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# TRC

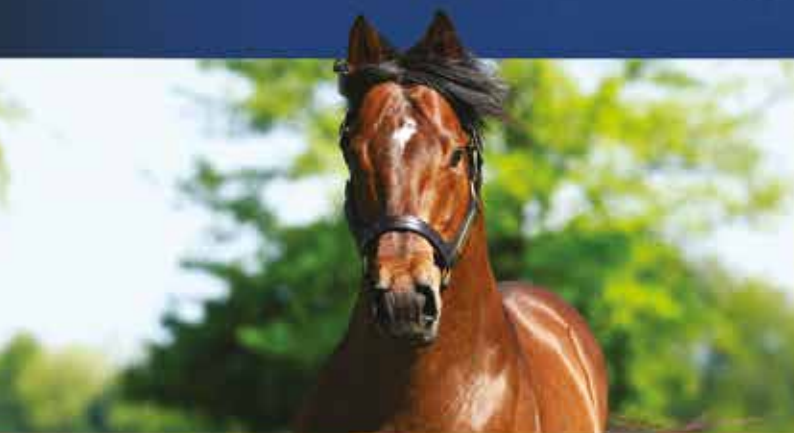
## The race with the *Max* factor

Special report on a  
memorable inaugural  
running of the Saudi Cup



**Also inside: Remembering a brave little horse / How Phil Tuck has been transforming Saudi racing / The curious beauty of the Hall of Fame process / What They're Thinking: Graham Motion**

# SHADWELL STALLIONS 2020



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**4X Graded SW at 2 & 3**

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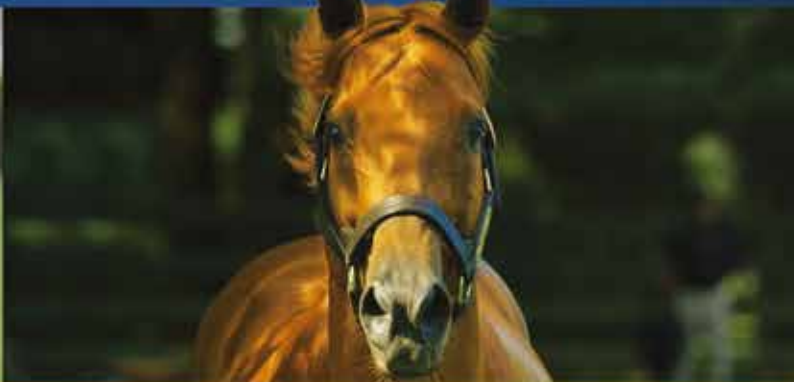


## QURBAAN

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# *Maximum Security's fabulous victory puts Saudi Arabia firmly on the racing map*

Nicholas Godfrey | February 29, 2020

*Money isn't always everything, and offering the richest prize the sport has ever seen could easily have been left looking little more than an exercise in hubris without a race – and more specifically a racehorse – to match its status.*

This page: Heroes return: Maximum Security and Luis Saez acknowledge the cheers after winning the Saudi Cup. Cover photo: A mixture of joy and relief for jockey Luis Saez as Maximum Security holds off the late surge of Midnight Bisou and Mike Smith. Photos: Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia



Fortunately for everyone concerned with the inaugural edition of the \$20 million Saudi Cup, the headline act delivered a headline performance as Maximum Security denied a phalanx of world-class horses in an absolute thriller, run medication-free, beneath the banks of floodlights at King Abdulaziz racecourse on the outskirts of Riyadh. Let's call it a case of the Max factor.

In a brutal, contentious and in the end controversial race, the horse who had been disqualified after passing the post first in last year's Kentucky Derby secured the most lucrative redemption possible.

Responding valiantly in a driving finish, Maximum Security wore down front-runner Mucho Gusto in the stretch

before holding late-running compatriot, the champion mare Midnight Bisou, by three-quarters of a length. Godolphin's Benbatl ran a fine race to claim third, denying a clean sweep for the much vaunted U.S. visitors, for whom Macho Gusto kept on well enough for fourth with another American, Tacitus, in fifth.

Midnight Bisou's rider, Mike Smith, the world #6, was later at the centre of a storm when it emerged he had been banned for a total of nine days for whip offences, giving him a total ban of 11 days from the meeting. In addition, the rider known as 'Big Money Mike' was hit where it hurts - in the pocketbook, forfeiting more than \$200,000 of his share of prize-money.

Which has to be regarded as more than a trifle unfortunate, because this was a truly outstanding contest with a brilliant winner. Mind you, even Maximum Security's trainer, Jason Servis, could not help but reflect on another notorious episode, when his colt was thrown out by the Kentucky Derby stewards for interference, handing the race to Country House.

"It's gotta be some vindication," admitted Servis, who has never really been in the spotlight in a long training career. "Man, that horse has a lotta heart, right?" the 62-year-old went on. "He's just some horse. I can't believe it, it's going to take about a week for it to set in."



