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# TRC

## Royal Ascot: did racing's elite prove their worth?



**Also inside: Justify, the Triple Crown and a black eye for racing /  
Hong Kong's brave new world / Does Royal Ascot glory really beat a Triple Crown /  
What They're Thinking: John Oxx**



# Without equal.

Frankel | The leading sire at  
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**Baghdad** | King George V Stakes

#### SECOND

**Cracksman** | Prince Of Wales's Stakes Gr.1

**Rostropovich** | King Edward VII Stakes Gr.2

#### THIRD

**Veracious** | Coronation Stakes Gr.1

**Nelson** | Queen's Vase Gr.2

**Sun Maiden** | Ribblesdale Stakes Gr.2

**Count Octave** | Queen Alexandra Stakes

**First Eleven** | King George V Stakes



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# How the highest-ranked jockeys, trainers and sires ruled the roost at Royal Ascot

James Willoughby | June 28, 2018

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Cover photo: focusonracing.com

William Buick and Blue Point winning the G1 King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot for Godolphin. Buick gained 11 TRC Global Rankings points over the week and is now joint world #7 in the jockeys' standings. Photo: Mark Cranham/focusonracing.com

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*With Royal Ascot staging no less than 19 of the 36 Group or Graded races run around the world last week, it's little wonder that the bulk of this week's most significant moves in the TRC Global Rankings came as a result of events at the great Berkshire festival.*

The top four Britain-based jockeys in the standings accounted for 13 Royal Ascot wins, distributed in line with their rankings (see overleaf).

Among these four, Ryan Moore picked up 6pts, Frankie Dettori 5pts, William Buick 11pts and James Doyle 6pts. Buick earned the most because

The top four Britain-based jockeys in the standings accounted for 13 Royal Ascot wins, distributed in line with their rankings

GB rank	Overall rank	Name	Pts	Rides	1st	2nd	3rd
1	1	<b>Ryan Moore</b>	1124	19	5	0	3
2	5	<b>Frankie Dettori</b>	1055	15	3	1	3
3	7	<b>William Buck</b>	1033	14	3	3	1
4	19	<b>James Doyle</b>	1002	14	2	1	1

Four of the top five British- and Irish-based trainers dominated the Royal Ascot Group-race win table, with 13 of the 19 Group races between them

GB / IRE rank	Overall rank	Name	Pts	Rides	1st	2nd	3rd
1	1	<b>Aidan O'Brien</b>	1087	40	4	4	7
5	12	<b>Sir Michael Stoute</b>	1010	9	4	0	3
3	5	<b>John Gosden</b>	1048	16	3	2	1
2	3	<b>Charlie Appleby</b>	1054	11	2	2	1

The 19 Royal Ascot Group races were won by 16 different sires. Only #1 Galileo, #11 Sea The Stars and #53 Shamardal won more than one of them

GB / IRE rank	Overall rank	Name	Pts	Rides	1st	2nd	3rd
1	1	<b>Galileo</b>	1072	16	2	2	2
4	11	<b>Sea The Stars</b>	1019	4	2	0	0
14	53	<b>Shamardal</b>	990	3	2	0	0
3	5	<b>Frankel</b>	1048	10	1	2	3
2	2	<b>Dubawi</b>	1062	9	1	1	0

he had the highest-quality wins and places given the size of his book of rides - half of his 14 rides were placed and he had a G1 win (King's Stand Stakes, Blue Point) and two G2 wins.

Ryan Moore's five Royal Ascot Group-race wins included Merchant Navy in the G1 Diamond Jubilee Stakes over six furlongs. This cements the great rider's #1 status for many more weeks to come, as he now has a 59pt lead over the current joint world #2s, American ace Mike Smith and Italian Mirco Demuro, who rides in Japan.

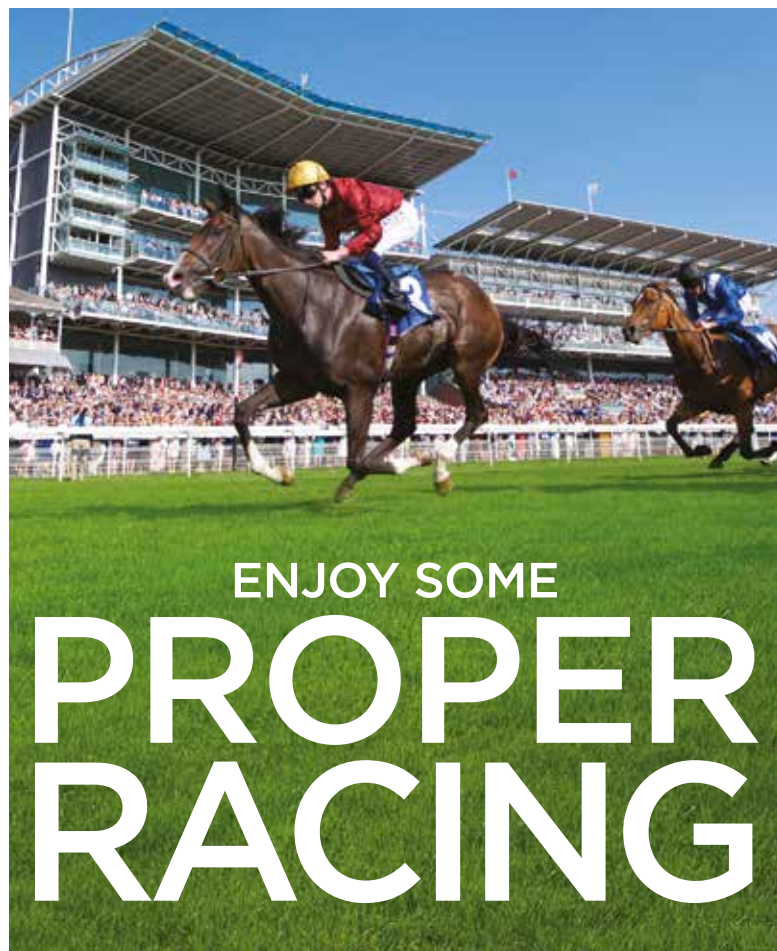
Moore has now spent 144 of 250 weeks as the TRC #1 rider. Any speculation you may have heard on TV broadcasts during Ascot - or anywhere else at any other time - as to who is the 'best jockey in the world' is purely a subjective matter, but there is no doubt whatsoever as to who is the most successful, as our impartial, objective figures prove.

