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TRC

Why things are really buzzing again at the National Stud



**Also inside: Jonathan Sheppard: out to start another winning streak /
The inspirational story of Sarah Ritchie / French racing's new poster girl /
What They're Thinking: Duncan Taylor**



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RACE DETAILS

- LD** 1:25pm **£500,000**
QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup (Group 2)
NO PENALTIES
3-y-o and up, 2 miles (3200 metres), round course
- SP** 2:00pm **£600,000**
QIPCO British Champions Sprint (Group 1)
3-y-o and up, 6 furlongs (1200 metres), straight course
- FM** 2:40pm **£600,000**
QIPCO British Champions Fillies & Mares Stakes (Group 1)
3-y-o and up, 1 mile and four furlongs (2400 metres), round course

- MI** 3:15pm **£1,100,000**
Queen Elizabeth II Stakes sponsored by QIPCO (Group 1)
3-y-o and up, 1 mile (1600) metres
- MD** 3:50pm **£1,300,000**
QIPCO Champion Stakes (Group 1)
3-y-o and up, 1 mile and 2 furlongs (2000 metres), round course
- BH** 4:30pm **£250,000**
Balmoral Handicap Stakes (sponsored by QIPCO)
3-y-o and up, 1 mile (1600 metres), straight course
Entries close Tuesday 25 September

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ENTRIES CLOSE TUESDAY 7 AUGUST

Exciting young stallions bringing exciting times at Britain's National Stud

Nancy Sexton | July 29, 2018



Cover photo: Leisl King/focusonracing.com

National Stud newcomer: Spill The Beans, who is shuttling from Australia and is the first son of the mighty Snitzel to stand in Europe. Photo: National Stud

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since the birth of Mill Reef 50 years ago, a landmark that was recently commemorated at the Palace House Museum in Newmarket. Amid all the tide of change, however, the National Stud has remained steady in its position as a rock of the British Thoroughbred industry, much the same as when it acted as the base for Mill Reef's lengthy and influential stallion career.

There have been ups and downs along the way, as there is with any operation. But, with 2018, came a renewed buzz thanks to the addition of three new stallions in Aclaim, Time Test and Spill The Beans.

Such a bolstering of their roster complements the presence of older inmates Gregorian, already a stakes sire with his first crop of juveniles, and Paul Makin's G1-winning 2yo Marcel. It also comes at a time when the stud, long renowned as a centre of training, welcomes the Duke Of Roxburghe as its new chairman.

The past 12 months have served to underline the ambition behind the National Stud, which remains active within the European bloodstock industry despite not having access to the kind of financial firepower available to some of its contemporaries. All of which makes the addition of two legitimate G1 horses in Aclaim and Time Test as well as Spill The Beans, the first son of Australian juggernaut Snitzel to stud in Europe, that much more important.

“It’s a massive year for us,” says Tim Lane, who was appointed stud manager in January 2017 following close to 13 years in a similar post at John Deer’s Oakgrove Stud. “Time Test and Aclaim are both big horses for the stud.

“We were offered seven new horses last year and we’re very pleased to get these three.

“I think we have something to fit every man. Gregorian has his first 2yos and there are some good reports. He has a good syndicate of good people and loyal breeders behind him. And Mr. Makin has supported Marcel strongly this year with some nice mares. To do what he did as a 2yo shows how talented he was as he’s a big horse and you’d think the best was to come with him at three.”

It has to be said that Aclaim owns many of the attributes to succeed at stud and - just as importantly in this day and age - to appeal to the commercial market.

Trained by Martyn Meade, he won the G1 Prix de la Foret, hails from the same family as Montjeu and shares his sire Acclamation with Dark Angel. A 50 percent stake in the horse was bought by Phoenix Thoroughbreds shortly after his retirement and, unsurprisingly, he has proven to be one of the most popular new sires around at a fee of £12,500.

“Aclaim is a lovely horse and we’re very lucky to have him,” says Lane (pictured). “I saw him during Book 1 of the Tattersalls October Sale and liked him. I thought he was a lovely horse. Dermot Farrington, being the gentleman that he is, said to me that, if we wanted to make a play, to do it quick as another deal was on the verge of being done. A few people were very helpful - the Duke of Roxburghe was very influential and



National Stud icon: a statue of the great Mill Reef in the grounds. Photo: National Stud

involved, and it’s great to have Phoenix on board. It sounds like they’ll support him at the sales, which will help him massively.