Golden moment: trainer Jason Servis and jockey Luis Saez after the Saudi Cup presentation. Photo: Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia

Maximum Security (second right) wins from Midnight Bisou, with Benbatl (blue) third ahead of Mucho Gusto (left) fourth and Gold Dream, who finished sixth. Photo: Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia





Winning jockey Luis Saez, seen to excellent effect in a brilliant ride, was also left marvelling at Maximum Security's effort. "That's what the world was waiting for from Max," said the Panamanian. "He was very, very impressive. Everybody wanted him to fight and we did it today. He's the toughest horse I've ever seen in my life. This is a big deal. It's amazing – he's the true Kentucky Derby winner."

Sent off 2/1 favourite with British bookmakers, Maximum Security entered the race as perhaps the only horse in the field with pretensions to proper superstar status. Well, guess what? The 4-year-old is a superstar now, bettered only once at the wire in a ten-race career that started

off, incredibly enough, in a low-level maiden claimer. Yes, irony of ironies, the winner of the richest race ever run could have been yours for just \$16,000 at Gulfstream Park on his career debut.

Okay, he won by nearly ten lengths – but he wasn't even favourite!

Maximum Security's most remunerative display owed as much to courage as talent as he was forced wide throughout, four or five paths out on the sweeping turn into the stretch, where Saez seemed to be asking serious questions.

Irad Ortiz looked to be exuding confidence on leader Mucho Gusto, even taking a peak behind to see if anything was challenging as he entered the long stretch. Bob Baffert's Pegasus hero

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*“He’s just some horse. I can’t believe it, it’s going to take about a week for it to set in.”*

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## *“Today was a historic moment for me, for Jason, for Max, for everybody,”*

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looked set to complete a famous double as he opened up a couple of lengths, but Maximum Security dug deep and kicked again as Saez switched him to the inner for the final winning assault.

Saez, 27, thanked the heavens after the race, crossing himself before returning to unsaddle in the parade ring in front of the packed grandstand at a ground-breaking event for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

“Today was a historic moment for me, for Jason, for Max, for everybody,” said Saez, currently #38 in the TRC Global Rankings, who had looked a broken man after the Kentucky Derby disqualification. Now he seemed to be struggling to take in the magnitude of his achievement.

“Oh my God – it’s just amazing to travel from far away and get this victory for the United States, for Panama, for all my people,” he said. “It was tough. When we broke from the gate, it was tough. Even behind the gate it was tough! He is amazing and has a big heart.”

Both Servis and Saez criticised the riding tactics of Ortiz on Mucho Gusto. “I don’t want to sound harsh but it was a little bit of a dirty match,” said Saez. “My horse wants a fight, but he was carrying me a little bit out. I waited so that I could jump inside in the stretch and he gave me that kick so we can be there and that moment we attacked.”

Servis decided discretion was the better part of valour – easier to do, one imagines, when you’ve just landed a \$10m first prize. “I’m trying to hold back because I was a little upset with Irad Ortiz carrying me out the backside and he carried me out at the turn,” he said. “Max ducked inside and he came down on me, but that’s a story for another day. He ran hard and I thought he was a little creased up in behind.”

With Coolmore having bought into a partnership with original owners Gary and Mary West, Maximum Security carried the colours of Michael Tabor for the first time and will stand at stud in

the States at the end of his racing career.

However, the Irish behemoth’s representative, MV Magnier, confirmed the son of New Year’s Day will stay in training for the remainder of his 4-year-old season before any decision is made on his future. Magnier also admitted he hadn’t been entirely confident during the race. “There were a couple of flutters, all right,” he smiled.

There was to be no immediate decision on Maximum Security’s next target, with Servis sounding reticent about the prospect of attempting a lavishly endowed Middle East double in the Dubai World Cup at Meydan in four weeks’ time.

“Ah, I would like to get back to the barn before I say anything about that,” he said. “He ran hard, he really did. I don’t know – we’ll look and see how he is about whether he’ll make the Dubai Cup or not.”

There was a double blow for Mike Smith after being beaten into second as he was banned for eight days for using his whip 14 times on Midnight Bisou, four more than the permitted ten-strike limit; he was also suspended for another day for using the whip with no regard to the horse’s stride; and he forfeited 60 percent of his share of the \$3.5m second-place prize-money. The veteran, who won Friday’s male-v-female jockey challenge, had already incurred a two-day ban for not weighing in after finishing fifth in an earlier race to take his total Saudi suspensions to 11 days.

Smith said after the race he was “so proud” of Midnight Bisou. “She ran awesome,” he said. “I did everything but we didn’t come first, but she won, do you know what I am saying?”

Oisin Murphy lauded a “stormer” from Benbatl; he is now likely to run in the Dubai World Cup on Godolphin home territory at Meydan.

Coolmore’s second runner, the much travelled Magic Wand, ran a respectable race for Aidan O’Brien on her dirt debut

before fading to finish ninth. “She ran super, bless her,” reported Ryan Moore. “She got tired on that surface. It’s just a different style of racing and it found her out. She felt magnificent and she ran her usual honest race.