Four of the top five British- and Irish-based trainers dominated the Royal Ascot Group-race win table, with 13 of the 19 Group races between them:

Sir Michael Stoute - the winner of more Royal Ascot Group races than any trainer in history - sent out four winners and three thirds from nine runners. This success rate and efficiency earned him 13pts and the title of biggest climber of the week in Europe. Aidan O'Brien (4pts), John Gosden (9pts) and Charlie Appleby (6pts) also made significant gains.

World #1 O'Brien picked up four Royal Ascot Group races and also earned another 11 places from a team of 40 runners in the races that count. The Ballydoyle legend has headed the trainer rankings 109 times out of 250. Australian handler Chris Waller - this week's #7 overall - is second with 83.

The 19 Royal Ascot Group races were won by 16 different sires. Only #1 Galileo, #11 Sea The Stars and #53 Shamardal won more than one of them. All three



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were identified as sires with a positive 'Ascot Factor' in an analysis we carried out before the meeting, with Shamardal having the highest overall rating in this metric.

Galileo gained 2pts, Sea The Stars 7pts, Shamardal 6pts, Frankel 4pts, but Dubawi lost 1pt. Dubawi's Old Persian won the G2 King Edward VII Stakes and his Wild Illusion ran second in the G2 Ribblesdale Stakes, but all his other runners finished no better than sixth - the higher the ranking, the greater the expected performance in TRC Global Rankings.

Frankel had three winners at the meeting overall, more than any other sire, but only one of them was a Group winner (Without Parole in the G1 St James's Palace Stakes).

Invincible Spirit, who now stands at the Irish National Stud, was responsible for first and third in the G1 Commonwealth Cup with Eqtidaar and Emblazoned. Formerly world #5 for 15 weeks, he moves to #32 from #42 this week. Notably, his brilliant son, first-season sire Kingman, earned his first Royal Ascot winner when Calyx won the G2 Coventry Stakes.

In Hong Kong meanwhile, Tony Cruz won the G3 Premier Plate and the G3 Premier Cup at Sha Tin and is now our highest-ranked trainer in the Chinese special administrative region, besting stalwarts John Size and the legendary John Moore on the back of a good recent run.

Also in Hong Kong, new world #13 jockey Zac Purton's Group-race form continues to mirror his exploits in all races that constitute

the local jockeys' premiership there. He leads that particular title race from Joao Moreira and is now just 2pts behind the world #12 in TRC Global Rankings. Purton was aboard the two G3 Tony Cruz-trained winners.

Biggest mover of the week was top-notch Peruvian pilot Martin Chuan, who picked up two G1s at Monterrico. The rarity value of these wins gains Chuan 18pts and a move from #143 to #84. He is now the highest-ranked rider to have Peru as his modal country since our rankings began four years ago.

The highest Racing Post Rating of the week in Group or Graded races belongs to Poet's Word, who earned 125 for winning the G1 Prince of Wales's Stakes at Royal Ascot. The Sir Michael Stoute-trained colt is a son of #21 Poet's Voice, the sadly deceased Godolphin stallion we have featured several times recently.



# Soaring up the world rankings: the women who gave us two of Royal Ascot's finest moments

Chris Smith | June 28, 2018

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Eve Johnson Houghton: "The poor people sitting in front of me and my Mum - I apologise to them - they will definitely be deaf because there was an awful lot of screaming going on," she said after Accidental Agent's win in the G1 Queen Anne Stakes. Photo: Dan Abraham/focusonracing.com

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*That women are hugely under-represented in the training ranks is surely now recognised by everyone as irrefutable fact. While the debate still simmers about whether female jockeys are as capable as males, no-one can seriously contend that women generally are less well equipped than men to train racehorses. Debate over. No case to answer.*

And the point got doubly underlined last week when two of the golden moments at Royal Ascot were provided by female trainers.

Highlight number one came in race number one at the festival, the one-mile G1 Queen Anne Stakes, in which 33/1 outsider Accidental Agent, trained by Eve Johnson Houghton near Lambourn in Southern England,



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beat a top-class field of runners trained by the likes of Aidan O'Brien, Saeed Bin Suroor, Richard Hannon, Bill Mott and Carlos Laffon-Parias.

The golden moment wasn't so much that the homebred son of Delegator caused such an upset as the infectious reaction to it of the popular Johnson Houghton, whose father Fulke trained ten Royal Ascot winners in a career that spanned the years from 1961 to 2006 and included top-level wins by horses such as the Irish Derby and St Leger winning brothers Ribocco and Ribero, Habitat and Ile De Bourbon.