“I think he sells himself. He was very tough, has quality and a bit of that Acclamation length with plenty of power and substance too. He’s been very attractive and it didn’t take long to sell all the breeding rights.”

As for Time Test, Lane is in a fine position to extol his attributes having observed the horse’s development at Roger Charlton’s during the era of Deer’s Al Kazeem. The Juddmonte homebred turned heads with an impressive winning display in the 2015 G3 Tercentenary Stakes at Royal Ascot, after which he added the G2 Joel and G2 York Stakes to his resume. He was also G1-placed on multiple occasions, including when second at World Approval in the Fourstardave Handicap at Saratoga following his transfer to Chad Brown. He stands for £8,500.

“I used to see Time Test a lot at Roger Charlton’s,” says Lane. “I got to see him work and understand him. He was an unbelievable work horse. Roger started touting him after Royal Ascot as one of the best horses he had trained. He’s a son of Dubawi out of a G1 winner [Passage Of Time] from a real deep Juddmonte family. So, when John McCormack suggested him to us, I lit up.

“We’ve sold 40 breeding rights in him, which will be a good backbone

of support to help the horse, and Juddmonte kept five shares. It’s a deep list of really good breeders - he suits the commercial breeder as well as the owner-breeder.”

The National Stud was one of the first British operations to embrace the idea of reverse shuttling when adding Australian G1 winner Danewin to its roster in 1997 and this season, over 20 years on, follows a similar path in Spill The Beans.

In a deal overseen by Billy Jackson-Stops, the G2 winner shuttles from Aquis Farm in Queensland, where he has been one of Australia’s busiest young stallions. A fast horse who was also effective at two, much of his appeal in the Northern Hemisphere lies in the fact he is the first European-based sire son of Snitzel, who continues to break one record after another in his native Australia and is currently world #6 in the TRC Global Rankings.

“A lot of people took the time to see him when we brought him to the Tattersalls February Sale,” says Lane. “He has a bit of height to him and he’s a great walker with a great mind.”

The National Stud has housed stallions under its current guise since the operation moved to Newmarket under the direction of Peter Burrell in 1967. At the time, it was home to Lester Piggott’s first Derby winner, Never Say Die, the champion sire of 1962, and in 1971 added another Derby winner in Blakeney.



National Stud newcomer: Time Test is being supported by “a deep list of really good breeders - he suits the commercial breeder as well as the owner-breeder”, says Tim Lane. Photo: National Stud

Better was to come in 1973, however, when it welcomed Paul Mellon’s champion Mill Reef, a real flagship horse for British breeding up until his death in 1986. He left behind the Derby winners Shirley Heights and Reference Point.

Other major winners such as Grundy, Royal Palace, Suave Dancer, Shaamit, Helissio and Bahamian Bounty, who currently lives in retirement following his lengthy and successful career, have also held court at the National.

British it maybe, but the National’s origins are actually Irish, emanating from the offer of Colonel William Hall-Walker (later Lord Wavertree) to gift his entire breeding stock to the British nation in return for the purchase of his 1,100-acre estate in Tully, Ireland. Thus, in late 1915, the British government came into possession of 43 of the most prized broodmares of the era, among them Blanche, the dam of champion sire Blandford.

Burrell came to the helm of the National in 1937, not long before the stud hit notoriety as the breeder of Sun

Chariot and Big Game, who between them swept the 1942 1,000 Guineas, Oaks, St Leger and 2,000 Guineas for King George VI.

Aside from basking in the stud’s classic success, one of Burrell’s early tasks was to react to the Irish government’s decision to lay claim on the Tully land (now the Irish National Stud) by transferring the operation back to Britain, initially to the Compton Stud (later Sandley Stud) in Dorset and West Grinstead Stud in West Sussex. And, when responsibility for the stud shifted from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Levy Board in 1963, a new purpose-built stud was constructed on the Newmarket site leased from the Jockey Club.

The Jockey Club purchased the stud in April 2008 and today, as ever, it offers all the services associated with a facility of its kind - for instance, one area of recent growth has been the spelling division, which has housed the likes of Red Cadeaux and The Grey Gatsby.