“She was on top of them turning for home, but it’s a different type of race and she’s running with very, very good American dirt horses.”

Indeed she was, and their presence alone did much to legitimise the Saudi Cup at a single \$20 million stroke.

Nearly four years ago, Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 blueprint was unveiled, outlining the bold project that aims to diversify the Kingdom’s economy and reduce its dependence on oil. Tourism – and therefore, sport – are an integral part of this initiative, in which context the Saudi Cup is a stunningly ambitious statement of intent.

A top-class field featuring five of the best dirt horses in America plus stars from Japan, Ireland and Dubai suggested we might be seeing something special. Maximum Security ensured that we did.

Rather like Cigar in Dubai 25 years ago, almost on his own, he put Saudi Arabia on the racing map.

### **Bans for Irad and Oisin**

It later emerged that the champion jockeys of both the U.S. and Britain – Irad Ortiz Jr and Oisin Murphy – had received bans over the two days.

Ortiz was suspended for eight days for excessive use of the whip in the final race on Friday, and another two days for the same offence in the Saudi Cup. The world #7 was fined ten per cent of his prize-money share.

Murphy, world #21, was given a two-day ban for excessive use of the whip on beaten favourite Deidre in the \$2.5m Mohamed Yousuf Naghi Motors Cup, one of the highlights of the enthralling undercard.



A jockey in a blue and orange striped helmet and blue jacket is riding a brown horse. The horse is wearing a green saddle cloth with the number 7 and 'SAUDI CUP' written on it. In the background, a large, ornate, golden trophy is visible. The trophy has a silhouette of a jockey on a horse at the top. The text 'SAUDI CUP' is written in large white letters, and below it, the Arabic name 'السعودية كؤبي' is written in gold calligraphy.

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# A touching way to remember a brave little horse who came to a heartbreaking end

Patrick Gilligan | February 24, 2020

*There is a horse buried in the infield at Fair Grounds in New Orleans. A famous horse, with an interesting story. His racing career commenced and ended at Fair Grounds, but his tale began with his mother.*

The Thoroughbred filly foal was born, somehow, in Oklahoma, in the then Indian territory in 1907. Although a registered Thoroughbred, most of her 34 career victories were gained in informal unregistered bush races, match races, but she did win under rules.

The last time she ever ran a race, her owner, who doted on her, had been convinced to enter her for a claiming contest in Juarez, Mexico, with a \$5,000 tag. His trainer had spoken with connections of the other contestants and was assured no-one would claim her as the owner's love and attachment for the filly was well known. She was family to Al and Rosa Hoots. Rosa was born in the territory, and she was half Osage.

Useit got claimed that day after the race, a race she also got beaten in. A man came with a claim ticket, after the filly had been washed down and cooled out and readied for her stall.

He found himself looking down the wrong end of Mr Hoots' rifle, that man, and decided pretty quickly that maybe he could find another horse to buy. The stewards had to explain to Mr Hoots that sadly they would have to warn him off and remove Useit from the Thoroughbred Register.

It was a long way home with Useit, all the way back to Oklahoma.

Along the way, an idea came to him. He was excited to return home again. He was not well anymore. Upon his return, he announced to his wife that

they were going to breed Useit to a fine Thoroughbred stallion, and that, should anything happen to him, she was not on any account to sell the colt she was going to have, even though they didn't even really have money to cover her. She was going to be bred, and the resultant colt would win the Kentucky Derby.

He decided all this, just days after the filly he loved had been removed from the Thoroughbred Register.

Three things happened over the next couple of years. Al Hoots succumbed to his illness, and oil was discovered in Oklahoma, on Indian territory, meaning every Osage tribe member would gain an annual payment from the sale of the rights to that oil.

## **Covetous eye**

Rosa Hoots' share came to \$12,000 a year. She was now able to write to the owner of successful Kentucky stallion Black Toney.

The third thing that happened was the Jockey Club relented and reinstalled Useit into the Thoroughbred Register.

Useit's foal by Black Toney was born in 1921 in Lexington, Kentucky. The colt was fine but small, and he was as dark as oil. And, since he maybe never would have been conceived without the money from those oil rights, Rosa named him Black Gold.

He ran his first race at Fair Grounds





at the end of January of his 2-year-old year. The undeveloped young colt, still well shy of his actual second birthday, ran well enough. He ended up winning nine of his 17 races that year, including the Bashford Manor Stakes at Churchill Downs.

Shortly after, he began his partnership with jockey John David Mooney, known to everyone as JD. A young rider, born of Irish parents and raised in New Orleans ten minutes from the racetrack, he grew up riding the dray horses his father cared for.

The rider had held a covetous eye for the young black colt he would see regularly on the track in the mornings and raced against sometimes in the afternoons.