"Unbelievable! I still can't believe it. I haven't slept for two nights. I dreamt that he would be third. My mum bred Accidental Agent - we have got the mare in the field - but nobody wanted to buy him

and we bought him back for eight grand," said Eve Johnson Houghton, who took over the stable when her father retired.

"I thought I was tilting at windmills. I dreamt about finishing third and then watching it I said, 'oh my god, we are going to place.'

"The poor people sitting in front of me and my Mum - I apologise to them - they will definitely be deaf because there was an awful lot of screaming going on. It is just ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. You might need to man the lifeboats as there are a lot of tears! Group 1 winner ... I've never trained a Royal Ascot winner, let alone a Group 1 winner at Royal Ascot!

"And my mother bred him. What a legend she is - I'm so proud of her. And luckily I had a tiny bit each-way at 50/1 to pay for the party. Come on!"

The victory meant lots of points for Johnson Houghton in the TRC Global Rankings, and she now enters the top 500 for the first time at #381 - which, more significantly, makes her the joint 17th highest-ranked female in the trainers' standings (and the joint highest British female, alongside Ruth Carr).

Golden moment number two last week came on Friday, again in a G1, when the Niarchos Family's Alpha Centauri stormed home six lengths clear in the one-mile Coronation Stakes for Irish trainer Jessica Harrington.

After the daughter of Mastercraftsman's last victory - in the Irish 1000 Guineas last month - Harrington charged 39 places up the trainers' rankings to #131, which made her the world's third highest-

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*The poor people sitting in front of me and my Mum - I apologise to them - they will definitely be deaf because there was an awful lot of screaming going on. It is just ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous. You might need to man the lifeboats as there are a lot of tears!*

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ranked female trainer, and the Royal Ascot triumph helped lift her up another 27 slots to #103.

Only trainers currently operational are included in the table above. Crique Head-Maarek (retired) is still ranked 330, and Maria Borell is still ranked 348.

Neither Harrington nor

Johnson Houghton are one-horse wonders, of course. Johnson Houghton sent out six runners at the Royal meeting, and Harrington's eight included close-up Gold Cup third Torcedor.

Between them they were responsible for 14 of the 21 Royal Ascot runners trained by women. Amy Murphy (2), Gina Rarick, Gaye

Kelleway, Amanda Perrett, Karen McLintock (whose sole runner was second in the Ascot Stakes handicap) and Jayne Chapple-Hyam (her only runner was third in the Royal Hunt Cup handicap at 100/1) were also represented.

Against this, though, the other 481 runners at the meeting were trained by men.



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## Female Trainers in the TRC Global Rankings

Rank	World rank	Name	Modal Country	Pts	Change
1	1	<b>Gai Waterhouse</b> (and Aidan Bolt)	Australia	988	+2
2	11	(Grant and) <b>Alana Williams</b>	Australia	954	-1
3	53	<b>Jessica Harrington</b>	Ireland	942	+8
4	5	<b>Josie Carroll</b>	Canada	933	0
5	2	<b>Michelle Nevin</b>	USA	931	-1
6	11	<b>Pla Brandt</b>	France	927	-1
7	53	<b>Linda Rice</b>	USA	925	0
8	5	<b>Yasmin Almenrader</b>	Germany	924	-1
8	2	<b>Candice Bass-Robinson</b>	South Africa	924	0
10	11	<b>Maria Fernada Alvarez</b>	Argentina	922	0
10	53	<b>Corine Brande-Barbe</b>	France	922	0
12	5	(Evan and) <b>Jennifer Rayner</b>	New Zealand	921	-1
12	2	(Trent Busuttin and) <b>Natalie Young</b>	Australia	921	-1
14	11	<b>Barbara Minshall</b>	Canada	918	0
15	53	<b>Donna Logan</b> (and Chris Gibbs)	New Zealand	917	0
16	5	<b>Mandy Brown</b> (and Matt Brown)	New Zealand	914	0
17	2	<b>Ruth Carr</b>	Great Britain	912	0
17	11	<b>Carla Gaines</b>	USA	912	0
17	53	<b>Eve Johnson Houghton</b>	Great Britain	912	n/a
20	5	<b>Sarah Steinberg</b>	Italy	910	0
20	2	<b>Shelley Hale</b>	New Zealand	910	0
22	5	(Lee and) <b>Shannon Hope</b>	Australia	909	0
22	2	<b>Ingrid Mason</b>	USA	909	0

# View From The Rail: Justify wins the Triple Crown, but racing gets a black eye

Charles Hayward | June 20, 2018

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Justify (left) is rushed up into the lead in the Belmont Stakes as soon as the gate opens. Photo: Adam Mooshian/NYRA.com

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*There are two sides to Justify's achievement in becoming just the 13th horse to win the Triple Crown. On one level, of course, it is a victory to celebrate, a tremendous boost for the sport in America. On another, however, it absolutely is not.*

The problem centres around a controversy over the running of two horses: Noble Indy, owned by Repole Stable and Winstar Farm and trained by Todd Pletcher, and Restoring Hope, owned by Gary and Mary West and

trained by Bob Baffert.

First, though, let's go back to Saratoga Race Course and the week preceding the running of the \$750,000 G1 Woodward Stakes in late August 2017. The big favorite and ultimate winner of the race was Gun

Runner, trained by Steve Asmussen. Ron Paolucci, owner of War Story, in advance of the race, informed the New York stewards that he was planning to enter a 'rabbit', May B, to run with Gun Runner in the Woodward, presumably to improve the chances of his other entry, War Story, who was a strong closer.