Living legends

“The Jockey Club have pledged a significant amount of money to us over the next three years, allowing us to modernise,” says Lane. “It’s a rolling programme. The stud won’t lose any of its quaintness but the stallion yard, for instance, hasn’t had anything done to it since 1965 and there are other parts of the stud that need updating.”

He adds: “One of the things we would also like to do is have a ‘living legends’ type of section. We have Trip To Paris [the 2015 Ascot Gold Cup winner] here and he is about to start the Retraining Of Racehorse (ROR) programme. Hopefully he’ll go on to represent the stud at ROR events.”

That affinity with racing enthusiasts is something that has set the National apart since it opened its doors to the public during the mid-1970s. Today, it is the only British-based stud that offers public tours and it remains as popular as ever with the help of a current alliance with Discover Newmarket.

“Last year, we had one policeman and a 56-year-old welder on the course. They were people who wanted a change of direction and to get into the business”

All the while, the stud also continues to play a vital role within the industry's training sector. The National Stud Diploma Course, which covers all aspects of stud work, has provided the grounding for a number of key industry figures over the years and was joined on the roster last year by the TBA Entry to Stud Employment Programme (E2SE), a course aimed at mature students that comprises a residential programme at the National before a six- to nine-month period of paid stud work elsewhere.

Helping ease staff shortages

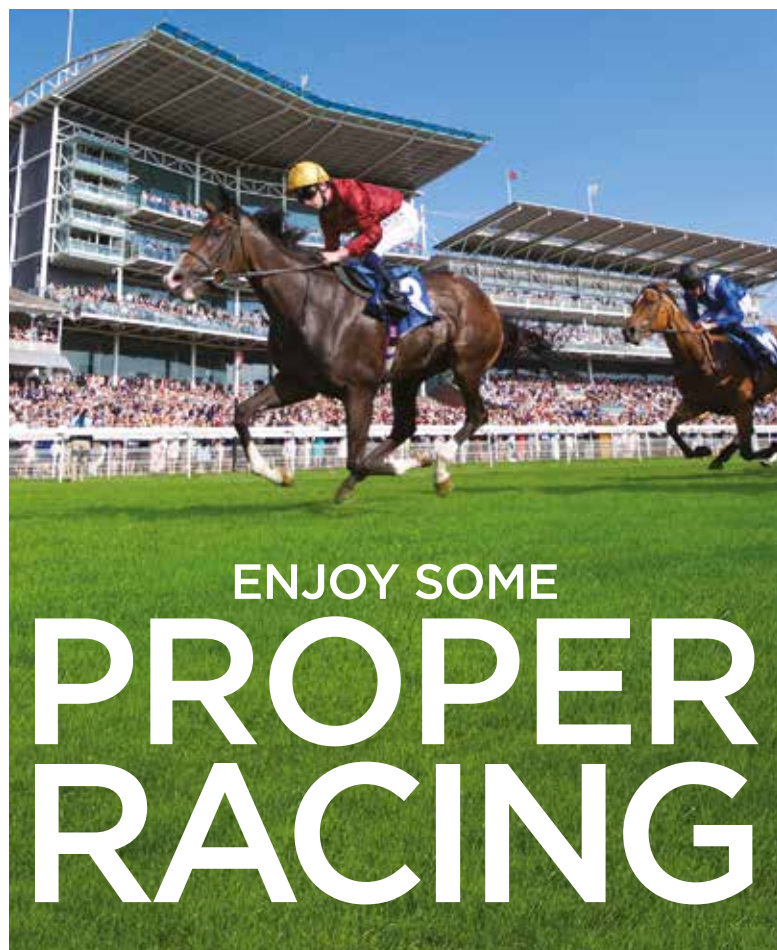
“The E2SE is a really good thing,” says Lane of the course that received 30 expressions of interest before it was even officially launched last summer. “The TBA [Thoroughbred Breeders' Association] helped fund it and it was well received. It offers a lot. They get to do a bit of everything - I'd say they see three years worth of work in six months.

“Last year, we had one policeman and a 56-year-old welder on the course. They were people who wanted a change of direction

and to get into the business.

“Everyone talks about the lack of staff and hopefully this is something that helps. It worked well and now we'd like to see the graduates go out into the smaller studs.”