### Out-of-town credentials

Black Gold matured and strengthened from two to three. He won the Louisiana Derby - then held at the Jefferson Racetrack. He had booked his ticket to head back to the state of his birth. He was going to run for The Roses.

In spite of his out-of-town credentials, and some condescension from connections of the more blue-blooded racing states, Black Gold went off favorite for the race. He lined up on the inside with 18 other 3-year-olds at the far end of the Churchill Downs straight, over 80,000 people there to witness. He met significant interference twice through the race, but it didn't matter. He still cut them down by the wire.

On May 17, 1924, Black Gold won the Kentucky Derby, in its golden jubilee year, the rider wearing the rose-colored silks of Mrs Hoots. He returned to the winner's enclosure and had that blanket of flowers placed over him. JD. picked one of the flowers and gave it to Rosa.

The black colt didn't go east for the Preakness or the Belmont Stakes afterwards. The trainer, Hanley Webb, went north with his single horse and won the Ohio State Derby and the Chicago Derby at Hawthorne. He won four derbys that year, but by its end his heavy campaign had taken its toll. He was sore, and the decision was taken to retire to stud the horse who won

Keeping racing history alive: monuments to Black Gold (foreground) and Pan Zareta at Fair Grounds. Photo: Patrick Gilligan

difficulties. There were also rumors that she had taken out a \$45,000 insurance policy on the horse. If those stories were true, then that last race was well named. Or was it the hard-pushing trainer, dismissive of the horse's plain calling of pain, who maybe was the real culprit.

The inaugural running of the Black Gold Stakes at Fair Grounds was held in 1958. The 2020 running is on Saturday (February 29). The winning rider traditionally places a wreath around that monument in the infield after the race, a touching way to keep alive, in some way, a piece of racing history.

There is one other horse buried next to Black Gold at Fair Grounds. Her name is Pan Zareta. She held the world record once as the fastest five-furlong sprinter. Use it met her more than once. They raced against each other, eyeball to eyeball, when they were young and swift.

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# How former top jump jockey Phil Tuck has been key in the transformation of Saudi racing

Jon Lees | February 20, 2020

*During a 15-year riding career, Cheltenham Gold Cup-winning jockey Phil Tuck was so superstitious he would salute magpies to avoid bad luck. He even called his house 'The Magpies'*



There are no magpies in Saudi Arabia, but, in his second career as a stipendiary steward, one of his roles has been to make the rules of racing black and white.

His efforts will be appreciated when the international racing community descends on the King Abdulaziz racetrack in Riyadh, which is to host the world's richest horse race, the \$20 million Saudi Cup on February 29. As Saudi Arabia's only stewards' advisor, he performs all the normal functions of a stipe on an inquiry panel, as well as ensuring the rules meet internationally-recognised standards.

Tuck, 63, has been in post for over six years, having filled a variety of roles after calling time aged just 33 on a decorated riding career that included a famous triumph at Cheltenham in 1984 on Burrough Hill Lad (see video below).

"When I retired from riding in 1990, I worked as a starter for a year, then I was a stipe, then I went to Cyprus in 2008 as chairman of the stewards' panel," he says. "I was there for two and a half years. I came back to England in 2011 and was clerk of the course at Sedgfield for two and a half years. It was while I was at Sedgfield, and I always hoped I would get another overseas job, that I was approached by John Sanderson about coming out to Saudi. I came out in September 2013 and have been very happy here."

Phil Tuck at King Abdulaziz racetrack in Riyadh: "You wouldn't recognise the rule book I inherited from the rule book we have now."  
Photo: Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia

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## *“You wouldn’t recognise the rule book I inherited from the rule book we have now.”*

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Tuck was given a clear brief, which he has accomplished despite, to his regret, not having gained complete command of the Arabic language.

He says, “My brief was to try to upgrade the rules and regulations to international standards, and I have been doing that for the last six and a half years.

“You wouldn’t recognise the rule book I inherited from the rule book we have now. One of the biggest changes was that, in the front of the book, it said, ‘these rules have been translated from Arabic to English and if there is a discrepancy Arabic will take precedence’. It now says the other way round because I know what I want to say.

“Thanks to the lovely people I work with, I have been allowed to make many changes. We now have proper body protectors, helmets and padded whips. The body protectors and helmets they used to use were terrible, paper thin, giving no protection whatsoever.

“I got in touch with Racetech in England, who shipped a load of protectors out, and now they all wear them. All the helmets are now to the accepted standard.

“Starting races out here used to be a problem. It would take ten minutes to load 18 horses. Now the average is two and a half minutes. I introduced gate testing so, when we get a field of unraced 2-year-olds, we know they have experience of going in the gate. All our interference rules are the same as other jurisdictions.”

Local jockeys have taken more time to come to terms with new whip rules, according to Tuck. “It’s been a big battle,” he says. “They are a lovely bunch of lads, but they were all in the habit of hitting horses three or four times in quick succession. I’ve been at them for years, running seminars and showing films but just couldn’t break them out of the habit until this year.