According to this article by Dave Grening in the Daily Racing Form, the stewards used their statutory discretion to deny the entry of May B. The steward, Stephen Lewandowski, representing the New York State Gaming Commission, stated, "We feel all horses that enter should be able to win the race."





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CATALOGUE ONLINE

## ‘Case-by-case basis’

The stewards were then asked if all horses who are entered and declared as rabbits would not be permitted in New York races in the future. Lewandowski replied, “We take everything on a case-by-case basis.”

The stewards did have the discretion to couple the two Paolucci entries as a betting interest, but they declined to do this. In implementing decisions based on the stewards’ discretion, it is essential that their rules are clearly established and their resultant decisions are simply and publicly articulated.

Recognizing that I do not have any access to entries at NYRA prior to races being drawn, I do not recall a NYRA race since where a rabbit (known as a ‘pacemaker’ in many other countries) was denied entry.

Back now to the 2018 Belmont Stakes. The favorite, Justify, trained by Baffert and owned by Winstar Farm and three partners, drew the rail. As already mentioned, Baffert had another runner, Restoring Hope, who is owned by Gary and Mary West, highly

regarded owners and breeders who have been in the sport for over 30 years. In January, West Coast, owned by the Wests and trained by Bob Baffert, won the 3yo colt Eclipse Award for 2017.

Trainer Todd Pletcher had two runners as well: Vino Rosso, owned by Repole Stable and St Elias Stable, and Noble Indy, who is owned by Winstar Farm, majority owner of Justify, and Repole Stable. Vino Rosso is a confirmed closer and came from nine lengths off the pace to win the G1 Wood Memorial earlier this year. Noble Indy, on paper, was the second best speed in the race after Justify and had won the G2 Louisiana Derby.

A decade ago, the rule for coupling was very strict and it would have been likely the Baffert horses, and the Pletcher pair, would have been coupled at that time. It would even have been possible that all four horses could have been coupled together in fact, because of the common ownership interests of Repole and Winstar, along with the two trainer interests.

## Stewards’ role

The uncoupling of owner/trainer concerns has been largely driven by a desire to increase betting interest, particularly in high-profile stakes races where the top trainers often have multiple entries. Therefore, it is essential that the stewards monitor the entries, and the running of the races, to avoid perceived or real conflicts due to common interests.

My personal opinion is that Justify was the clearly the best horse in the race and is better on a fast track than he was on the two sloppy races at the Kentucky Derby and the Preakness. However, some do not share that view. Restoring Hope, a Baffert trainee, broke a step slow and then quickly rushed up to sit off of Justify’s right flank.

Gary West, owner of Restoring Hope, said in an email to the New York Post, “I had no earthly idea what Florent [Geroux, Restoring Hope’s jockey] was thinking or what his race strategy was. Had I known better, the first eighth of a mile I would have thought it was a

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Quarter Horse race not the mile-and-a-half Belmont. Maybe the horse was completely out of control and Florent had no choice. I will never know.”

Mike Repole, of Repole Stable, and owner of Vino Rosso and Noble Indy, was upset with the riding of Javier Castellano on Noble Indy, and the race flow. Repole told the New York Post, “All week and in the paddock, Todd [Pletcher] and I were crystal clear to Javier to make the lead. He broke good. Mike Smith [the jockey on Justify] broke good. We definitely saw an opportunity that Javier, being told to make the lead, could have, or at least [have] pressured Justify.”

While Noble Indy bumped the gate at the break, I certainly expected to see this horse getting out in front of Restoring Hope and pressing Justify.

Pat Forde, of Yahoo Sports, gave a good detailed review of the various controversies surrounding the race.

What troubled me the most was the response the State Gaming steward gave to Daily Racing Form’s Dave Grening the

day after the race. When asked if there was a plan to arrange an interview with Florent Geroux, the rider of Restoring Hope, he said, “Nothing was brought to our attention.”

This was an absolute outrage in my view.

Most racetracks employ three stewards to monitor all racing-related activities. At NYRA, the stewards consist of a Gaming Commission steward, a NYRA steward and a Jockey Club steward. Their main responsibility is to watch the horses once they come onto the track, carefully watch the running of the race, and follow the horses as they return to the unsaddling area to insure the integrity of the race and to oversee the safety of the human and equine athletes.

Last August the steward told Ron Paolucci that his rabbit was being excluded from the Woodward because, “we feel all horses that enter should be able to win the race. We take everything on a case-by-case basis.”

## Wagering activity

Look again at the replay of the Belmont. Was every horse given a chance to win the race?

On the Saturday of the Belmont Stakes, \$72,702,815 was bet on the one race alone. The Thoroughbred racing industry depends on wagering activity to drive the financial success and growth. It is imperative that racetrack operators and regulatory authorities maintain the integrity of the wagering pools for the benefit of their betting customers.

NYRA is one of the most important and lucrative racing circuits in the country, if not the world. To protect the bettors and the owners, the stewards must carefully look at and review horses with common ownerships and common trainers at the time of entry.

They need to use their discretion to configure the fields of the individual races and to review the conduct and results of the races. And they must be consistent. Put real meaning into the words, “We feel all horses that enter should be able to win the race.”



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# Is there anything they haven't thought of in Hong Kong racing's brave new world?