There is no doubting the ambition of this Newmarket institution, whether in its role as a premier training establishment or working stud. Such drive will no doubt continue to stand it in good stead, and, who knows, perhaps there is another Mill Reef lurking on this year's stallion roster.



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He holds Saratoga's ultimate winning streak; now Jonathan Sheppard is out to start another

Bob Ehalt | July 25, 2018



Incomparable at Saratoga: Jonathan Sheppard holds a record at The Spa that will surely never be beaten. Photo: NYRA.com

Baseball has never been Jonathan Sheppard's strong suit. Yet to understand what he has accomplished in more than 50 fabulous years of training Thoroughbreds, it's best to reference the great American pastime of baseball and records that figure to stand for decades to come or may never be broken.

Consider Joe DiMaggio's 56-game hitting streak, which has been a standard since 1941.

Or Cal Ripken Jr.'s mark of playing in 2,632 consecutive games that has been unchallenged since 1998.

The same can be said about Sheppard and some of his amazing feats in training jumpers and flat runners. They may never be equaled or, at the very least, promise to be unrivaled for the next few decades.



Saratoga star: the Sheppard-trained Forever Together winning the G1 Diana Stakes at Saratoga in 2009. She also won the race in 2008, when she went on to win at the Breeders' Cup. Photo: NYRA.com

"A lot of talent. A lot of hard work and a lot of observational skills have gone into everything he has accomplished over so many decades," said Don Clippinger, the Director of Communications for the National Steeplechase Association.

Unassailable achievements

Still spry at the daunting age of 77, Sheppard's résumé contains such rare and unassailable achievements as:

- Winning more than 1,000 steeplechase (jump) races and 3,000 flat races.
- Training a Breeders' Cup steeplechase winner and a Breeders' Cup dirt sprint champ.
- Standing alongside Sid Watters Jr. as the only trainers who produced flat and jump champions.
- Leading all U.S. jump-racing trainers in earnings for 18 straight years (1973-1990).

There's also one more record that becomes even more noteworthy as mid-

July passes and Saratoga Race Course once again opens its gates.

Sheppard holds the distinction of winning at least one race at Saratoga from 1969 through 2015, giving him a mind-boggling streak of 47 straight years in which the native of Ashwell, Hertfordshire, England, has graced the winner's circle at the Spa.

"It's amazing what he's done," Clippinger said, "and he's done it all on his own. He never had a mentor. To his credit, he's done it with so much class that no one could ever be jealous of him."

Yet, ever since Outsider Art won the second race at Saratoga on August 26, 2015, not even the timeless surroundings of Saratoga could save Sheppard from being collared by Father Time.

After losing longtime owners George Strawbridge Jr., of Augustin Stable, and William L. Pape, who had been sending him horses since the 1960s and gave him his greatest stars, in recent years Sheppard has relied on a smaller cluster

of owners and homebred runners to remain in the game he loves so dearly.

He still has a stable of 60 jumpers and flat runners based primarily at his farm in West Grove, Pennsylvania, but missing are the Graded stakes winners that were a hallmark of his stable for decades.

Since Outsider Art's victory, Sheppard saw his winning streak at Saratoga come to an end in 2016 and, with the Spa's 155th season just a few days old, he owns a far less glorious streak of 41 straight losses at the track where he was the leading trainer in 1984 and 1985.

Never one to let his ego get the better of him during his glory days, the unflappable Sheppard will not allow himself to bemoan a cruel twist of fate in a Hall of Fame career.

"Saratoga is a place where I've had a lot of luck, but I have conditioned my mindset to let the past be the past and to concentrate on what I have as well as moving forward," Sheppard



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said. "I may not have the strength and quality I once had in my stable, but I'm 77 years-old and I've had a good life and a good career and I'm not going to cry over spilled milk. We still have a few nice horses to run and we win our share of races here and there, so I'm not complaining."

As recently as 2013, Sheppard won 95 races and posted earnings of \$3,253,627. Then, as the Augustin horses in his barn dwindled down to first a precious few and then none, he won just 37 races last year, his lowest total since a 36-win campaign in 1973. His earnings checked in at just \$1.2 million.

"I trained for George Strawbridge for about 50 years and for Bill Pape for about 45 years and lost both of them," Sheppard said. "It's a rough situation. It's not the same as a divorce with your wife but it's not that different. You have to suck it up and get over it."