“Prince Bandar [Bin Khalid Al Faisal, the chairman of the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia], because the Saudi Cup was coming up, felt we had to come along with the rest of the world. We brought in a restriction where you can use the whip ten times

behind the saddle throughout the race.

“I ran a seminar in October, which Prince Bandar said they must attend or they would be suspended. It has been a great help to push this forward, and the riders have reacted extremely well.”

### **‘My greatest defeat’**

Tuck lives with his wife on a western compound in Riyadh among other foreign nationals where he enjoys “probably a better social life than we did at home”. He says, “You only get out what you put in. It’s a great lifestyle.”

It’s a long way from winters in Britain, where he rode 423 winners and landed a hatful of big races as one of the leading jump-race riders in the north of England.

During a prolific period in 1986, he equalled Johnny Gilbert’s record of riding ten consecutive winners.

However it’s neither that achievement nor his Gold Cup triumph that he is first to recall, but a big race that he didn’t win. “My greatest defeat, which is how I like to describe it, is finishing second in the Grand National in 1985 on Mr Snugfit, the year after the Gold Cup,” he says.

“I was just heartbroken because I would have loved to have won the National. For me it was the ultimate test of horse and rider.

“If before the race someone had said you will finish second in the Grand National, I would have accepted it. But to lose in the way we did it was like Crisp and Richard Pitman. I led over the last until ten yards before the line, when Last Suspect came on the outside and beat me.”

Tuck had an on-off association with Burrough Hill Lad, for whom first-choice rider was champion jockey John Francome

“Winning the Gold Cup was a wonderful day, but I didn’t appreciate it at the time,” he says. “I thought I had won a 3¼-mile chase round Cheltenham and it didn’t really sink in as to what I had actually achieved until a while after.”

Tuck, who had given up the mount on Burrough Hill Lad to Francome in the Welsh

National to stay loyal to another trainer, reclaimed the mount at Cheltenham when Francome was claimed by Fred Winter for Brown Chamberlin.

### **Amazing winning streak**

Two years later he was part of the powerful Gordon Richards set-up when he went on his ten-race winning streak. “I just happened to be in the right place at the right time,” he says. “There was fast ground, not many runners and it was my first season with Gordon, so I couldn’t have had a better start.”

Tuck had endured a spell on the sidelines before he abruptly announced he was quitting the saddle after riding a winner in February 1990.

“I had a fall at Catterick and ended up with a liquid haematoma in my leg. The doctor told me I may lose part of the use of my leg. That made me think. Plus there was the fact I had split with Gordon and wasn’t getting any decent rides and wasn’t prepared to ride the bad ones to get back to the good ones. Also, if I am perfectly honest, while I don’t think my bottle had gone, it was going.

“I went to Newcastle to ride Midland Glenn. I said to the starter, if this won I would pack it in. Ironically he beat one of Gordon’s. I felt I had given the horse as good a ride as I could and I wanted to go out on a winner.”

### **Exciting times**

He believes he is part of a winning set-up in the Middle East, where Prince Bandar is hoping to turn his nation into a major horse racing jurisdiction.

“These are very exciting times,” says Tuck. “To have a turf track in the middle of the desert is incredible. I know Dubai has had one for many years, but there it is very humid, here it is very dry. There are big plans, I believe, to improve Ta’if [the other Saudi racecourse - further east, in Mecca province], to possibly build a new track on a new site where the climate is a bit easier and possibly race all year round.

“The Saudi Cup is a massive step forward. Prince Bandar is incredible. He is a very articulate man who wants to push forward and improve standards across the board. The ambition is to move from a Part 3 country to a Part 2 to a Part 1. The way he is taking it forward, he is going to achieve that.”



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# *Irwin sees the big-picture benefits of racing in Europe with new-look Team Valor*

Minty Farquhar | February 14, 2020

*“The best thing about racing in Europe is you can take a young horse and develop it. In America, it’s very difficult to do because you’re always racing and training around soundness in sub-standard conditions” – Barry Irwin*

Barry Irwin is well-known for routinely being one step ahead of his peers.

Indeed, it is a knack for looking beyond the obvious that has enabled the Team Valor International founder and CEO to build his business into the world’s most successful racing syndicate.

Since its inception in 1987, the operation has amassed almost \$80million in prize money and sourced over 300 stakes winners, with victories in the Kentucky

Derby, two Breeders’ Cup contests and the Dubai World Cup all featuring high on the roll of honour.

Yet, in spite of considerable success in the U.S. over the years, Irwin made the head-turning announcement midway through last November that Team Valor would be moving into a new phase of its development, refocusing its attention almost entirely on racing in Europe.

Of course, the transition does not

Top: Team Valor International’s Technician (Pierre-Charles Boudot) winning the G1 Prix Royal-Oak at ParisLongchamp last October for British trainer Martyn Meade: “If it ever came up that someone wanted to buy all of him or half of him, we get to a point where we’ll definitely consider that,” says Barry Irwin. Photo: focusonracing.com  
Right: Barry Irwin.