Kristen Manning | June 11, 2018

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Almost ready: the new Conghua centre "is an outstanding state-of-the-art training complex, with access to several beneficial facilities that we don't normally have access to in Hong Kong," says trainer Caspar Fownes. Photo: Hong Kong Jockey Club

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*The Hong Kong Jockey Club's magnificent new Conghua Training Centre is due to open in mainland China in August. And it looks set to be a gamechanger, elevating the jurisdiction still further in world racing. Kristen Manning reports.*

For two decades, the Hong Kong Jockey Club has been keen to expand. It has had the financial means, the motive of a flourishing local racing industry and the support of all those involved. What it did not have was space.

When the Club was formed by a group of enthusiastic racing fans in November 1844, finding a suitable location for a racetrack was not so much of an issue, and Happy Valley was built a year later on what used to

be swampland, the first meeting taking place in 1846.

And racing in Hong Kong has not looked back, Sha Tin established on reclaimed land in 1978. It is now home to the Longines Hong Kong International Race Day each December, a day that racegoers Down Under keep a close eye on, with the likes of Sunline, Falvelon, Monopolize, Catalan Opening, Our Grey Invader, Kesslem and Romanee Conti proving great representatives for Australasia.

The competition has gotten tougher in recent years, with Australian and New Zealand runners finding it harder to get



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into the winner's circle, although several of the big day's major stars have carried (AUS) and (NZ) suffixes; such as Silent Witness, Sacred Kingdom, Fairy King Prawn and Vengeance Of Rain.

### Initial aim realised

December 2017 was dominated by locally trained horses, but the International Sprint winner Mr Stunning, a son of Exceed And Excel, was bred in Australia while Beauty Generation proved too strong for his rivals in the International Mile. The New Zealand-bred son of Road To Rock raced in Australia as Montaigne, winning at Randwick and finishing second to Tarzino in the G1 Rosehill Guineas.

The success of the day is something that the Hong Kong Jockey Club's Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges is extremely proud of, especially as it has realised its initial aim: to enhance the overall quality of Hong Kong racing and horses.

It was 1998 that saw the first Hong Kong-trained horse, Johan Cruyff, make it into the international rankings (now the Longines World's Best Racehorse Rankings), a figure that increased to eight in 2008, to 21 by 2013 and 26 in 2016. Some eight percent of the world's highest-rated horses call Hong Kong home and all 11 of Sha Tin's major races feature in the world's top 100 G1 races, according to the Longines/IFHA (International Federation of Horseracing Authorities) figures.

But still there are limitations, with the 22 trainers currently working in Hong Kong permitted a maximum of 60 horses each and the current equine population capped at 1,230. The racing is competitive and exciting but there is a lengthy waiting list of owners, who wait four years for a permit, and the Club is keen to increase the numbers.

### Alluring possibility

For two decades it wondered how. "We tried for years to source land but it was impossible," Engelbrecht-Bresges said. And then along came the 2010 Asian Games at Guangzhou, two years after Sha Tin was used to house the horses competing in the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

From which an alluring possibility arose. There is plenty of space in China.

And so an agreement was reached to purchase and develop "a major piece of land" in Conghua, 139 km north of Hong Kong.

Known for its hot springs, Conghua is already a popular destination for local tourists, and its mayor, recognising that the presence of the Hong Kong Jockey Club is only going to increase awareness, has been supportive.

Not that all has been smooth sailing, Engelbrecht-Bresges describing the development of the Conghua Training Centre as "probably the most demanding and significant project the Club has ever undertaken".

"We have overcome many challenges," he said, "from establishing the first equine disease-free zone in China ... to obtaining special permission for cross-border transportation of horses, for our veterinarians to practise in China, to be able to import feed and medication and to establish the first comprehensive equine clinic on the mainland."

All the time keeping in mind that gambling is prohibited, the Club worked hard to establish good working links with officials while its overriding aim for a new training centre was to build something perfect for trainers, owners, riders and workers and, most of all, for the horses.

"The horse comes first," said John Ridley, Director Of Capital Racing Projects. "A happy horse gives his best."

And so the Hong Kong Jockey Club has worked to ensure that Conghua is a showpiece Thoroughbred establishment, one that consists of a 2000m turf track (a 400m home straight with a one percent rise and a 674m home bend with transitional curves) with the same grass profile as Sha Tin, as well as large and small all-weather tracks, two trotting rings and an 1100m turf uphill gallop sloped at a continuous 1.5 percent.

Eight single story and one double story stable blocks for horses in training are designed to accommodate two trainers per divided stable, each with 34 stables and eight turn-out yards per wing, as well as two larger-than-usual isolated stallion stalls, inside and outside wash stalls and two covered walking machines.



An 1100m turf uphill gallop sloped at a continuous 1.5 percent is a feature of the complex. Photo: Hong Kong Jockey Club

In total, there are 664 individual CCTV monitored stalls, serviced by an equine clinic, chilled salt-water spas, aqua treadmills, a water walker, a covered and heated 70m long swimming pool and 20 turf paddocks with shelter, feed bins and automatic water.

### **Ideal environment for stallion prospects**

Horses will never come into contact with vehicles, with each having its own access ways, while deliveries will be made away from the stables so as not to cause any disruption.

The provision of paddocks in a quiet area beyond the stables and tracks is a significant step for the Hong Kong Jockey Club with Engelbrecht-Bresges recognising that Sha Tin is, particularly for young horses, “an intense environment”.

It will enable horses to be imported at a younger age as they can now be given time to develop and mature and to acclimatize and, along with the stallion boxes, it will also be easier to keep promising males entire.