Relying on owners such as Ed Swyer, of Hudson River Farms, who has been with him for about 25 years, and a relatively new addition in Rod Moorhead, of Buttonwood Farm, Sheppard has been able to win 22 races this year (through July 19) and remain quite active in a sport that has given him a lifetime of wonderful memories.

"I still really enjoy what I do. I have a lot of homebreds that I train for different owners and, with about ten mares in foal, I can't very well get out of the game now," Sheppard said.

For that new corps of owners, the opportunity to work with a Hall of Famer and learn from him, has been a treat.

"It's been great," said Swyer, who has about ten horses with Sheppard. "We've had great years. We've had mediocre years. I don't think we've ever had a year when we didn't win anything, but we

came close. Jonathan has so much energy and I don't know how he does it. He defies his age. I haven't seen a change in him. His interest in the game and his abilities look to be unchanged to me."

Special category

Aside from Sheppard's remarkable ability bring out the talent in a racehorse, Swyer says Sheppard's honesty puts him in a special category.

"One of Jonathan's great qualities is that he's honest," Swyer said. "We once had a horse with great potential. Jonathan put him in a race and he came out of it with a bowed tendon. After the race, Jonathan told me, 'To be honest, I think I ran him too early.' Imagine a trainer saying that. He's very unique. He'll tell you the truth right up front."

The truth about Sheppard is that he's a rare breed who cannot be placed in a single mold.



Breeders' Cup winner: Sheppard after Informed Decision took the Filly & Mare Sprint at Santa Anita in 2009. Photo: Breeders' Cup/Gary Bogdon

As a flat trainer, Sheppard's accomplishments are remarkable with 3,342 wins and earnings of \$86,124,739.

He was in his late 60s when he won Breeders' Cup races in successive years for Augustin. First he won the Filly and Mare Turf in 2008 with Forever Together, the champion female turfer of that year who earned \$2.9 million in her career. Then he captured the 2009 Filly and Mare Sprint with Informed Decision, who was honored as the champion female sprinter.

He also trained the multiple Graded stakes winner With Anticipation and Storm Cat, who became a pre-eminent sire.

Training a champion sprinter takes on a different glow when you consider how Sheppard also developed a legion of a steeplechase stars who could handle distances of two miles or more.

Café Prince, Highland Bud and Athenian Idol are just some of the champions who brought Sheppard's love of jump racing to new heights.

"I guess if someone put a gun to my head and said you have to train either flat horses or steeplechasers the rest of your life, I'd go with the jumpers. It's more fun," said Sheppard, who was inducted into the National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame in 1990. "When you train a flat runner, you go to the track for that race and leave. With a steeplechaser on a Saturday, I'll stay for the entire day. It's a fun day out. I'll see friends and we all hang out together and we have a common bond. While you try to beat each other, it's a friendly rivalry.

"They get big crowds, and are very well organized with a lot of volunteer help. A lot goes into

them for just one day and it's fun to be a part of them."

Sheppard had much more than fun with his greatest jumper, Flatterer.

The Pennsylvania-bred son of Mo Bay won four straight Eclipse Awards as the champion steeplechaser from 1983-86 and registered a victory in the prestigious Colonial Cup in each of those years. Owned by Pape, Flatterer won 24 of 52 starts and entered the Hall of Fame in 1994.

Flatterer also brought Sheppard back to the United Kingdom in 1987, when he finished second in the most prestigious hurdle race in Europe, the Champion Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival. He failed by just a length and a half to overhaul See You Then, who was winning the race for the third straight year.

"That was tremendous, it really was," Sheppard said about

Europe's leading 2YOs

Following Frankel's position as the leading sire of Royal Ascot 2018, the Juddmonte stallions continue to head the ranks.



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Flatterer's effort. "Even though Flatterer got beat, he ran an incredible race and people over there were very appreciative of his performance and effort."

Today, a little more than 30 years later, Sheppard has a much different focus. After enjoying so much success at Saratoga, he's philosophical about trying to win a race at Spa for a 48th year, knowing he's heading there with six horses that he says "are not much of a string".

A reduction of steeplechase races from nine to six at this year's meet only adds to the challenge of reaching the winner's circle.