A star discovered: the British-bred Belvoir Bay, bought by Team Valor as a 2-year-old running in the UK, wins the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint at Santa Anita last November. Photo: Alex Evers/Eclipse Sportswire/CSM/Breeders' Cup

require any great change in approach when it comes to Irwin's buying strategy, with around 80 percent of his acquisitions over the last five years graduating from European stables anyhow.

For the U.S.-based syndicate members, however, the shift will inevitably mean a different ownership experience, and Irwin cannot yet be sure how well the transition will be received by existing members, in spite of the response thus far being "pretty encouraging".

Any disappointment surrounding the location of the horses may be offset, however, by a notable new development in the evolution of the Team Valor product: its profitability.

"We're going to try to make it a for-profit venture," Irwin explains. "Up to this point, it has been to provide people with a vehicle for entertainment and enjoyment, and now we're going to try and do the same thing but also try to make money."

To attempt to coincide this new goal with a switch to Europe may sound like a tall order; after all, it is no secret that race meetings across the U.S. regularly offer juicier prize funds than their European counterparts, particularly those in Britain or Ireland.

This is where Irwin's ability to see the bigger picture comes into play.

## Resale value first, prize money second

"I look at it two ways," Irwin says when asked about the prize funds his horses will compete for in Europe. "Number one, it's improved a lot. If you're running horses that are high enough level, the prize money is

certainly good enough."

He is not wrong. At the top of the food chain, Royal Ascot will offer a record £8,095,000 in 2020, an increase of £765,000 on last year's total prize fund, with the G1 Prince of Wales's Stakes and G1 Diamond Jubilee Stakes both making the leap from £750,000 and £600,000, respectively, to £1 million contests this year.

"But the main thing is we're more interested in the development of a horse and seeing how far we can get with it, what good races we can win and eventually what we can sell it for," Irwin continues.

Indeed, it is this focus on the residual value of the 25-odd horses that the syndicate will have in training at any given point - and a new policy that all horses will be for resale - that will underpin this new chapter of the Team Valor story.

"Everything we have at one point or another will be for sale," Irwin confirms. "If we get a horse that looks like a champion - like we have a horse called Technician, we own him with [UK trainer] Martyn Meade - and if it ever came up that someone wanted to buy all of him or half of him, we get to a point where we'll definitely consider that. So, we're just going to weigh the earning potential of the horse versus what its resale value is."

And it is within Europe's turf programme that Irwin believes Team Valor International's horses can best develop their residual value.

"The prize money along the way for a young horse is secondary to how well it can be developed in Europe," he explains.

The best thing about racing in Europe is you can take a young horse and develop it. In America, it's very difficult to do because

you're always racing and training around soundness in sub-standard conditions."

Asked whether he sees the prestige and quality of the turf racing in Europe as part of this, Irwin replies, "Yes, absolutely."

Certainly, the Longines World's Best Race rankings indicate that the quality of turf racing remains concentrated in Europe. ParisLongchamp's Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe retained top spot for 2019, while contests at Ascot, Sandown Park and York accounted for a further four of the top ten races worldwide.

By nature, the quality of these races was determined by the ratings of the horses that dominated them last year - co-winners Waldgeist, Enable and Crystal Ocean either won or placed second in all five contests - and six of the top ten spots in the Longines World's Best Racehorse rankings went to horses trained in Europe.

Combine all this with the fact that the TRC Global Rankings point to the strength of Europe's training ranks, with five European handlers - headed by John Gosden - featuring in the top ten, and it becomes hard to find fault in Irwin's reasoning.

And, lest we forget, this is a man who has a proven track record with selling on progressive types; you only need look as far back as 2019 Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint winner Belvoir Bay, bred at Manor House Stud in North Yorkshire, to find a good example. She was bought by Team Valor and Gary Barber as a juvenile, won Graded races at 3, 4 and 5, then fetched \$625,000 at the Fasig-Tipton November Sale as a 5-year-old (she is now owned outright by Barber).

"We've sold lots of horses over the years to Juddmonte, Sheikh Mohammed, some of the bigger outfits in racing," Irwin reflects. "Obviously, we like doing it because they've got the wherewithal, but when one of those big outfits buys your horses, it's like a feather in your cap."

## Untapped potential remains key to success

Of course, the success of this new phase in Team Valor International's evolution





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depends, first and foremost, on Irwin's own continued ability to identify horses with significant untapped scope. He will also rely on the assistance of Jessica Berry, who joined the team after graduating from the Godolphin Flying Start program in 2018.

Now more than ever, with the focus shifting to the resale value of their acquisitions, the pressure is on the pair to deliver.

"We're always looking for bargains, for diamonds in the rough, looking to see what is slipping through the gaps," Irwin explains.