“Our prize money levels are attractive, but we need to keep adding value to the ownership experience,” Engelbrecht-Bresges said, noting that Hong Kong is the ideal environment to produce stallion prospects.

“Our racing is of a high quality, it is substance-free and breeders know that a stallion who has raced in Hong Kong is genetically sound and not influenced by medication.”

It was a timely discussion given that Archipenko (who sadly died recently), winner at Sha Tin of the G1 Queen Elizabeth II Cup in 2008 was represented by a big winner at this year’s International meeting, Time Warp impressively claiming the G1 Hong Kong International Cup.

Meanwhile, winning in Hong Kong in recent years has done plenty to enhance the reputation of such stud prospects of Maurice, Lord Kanaloa and Highland Reel.

Chosen as one of the first trainers to complement his Sha Tin stables with a base at Conghua is Caspar Fownes, who said that he “feels very privileged” to be part of the new establishment.

“It is an outstanding state-of-the-art training complex, with access to several beneficial facilities that we don’t normally have access to in Hong Kong, such as spelling paddocks, uphill gallops and water walkers. I am sure that I will be able to use the set up to my advantage.”

Conghua is designed, said John Ridley, with “further expansion in mind. We can continue to grow over time”.

Not only is there room for more stables

and tracks, but space has been allotted for the equine clinic to expand with future plans for MRI, CT and scintigraphy equipment. Such a high standard is the veterinary care that Dr Christopher Riggs, Head Of Veterinary Clinical Services, joked: “If I were a horse, I know where I’d want to live!”

A major challenge in the establishment of Conghua has been assuring that racehorses never come into contact with disease. The welfare of horses is paramount, firstly for their own wellbeing and secondly for the economy of both horse racing and Hong Kong.

“We will not compromise on horse health,” Engelbrecht-Bresges said, noting that the Hong Kong Jockey Club pays HK\$12 billion in taxes each year, around four to five percent of Hong Kong’s revenue. “And so the government do not want us to take any risks either.”

Security at Conghua is exceptionally tight (comings and goings monitored not only by the Club but by government officials) and the training centre is in the midst of a 2000 square km horse-free zone. And there are no horses 1km each side of the freeway en route. “Even if horses have to be unloaded for any reason, there will be no contact with local horses,” said Dr Brian Stewart, Head Of Veterinary Regulation And Biosecurity Policy.





The owners' lounge at Conghua will be impressively equipped. Photo: Hong Kong Jockey Club

## Electrified fencing and buried concrete

Mindful that diseases such as rabies are present in China, Dr Stewart added that the 2.3 metre high electrified fencing (supported by 600mm of buried concrete to prevent burrowing) surrounding Conghua is specially designed to make it impossible for a wild animal to penetrate the borders.

"There is just so much at stake," he said, while admitting that "the greatest risk is people". Which is why strict protocols, overseen by quarantine officials from around the world, are in place while everyone involved is highly trained and experienced.

"Hong Kong has safely imported and exported thousands of horses over the past 25 years," Dr Stewart noted, "and we have successfully managed international racing events, temporarily importing up to 40 Thoroughbreds from many countries each year. Our disease surveillance and preventative health measures are second to none."

At present, every horse in Hong Kong has its temperature taken twice daily, with every horse displaying fever symptoms immediately tested. "This is the most effective and sensitive early detection system."

Around 450 people (including strappers, track riders and farriers) have been seconded from Hong Kong to work at Conghua while locals (over 1,500 applied when 100 stable-assistant positions were advertised and there were similar numbers for riders) will be trained at the Huangcun Sports Institute. Twenty five track riders, who also spend time at Sha Tin, have been in training since 2016.

Another challenge for the Hong Kong Jockey Club has been convincing local owners that sending their horses across the border is a good idea. The typical Hong Kong owner is very involved with his or her horse, and the typical resident rarely has the need to spend much time travelling. Nor are they used to their horses spending much time in floats.

And so the Club is producing a regular newsletter to keep owners up to date, one assurance coming in the form of international comparison. "To take a common English route, the journey is roughly the distance from York to Newmarket," said KL Cheng, Head Of Dual Site Stable Operations And Owners' Services.

Dedicated travel grooms have been trained and each convoy of trucks will be accompanied by a security car, a veterinarian and a mechanic. The journey

is monitored with live GPS tracking with CCTV vision (and recording) of each horse and regular reporting to control centres at Sha Tin and Conghua.

## Minimum border checks

Several successful horse-movement trials have already been undertaken. In total 18 will have taken place, the trip taking just under five hours. There are only minimum border checks with a customs clearing station built at Conghua. Once everything is in full swing there will be return journeys twice a week; up one day, back the next.

The floats are specially designed with the comfort of both grooms and horses paramount. "Each horse will have its own enclosed stall yet will be able to see, hear and smell the horses next to it," Dr Riggs said. "The horses have space to allow them to lower their heads to the ground, which is important for their health. And we want the horses relaxed for the longer distance travel."

Relaxed is also the word to describe how the visiting owner will feel with a customized luxury coach on hand to ferry to Conghua those keen to see their horses, while an impressively equipped owners' lounge is serviced by owners' ambassadors.

Monthly barrier trials will be conducted at Conghua, and owners with runners will be entitled to a free package, consisting of transport, overnight accommodation and meals at a five-star resort, with local sightseeing and golf expeditions arranged.

And so it seems that there has not been a stone left unturned. It has undoubtedly been an enormous project with contributions for a wide variety of experts. Unfortunately there are ongoing issues with the Australian Department Of Agriculture And Water Resources, which has so far refused to grant approval, which led to no Australian representation at the 2017 meeting. Australian horses can go, it is just hard for them to return (a six-month New Zealand stopover required).