"It was disappointing when we didn't get a win in 2016 and the streak ended at 47 years," Sheppard said. "But now that it's over, it's not such a big deal if we do not win one this year. It wasn't even until the last few years that I realized the streak was that long. I'm sure someone

else will break it somewhere down the road, but I guess I'm safe for a few years."

Yet among those six horses are a couple who are talented enough to end the drought at the Spa.

Buttonwood Farm's All the Way Jose won the G1 Lonesome Glory Handicap at Belmont Park last year and is the 5/2 second choice in a field of seven for the G1 \$150,000 A.P. Smithwick Memorial tomorrow (July 26).

Sheppard has another exciting candidate for the Smithwick, a race he has won five times since it became a stakes in 1996, in Hudson River Farms' Iranistan, a speedy 4-year-old who is undefeated in three steeplechase starts and is the 3/1 third choice in the morning line.

Illustrating Iranistan's versatility and ability, he is coming off a 1¾-length victory in a mile-and-a-half maiden race on the turf at Delaware Park on July 4.

"He rallied from the back of the pack at a mile and a half on the turf and did it quite easily," Swyer said. "The jockey [Andrew Wolfson] never used his whip. It was just a little jog for Iranistan. He did it so effortlessly."

After all Sheppard has done for him, Swyer says he would be thrilled to help his long-time trainer return to the winner's circle at the historic Spa.

He played a role in one milestone for Sheppard when his jumper Arcadius triumphed in the 2010 Helen Haskell Sampson Stakes at Monmouth Park and gift-wrapped the trainer's 1,000th jumps win. Now he's eager to be a part of what would be a highly emotional page in the diary of the legendary trainer's storied career.

"The winning streak was broken so now he has to start a new one," Swyer said. "It would really be great to see him get it and be a part of it."

Living the dream against so many odds: the inspirational story of Sarah Ritchie

Emily Shields | July 30, 2018



Sarah Ritchie with one of her charges, popular 5-year-old gelding Leo From Heaven. "I really like what I'm doing," she says. "I love that every day is different." Photo: Emily Shields

It takes a fair amount of courage to change your life, from ending a relationship that isn't right for you, to sticking with a workout regime to reach your fitness goals. It also takes courage to live with an often debilitating disease, and even more bravery still to face it while giving up a long-standing job to pursue your own dreams. Through all these challenges, Sarah Ritchie has succeeded in inspiring style.

Ritchie, 37, has been a familiar face on the backside of Woodbine Racetrack for years, the kind of person that shows up at the track looking for work, falls in love, and never leaves. "The extent of my horse racing experience is that I would come down around my birthday every year," Ritchie said. "I knew horses, just not racing."

Four years after first learning to groom, Ritchie was working for Mark Frostad, who has trained the likes of Breeders' Cup Turf winner Chief Bearhart and G1-winning millionaires

Quiet Resolve, Soaring Free, and Dancethruthedawn. With a natural skill around horses, Ritchie worked her way up the ranks.

"I had done a little bit of everything before I got there," she said. "While I groomed for Mark at Woodbine, I ran his shed for him in Florida in the winter."

'I was the only person screaming'

The first stakes winner Ritchie groomed was New Normal, who ran in the 2010 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf. Her favorite was Stars To Shine, a Tale Of The Cat daughter who earned \$429,900.

Ritchie eventually became Frostad's main assistant, running the barn and traveling with stakes horses all over North America, including taking the bold and brilliant colt Lucky Lindy to win the Hawthorne Derby in 2015. "I got to put the tack on him that day, and these people at Hawthorne must have thought I was crazy," Ritchie recalled. "He hit the top of the stretch and I was the only person screaming."

When the horse jogged back, Ritchie had his halter and followed him back to the test barn. She was later teased for not sticking around for the post-race interview.

The best horse she is associated with was Irish Mission, a royally-bred daughter of Giant's Causeway out of stakes winner Misty Mission. A leggy, flashy chestnut, Irish Mission defeated males in the Breeders' Stakes, the third leg of the Canadian Triple Crown, and went on to win Graded stakes at Saratoga and Gulfstream Park. She earned over \$1.3 million.

But things were far from perfect for Ritchie. She was suffering from numbness that made working around the horses difficult, and on the very day she was meant to be heading to Florida for the winter, a neurologist informed her she had multiple sclerosis. Although she went to Florida anyway and tried to keep the symptoms at bay, she ultimately needed to make some dramatic changes in her life.