At the centre of their attention will still be the horses-in-training market, though Irwin admits to considering – albeit tentatively – the breeze-up sales as a source for unraced 2-year-olds – something he credits Gouverneur Morris with, having picked up the Kentucky Derby-bound 3-year-old at Fasig Tipton's breeze-up sale last year.

"I don't expect to buy any unraced horses in Europe unless we got one at a breeze-up sale," Irwin clarifies. "I want to find a horse that's run once or twice, just so I see enough. I'd rather pay a premium for a horse that's raced than try and get value from an unraced horse because it's just too difficult."

As for which European trainers will benefit from the move across the Pond, the spread will, for the most part, be determined by where the horses purchased are already in training.

"When we buy a horse, more often than not we will leave it with that trainer," Irwin explains. "In Europe, especially in England, there are so many good trainers. It's not like you have to move one from A to B because the first guy wasn't good enough. There a lot of terrific trainers."

## A busy summer ahead

Irwin and Berry are set to become familiar faces at Europe's premier race meetings over the coming months, with a Team Valor presence anticipated across Britain, Ireland and France during the summer season.

"In terms of spending time in Europe, Jessica and I are going to split our time," Irwin explains. "She'll go over for a while, then when she comes back, I'll go over. I would say from April through to the first part of November, one of us will be there at any given time."

In an exciting new development, Team Valor International's members will also get the opportunity to venture across the Atlantic in the near future.



"We are going to take a group of our existing partners over to Europe," Berry explains. "We're going to go to England, Ireland and France. We're going to visit the horses that we have in training there and we're going to go racing in Chantilly, in Leopardstown and at Royal Ascot. Some of [the members] have been before, most of them haven't."

"It's really just about going over and showing them the whole experience of what European racing is and European training centres. It's both educational in terms of a first look at the differences in training style and it's supposed to be something that is fun, because racing in Europe is such an incredible experience and we're really hoping that this trip is going to get people excited about the transition that we're making."

## Leading the way with a viable alternative

Irwin did not get where he is today without a healthy dose of both vision and ambition, and it is evident from even the briefest of conversations with him that his eyes are firmly set on the long-range development of Team Valor International in this new phase.

Speaking of his ambitions today, he explains: "In the long term, we want to develop our brand so that, when people see one of our horses run, if it appeals to them as a possible purchase, that they know they can call us up and our horses are for sale. That's the long-range goal."

As for the impact that the well-documented decision to step back from racing in his home country has had among his peers and existing Team Valor members, Irwin reflects, "I think a lot of people have

Gouverneur Morris: Team Valor International picked up the Kentucky Derby prospect at Fasig Tipton's breeze-up sale last year. Photo: NYRA.com

known that I've wanted to do something like this or at least race more extensively overseas, but I think until they saw the actual announcement and saw I was serious, only then did it really shake them up a little bit and made an impression.

"At the moment, unfortunately there's such negative publicity about racing in America that it's soured a lot of people and, if they want to continue to race and enjoy it, we're offering a viable alternative."

Subject to Team Valor International's success continuing as Irwin hopes, he even anticipates that the move might inspire similar ambitions among other owners Stateside.

"I'm usually the first out of the door and I expect others to follow," he says confidently.

Berry, who is relishing the chance to shape the future of Team Valor in her first full-time role in the industry, adds, "Barry is a market leader in trends and this move is going to put us at the forefront of this transition of American buyers."

"We've already been there in the past, it's been our modus operandi to source horses from Europe, but this is going to put us even more at the forefront of being a leader, being the first major American syndicate to make this move."

Time will tell whether others do indeed follow. In the meantime, Europe's racetracks can look forward to the green and red silks gracing their turf more often.



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# What They're Thinking: Graham Motion: why U.S. racing desperately needs 'someone to answer to'

Nicholas Godfrey | February 18, 2020



Graham Motion: "We need to be able to justify to the general public that we are doing everything we can to avoid injuries." Photo: AP/Jim Dietz

*Graham Motion is one of the most respected trainers in the modern era of U.S. racing, renowned both for his spotless reputation and the exploits of several top horses, headed by 2011 Kentucky Derby winner Animal Kingdom, who went on to win the Dubai World Cup at Meydan two years later.*

A British-born American citizen, Motion began training in his own right in 1993 after spells as assistant to Jonathan Sheppard and Bernie Bond in the U.S. and Jonathan Pease in France.

Based at Fair Hill in Maryland, the 55-year-old has now saddled nearly 2,500 winners, among them four Breeders' Cup successes, including Sharing, who landed the Juvenile Fillies Turf this year at Santa Anita. Motion's operation is called Herringswell Stables after the Newmarket stud operated by his parents, Michael and Jo, when he was a child before the family relocated to the States in 1980.

## Who do you believe is the most important figure in the history of racing around the world?

Sheikh Mohammed, not only because of what he adds to the racing world with his own racehorses and breeding program but because of the initiatives that he has promoted from the Dubai World Cup Carnival to the Darley Flying Start program and Darley Thoroughbred Industry Employee Awards, which will influence racing beyond my lifetime.