In the meantime, the HKJC looks forward to the Conghua opening in August, after which some HK\$1.5 billion will be spent on renovating Sha Tin.

There is no resting on laurels in Hong Kong. "We strive for excellence in everything we do," Winfried Engelbrecht-Bresges said.

# Does Royal Ascot glory really beat a Triple Crown-winning moment?

Bob Ehalt | June 22, 2018

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Gidu (blue and yellow, second right, partly hidden) is a close and creditable sixth in the G1 Commonwealth Cup behind Eqtidaar (5). Photo: Zuzanna Lupa/Racingfotos.com

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*John Gunther may have rankled some feelings in America with a comment he made after the G1 St. James' Palace Stakes at Royal Ascot on Tuesday. Following a victory by his homebred Without Parole, Gunther proclaimed, "I don't think I could ever top the emotion of this day ever."*

Being that Gunther lives in Vancouver, Canada, and often attends the races at Royal Ascot, his feelings were somewhat understandable - until you realize that Gunther was the breeder of Justify, who became just the 13th winner of the American Triple Crown earlier this month.

G1 winner at Ascot vs. Triple Crown winner. Even with Gunther owning St James's Palace Stakes hero Without



Parole, you would figure that such a close association to a rare champion such as the undefeated Justify would be next to impossible to top.

And yet, someone else well versed in the experience of winning a Triple Crown can understand Gunther's feelings. He might not agree with him, but after just one day at Royal Ascot, American-born and raised Justin Zayat can relate to the special feelings Royal Ascot can generate.

"I can understand how some people feel and why they would say that, but you can't compare winning here at Royal Ascot and winning the Triple Crown. They are special in their own way. Ascot is amazing, but the Triple Crown is a different and unforgettable thrill."

## No disappointment

Justin Zayat was the right-hand man and racing manager for his father, Ahmed, when American Pharoah, owned by Zayat Stables and trained by Bob Baffert, ended a 37-year Triple Crown drought in 2015. Now the President and CEO of Racing and Bloodstock for Zayat Stables, he represented the stable in his father's absence at Royal Ascot when they ran the United States-based Gidu in the £500,000 Commonwealth Cup today (Friday). The 3-year-old son of Frankel, who had three wins and two seconds in five U.S. starts, finished a highly creditable sixth behind Hamdan Al Maktoum's Eqtidaar.

"We were about 2½ lengths away from glory," Justin Zayat said. "Gidu ran hard. He was fighting at the end. We'll live to fight another day. [Jockey John Velazquez] gave him a perfect trip. There's not much more you can ask for."

Justin Zayat at Royal Ascot yesterday: "If we ever have another horse capable of being here, we'll be here for sure.

I'd love to come back." While the trip across the Atlantic did not generate a victory on the racetrack, there was no sign of disappointment on Zayat's face after the race. If anything, he was gushing over his first taste of Ascot racing and talking about returning as soon as possible.

"Racing here at Royal Ascot is like your first taste of the Kentucky Derby. It makes you want to go back for more and win a race here," he said. "If we ever have another horse capable of being here, we'll be here for sure. I'd love to come back.

"It's completely different from American racing. The pageantry here, it truly feels like the Sport of Kings. It's a different world. It exceeded all my expectations. To be here, seeing it all in person, I can't compare it to anything."

Certainly, there's nothing in America that can compare with the sight of a grandstand and grounds filled with a crowd of about 70,000 during a weekday, all of them dressed to the nines in designer dresses and hats and top hats and tails. In the paddock, there are not only titans of industry but royalty too - like Queen Elizabeth II and Sheikh Mohammed, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for instance.

Velazquez, who rode Gidu, says he has ridden about a half-dozen times at Royal Ascot and each time he marvels at a brief, five-day meet that can only compare to a week-long Breeders' Cup with its international intrigue.

"This is a special event. Every day is like the Breeders' Cup back in the United States. It's very international. You meet people and horses from everywhere. It's a special place," Velazquez said. "Everyone wants to be here. It's like Saratoga in America. Everyone wants to be here and run in the races. International racing has gotten so big, it's

an important place for a lot of people. It's a very special moment to win here."

For Zayat, even more than the gallant effort by Gidu in the Commonwealth Cup, his favorite memory of his initial day at Ascot was meeting another 'owner' in the previous race.

"I got to meet Her Majesty The Queen," he said. "It was an unbelievable experience. When she ran a horse in the second race [Elector in the King Edward VII Stakes] they let me approach her and speak with her. Her knowledge of horse racing is unbelievable. She knows every horse, every breeding. See was so pleasant. It gave you a very warm feeling talking with her. Meeting The Queen is definitely something that I will never forget for the rest of my life."

As new as Zayat may be to the experience, Velazquez, who won the King's Stand Stakes with Lady Aurelia last year at Ascot, has come to truly appreciate the electricity and vitality packed into each day at the fabled race meet. As impossible as it might be, the Hall of Fame jockey says he would love nothing better than to bottle the atmosphere and bring it back to America with him.

"Just look around. It's very simple. Look around and see all the people. That's what you would love to see in America," Velazquez said. "You see how well-dressed the people are. You see how much they love the racing. The love of the sport is incredible here."