Sarah Ritchie and Leo From Heaven. Photo: Emily Shields

"It got to the point you realize you've been grinding away for everyone else but you," Ritchie said. "You put in so many hours working for someone else, and there's so much stress and thought that goes into making sure someone else is okay, that their stable is okay. At the end of the day, everything is at the expense of your own health. You become last on the list of things you pay attention to. I decided I wanted to do something for myself."

Ritchie left Frostad's barn, got out of a long-term relationship, and took a winter off to focus solely on herself. She started going to classes at the Babe Cave fitness studio in Alliston, Ontario, under the direction of owner and instructor Becky Overbeck. "Her energy sucks you in," Ritchie said of her mentor and good friend. "It's hard not to want to change your life when you meet someone like that, who inspires you to be a better version of yourself."



That first victory: Bourbon Babe winning in Sarah Ritchie's colours at Woodbine in July, 2017. Burns Photo

Ritchie lost over 100 pounds in less than a year by participating in Kangoo classes, where participants strap on special boots with a stable spring system underneath, and literally bounce their way to fitness. It is a low-impact activity that eases pressure on joints while promoting a high-calorie burn.

With control of her own life, Ritchie had a decision to make. "Either you stay as someone's assistant forever, or you go out on your own. I no longer felt I could be on someone else's schedule, so I did it for my own sanity."

The very first runner that Ritchie owned herself, Splashy Gizmo, was a hard-knocking former stakes horse. With a big following on social media, there was a lot of excitement when Splashy Gizmo went to the post with Ritchie's distinctive cat eye silks, modeled after her celebrity cat Gator, who has over 2,500 followers on Twitter under the handle @GatorKitten. Splashy Gizmo finished

last, beaten only four lengths, and was promptly claimed away. And while horses in claiming races are obviously for sale, the public fanfare around Ritchie's first start made it a tough experience.

"That was crushing for me," Ritchie admitted. "Even if you don't plan to breed them, I believe you bear some responsibility for where they go and what happens to them when they are done racing. I only had her 30 days, it was one of the hottest days of the summer, and I knew I should have scratched her. My family was there, and I never in a million years would have thought someone would claim her. Being my first one, I was a little attached."

Not to be deterred, Ritchie subsequently took out her trainer's license. She has just three horses in her care, Leo From Heaven, MarchOf Dreams and Bourbon Babe, who she also owns. The chestnut mare proved to be tough to handle, but Ritchie schooled her in the paddock

relentlessly. "I find it really special to work with quirky horses," she said, "especially mares. Bourbon Babe was a lot of work. Every time I took her to the paddock she tried to flip over, which drove me mental."

But Ritchie's patience paid off, and Bourbon Babe delivered the trainer her first win on July 16, 2017, at Woodbine. "Seeing her come down the stretch in my colors, and knowing how much work it had taken to get her there ... well, there may have been a tear or two."

In an ideal world, Ritchie would have around ten horses, and would like to buy a few juveniles. "I want to be active and hands on. If I was able to get on and gallop them, I'd do that too!"

Despite the trials of the last two years, Ritchie wouldn't change anything now. "I really like what I'm doing," she said. "I love that every day is different. I love early mornings. And when horses turn around for you, that's really rewarding."

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Tattersalls

Meet the new poster girl for French female jockeys

Sally Ann Grassick | July 20, 2018



Mickaëlle Michel: "The weight allowance gives trainers a reason to use a female jockey so, if it works, then great."

The U.S. has Julie Krone, Britain has Hayley Turner, Australia has Michelle Payne - riders successful at the highest level who have become the poster girls for female jockeys - and now France may finally be joining the club.

Mickaëlle Michel is the new golden girl of French racing, and not simply for her engaging and charming personality or infectious enthusiasm for our sport. This 22-year-old is a natural talent in

the saddle. She is a jockey pure and simple, no need for the prefix of 'lady' or "female".

Her accomplishments speak for themselves - in a very short space of

time. Michel rode her first winner in Paris only last September but, at the time of writing, she has now ridden 60, with 42 of them in 2018 alone.

