in recent years. Without being specific, I feel that some of the language and images he employs do not chime in with the increasingly 'woke' nature of British society. Perhaps others will not agree.

Stitched Up is now available from Amazon in paperback at a price of £8.50 or as a Kindle download.

Showing off in RoR classes!

Johnston Racing last month once again sponsored the Retrained Racehorse Class at the Great Yorkshire Show in Harrogate, writes **Deirdre Johnston**. The show, held over four days in the second week of July, was attended by more than 140,000 people. It is one of the largest agricultural shows in Britain and well worth a visit.

I love seeing these gallant steeds enjoying their new careers and strutting their stuff in the White Rose ring. It is always a very popular class and the stands were packed to watch 21 former racehorses competing.

In order to give maximum space for the initial ridden section, where they have to show a walk, trot and canter on each rein and then one gallop, the horses were split into two groups to be judged. After this initial ride round, the horses were ridden by the two ride judges who rode half the horses each in order to get through them efficiently.

Each horse was then judged on its conformation by the Conformation Judge. The judges then all conferred to give the final result.

The winner, for the second year running,

was Rich Man Poor Man, a stunning bay by Robyn Des Champs. He was trained by Philip Kirby during his racing days, is owned by Mrs Morean Hamilton, and was ridden beautifully by Kristine Douglas who is based in Dumfries.

After winning last year he went on to become Supreme Champion at the Jockey Club ROR national championships at Aintree in August.

Second this year was Cuban Sun, owned by Ms C Collins and ridden by Ewan Hills; and third was Amroth Bay, owned by Sophie Brown and ridden by John Kingston, who incidentally both work in Middleham.

I had a great time presenting the prizes and rosettes and would like to say 'well done' to all the competitors on turning the horses out to look so fantastic.

Another ex-Johnston Racing horse doing extremely well in his new career is Wadacre Tir, owned by Jeanette Griffiths Mathews and Tom Heywood.

He is a four-year-old home-bred from their Wadacre Stud and is by Churchill. He is now competing in pure dressage and has won his first two outings.

In his first competition at Aintree he won a British Dressage Affiliated competition and followed this up with a win in a Retrained Racehorse Class. Very well done to Tom and Jeanette and his rider Olivia Rimmer and we wish them all the very best with him. ■



Wadacre Tir with Olivia Rimmer