Surely, even with a slight glance, it's easy to see why Royal Ascot is held in such esteemed regard. Whether a victory there can match a Triple Crown sweep might depend on your allegiance. Yet through it all, it seems clear that, whether you are racing royalty in the United States or just someone happy to have a \$2 souvenir ticket on Justify or American Pharoah, a day at Ascot will surely have you reaching for superlatives.

# What They're Thinking: the thoughts of master trainer John Oxx

Donn McClean | June 26, 2018

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John Oxx with Sea The Stars, the colt he trained to win the 2000 Guineas at Newmarket, the Derby at Epsom, the Eclipse at Sandown, the Juddmonte International at York, the Irish Champion Stakes at Leopardstown and the Arc at Longchamp across a glorious season in 2009. Photo: Racingfotos.com

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*John Oxx began winning classics in 1987 (Eurobird, Irish St Leger) and has been one of Europe's great trainers ever since. He has been responsible for two horses who both won the Epsom Derby and the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe in the same season (Sinndar and Sea The Stars), two Irish Derby winners (Sinndar and Alamshar), a Breeders' Cup winner (Ridgewood Pearl in the Mile) and two Cartier European Horses of the Year (Ridgewood Pearl, 1995, and Sea The Stars, 2009).*

*Oxx, who trains at Carrabeg on the Curragh, is as renowned for his calm, reasoned approach to his craft as he is for his achievements on the track, which makes him an ideal subject in our What They're Thinking series in Irish Derby week.*



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### Who do you think is the most important figure in world racing history?

This is difficult to say but it may well be King Charles II, who is generally considered to be the man who made Newmarket in the UK a venue for racing. His love of the sport was instrumental in initiating racing into the fabric of English society and racing flourished during his lifetime. In 1664, he instituted the Newmarket Town Plate, and shortly thereafter the importation of the foundation sires of the modern Thoroughbred introduced the breeding of the Thoroughbred we recognise today.

King Charles's niece, Queen Anne, built on this foundation and the spread of the British Empire brought racing around the world and caused it to become an international sport. We can only speculate but, perhaps, without King Charles, racing would never have developed as we recognise it today.

### Which is your favourite venue and race?

I really have two. Firstly my local course, the Curragh, which is a great track and home of the Irish classics. It is here that the Irish Derby is the pinnacle of some very high-class racing throughout the year. I am excited by the new development and feel the Curragh will be greatly enhanced as a result.

Secondly, Epsom on Derby Day has a special feel to it. The Epsom Derby is of such historical significance in the development of the breed, and the unique contours of the track are responsible for that because the winner requires blend of speed and stamina.

### What is your fondest memory in racing?

Training Sea the Stars. The privilege and pleasure of watching him every day, planning his work and seeing him develop into one of the greats. (Watch Sea The Stars win the 2009 Arc below.)

### What do you see as the biggest challenge racing faces today?

Trying to keep racing popular and keeping people interested in spite of a great deal of competition from other attractions. It is important to make racing attractive for everyone, and that is not only about bringing people through the turnstiles. People need to have ownership of horses for smaller money through syndicates and clubs so that they feel like stakeholders in the sport.

If you could change one thing in racing, what would it be?

Following on the success of Dundalk Racecourse, it would seem to me that it should be a possibility to have another all-weather track in Ireland with extra fixtures, which are badly needed and would give smaller trainers and owners more opportunities.

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# TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



24 June 2018

## Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1124
2	Mike E Smith	USA	1065
2	Mirco Demuro	Japan	1065
4	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1060
5	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1055
6	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1041
7	Javier Castellano	USA	1033
7	William Buick	Great Britain	1033
9	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1029
10	Christophe Soumillon	France	1022
10	Kerrin McEvoy	Australia	1022
12	Joao Moreira	Australia	1020
13	Zac Purton	Hong Kong	1018
14	Joel Rosario	USA	1015
15	Florent Geroux	USA	1014

## Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	A P O'Brien	Ireland	1087
2	Bob Baffert	USA	1068
3	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1054
4	Chad C Brown	USA	1050
5	John Gosden	Great Britain	1048
6	Darren Weir	Australia	1045
7	Chris Waller	Australia	1025
8	A S Cruz	Hong Kong	1015
9	J Size	Hong Kong	1013
10	Saeed bin Suroor	Great Britain	1012
11	Yasutoshi Ikee	Japan	1011
12	A Fabre	France	1010
12	Sir Michael Stoute	Great Britain	1010
14	John Moore	Hong Kong	1009
15	Todd Pletcher	USA	1005

## Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1091
2	Godolphin	Australia	1064
3	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1041
4	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1033
5	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	Great Britain	1029
6	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1028
7	China Horse Club Et Al	Australia	1023
8	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1020
9	H H Aga Khan	France	1017
10	Al Shaqab Racing	France	1016
11	Head of Plains Et Al	USA	1010
12	Hajime Satomi	Japan	1008
13	U Carrot Farm	Japan	1003
14	Mayfair Speculators Et Al	South Africa	1002
14	Te Akau Syndicates	New Zealand	1002

## Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Galileo	Great Britain	1072
2	Dubawi	Great Britain	1062
3	Scat Daddy	USA	1052
4	Deep Impact	Japan	1051
5	Frankel	Great Britain	1048
6	Snitzel	Australia	1035
7	I Am Invincible	Australia	1027
8	Curlin	USA	1026
9	Street Cry	Australia	1021
10	Fastnet Rock	Australia	1020
11	Ghostzapper	USA	1019
11	Not A Single Doubt	Australia	1019
11	Sea The Stars	Great Britain	1019
14	Dark Angel	Great Britain	1016
14	Kitten's Joy	USA	1016