## Which is your favourite venue and race (anywhere in the world)?

Santa Anita is probably the most beautiful racetrack I have been to and the Breeders' Cup is my favourite race meet. It's the level of international competition there; it's our world championship, unlike anything else we ever see over here. You're taking on your contemporaries from all over the world, and I point my horses at the Breeders' Cup because they are the races you want to be involved in. I always feel tremendously proud and lucky to be a part of it.

I'd also love to go back to Royal Ascot, and the Coronation Stakes is definitely something we could consider for Sharing. To win a race in Europe would be a goal of mine.

## What is your fondest memory in racing?

Probably winning the Dubai World Cup with Animal Kingdom in 2013 (see video below). Not just for the financial reward, which was obviously immense, but to get him there in what I felt was the best condition he could possibly be in was very rewarding – especially in a race I could never have anticipated winning earlier in my career.

Not that I could have dreamed of winning four Breeders' Cup races or the Kentucky Derby – you put those races on a pedestal. Obviously winning the Derby was also extraordinary, but I probably felt that was more about luck because Animal Kingdom was such a good horse and he handled everything so well, whereas we'd been pointing to the World Cup for two years.

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

Public perception is so important in this era of social media. We constantly have to prove that we are a viable and ethical sport.

Everyone is aware of the issues in California, for example, and that was involved in the build-up to the Breeders' Cup at Santa Anita. We had two brilliant days in such a beautiful setting, which is why it was so devastating that Mongolian Groom got injured in a tragic accident at the end.

It's not a perfect world and we cannot avoid some of these injuries – but we have to do a better job of portraying it. We need to be able to explain it to the general public, and we need to be able to justify to the general public that we are doing everything we can to avoid them.

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

In the U.S., it would be the formation of a governing body of some sort; we are a rudderless ship. We are lacking from not having a governing body that oversees our sport that we have to answer to. I think it's a big problem for us, not only when it comes to rules and regulation and oversight, but also handling the PR side of things in general and how the sport communicates with the outside world.

With the Horseracing Integrity Act, I think it's closer now than it's ever been, but that's not going to be the be-all and end-all, though it should help with regard to medication and regulation. But whether it's stewarding or PR, we need someone to oversee us and guide us; someone to answer to, quite frankly.

Honestly, if we'd had that, I don't think we'd be in the pickle we are with what's going on in California, which is very sad and disturbing.



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1st Gr.3 Acomb Stakes

#### **BRANDO - 115,000GNS**

1st Gr.1 Prix Maurice de Gheest  
Career earnings - £1,012,425

### GOFFS UK BREEZE-UP 22nd - 23rd April

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01 March 2020

## Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1089
2	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1071
2	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1071
4	William Buick	Great Britain	1048
5	Zac Purton	Hong Kong	1044
6	Irad Ortiz Jr	USA	1041
7	Joel Rosario	USA	1038
8	Mike E Smith	USA	1035
9	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1029
10	Flavien Prat	USA	1025
10	Mickael Barzalona	France	1025
12	Javier Castellano	USA	1024
13	James McDonald	Australia	1022
14	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1019
15	James Doyle	Great Britain	1016

## Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1082
2	John Gosden	Great Britain	1075
3	Chad C Brown	USA	1069
4	Bob Baffert	USA	1042
5	Aidan O'Brien	Great Britain	1036
6	James Cummings	Australia	1019
6	Steven Asmussen	USA	1019
8	Andre Fabre	France	1016
9	Jamie Richards	New Zealand	1015
10	Brad H Cox	USA	1012
11	Chris Waller	Australia	1009
11	Sir Michael Stoute	Great Britain	1009
13	John Size	Hong Kong	1007
13	Saeed bin Suroor	UAE	1007
15	John Moore	Hong Kong	1003

## Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Godolphin	Australia	1082
2	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1047
3	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1042
4	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	USA	1034
5	Silk Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1028
6	Madaket Stables Et Al	USA	1022
6	U Carrot Farm	Japan	1022
8	White Birch Farm / Peter Brant Et Al	USA	1016
9	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1015
10	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1012
11	Danox Co Ltd	Japan	1010
11	Klaravich Stables Et Al	USA	1010
13	Michael Dubb Et Al	USA	1008
14	Peters Investments Et Al	Australia	1007
15	Bernard Kantor Et Al	South Africa	1005

## Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Dubawi	Great Britain	1078
2	Galileo	Ireland	1049
3	Shamardal	Great Britain	1044
4	Frankel	Great Britain	1043
5	Deep Impact	Japan	1040
6	Sea The Stars	Great Britain	1039
7	Lord Kanaloa	Japan	1034
8	Curlin	USA	1021
9	Pierro	Australia	1020
10	Lookin At Lucky	USA	1019
11	I Am Invincible	Australia	1017
11	Scat Daddy	USA	1017
11	Zoustar	Australia	1017
14	Not A Single Doubt	Australia	1016
14	Street Cry	Australia	1016