She is the first woman to top the French jockeys' table, where she remained for 83 days until a certain Christophe Soumillon overtook her. She is the first female to ride a treble at a premium meeting in France, which she has now achieved twice. She is the first to ride a winner at the newly renovated ParisLongchamp, the first to be top jockey at the winter Cagnes Sur Mer meeting ... the list goes on.

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‘I will never get a big head’

I sat down with Michel and her agent, ex jockey Frederic Spanu, after she had finished riding for the day at Saint Cloud recently.

“Work comes first, media second,” was the matter-of-fact statement from her agent at my request for an interview, a sign of where her professionalism comes from.

“Fred is very tough on me, but it is for the right reasons as he is a true perfectionist,” she explained. “I will never get a big head with him around. I have always worked hard at everything I’ve done, but I never had anyone who believed in me like he does.

“It is a little scary at times as I worry I won’t live up to his expectations, but he saw something in me and, with all of his experience and knowledge, I have to trust that he is right. We don’t have the normal apprentice-agent relationship, and I think many other young riders would love to have the support and attention I have.”

Fred Spanu is well known in French racing. The 44-year-old retired from the saddle in 2016 after a career spanning almost 25 years, with around 500 wins to his name in France and abroad.

How did he come to mentor a young, unknown apprentice who had only just arrived in the Paris region?

Michel takes up the beginning of her story: “My family has nothing to do with racing or horses even, for that matter. I started riding when I was young, and I knew early on that I wanted to work with horses. I looked into what opportunities there were available and from there I ended up doing a week-long trial at the apprentice school in Marseille.

“I was hooked instantly and knew that was the career for me. I spent time with trainers Michel Planard and Bernard Goudot as an apprentice, but I only had around 30 rides in three years.

Arriving in Chantilly

“I believe the best way you learn about anything is by seeing how different people do it, so I travelled around different yards a lot to gain as much experience with top trainers as possible.

“My best friend and I really wanted to see what racing in Paris was like, so we came to Chantilly last summer. I went to work for David Smaga, but my goal was to gain experience, riding in races never even came into my head. I was blown away to be riding on the famous Les Aigles gallops and to be meeting Monsieur Fabre and Criquelette Head in the mornings.

“One day Monsieur Smaga offered me the dream chance to ride in a race in Chantilly. I met Fred by chance a few days before.

I knew exactly who he was, but of course he had no idea who I was. I mentioned that I had a ride at Chantilly coming up and, out of curiosity, he watched my race. I must have done something right as he contacted me again afterwards to discuss working together.”

Making sure

Spanu takes up the story: “I can’t explain it, I saw something when I watched her ride, and I knew right then she would be a future champion. That is how I sold her to trainers when I approached them.

“I was willing to put in a lot of time and effort to help develop her as a jockey, but first I had to make sure that she was as dedicated as she was naturally talented.”

This brings a laugh from Michel. “Oh, he did that alright! We met for the first time at the end of June, but we did not start working together until August in Deauville. During that time, he tested me both mentally and physically to make sure I had what it takes and that I was motivated enough to go the whole way.

“He came to watch me ride work in mornings, and there was a lot of physical work in the gym as well. We talked a lot as well as Fred likes people who are serious about what they do and he wanted to be sure about me. We also did observation work, both watching races to see how other jockeys ride and looking at horses in the parade ring. It

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was a proper education in all aspects of being a jockey and that sort of knowledge is priceless.

"From there we went to Cagnes Sur Mer for the winter and things just took off.

"Fred had worked very hard on the marketing side of things ahead of the meeting and we had flown down a few times beforehand to ride work and meet local trainers. I was riding winners almost every day for lots of different trainers. The media wanted lots of interviews, fans started to know who I was and trainers were ringing up for me to ride for them.

"The attention put more pressure on me as I know people are watching me ride now and they won't forgive my mistakes just because I'm a woman."

Role of the weight allowance

Much has been written about the weight allowance for female riders in France brought in last year by France Galop to encourage trainers to provide them with more race-riding opportunities. The jury is still out for many people on whether this is a good thing, but the facts speak for themselves: eight female jockeys are currently among the top 50 for this year so far compared to three for the whole of 2017, and none at all in 2016.

Michel is the poster girl for the weight allowance, with nearly all her career wins coming since it was implemented. She is therefore perfectly placed to give an insider's opinion.

"The weight allowance gives trainers a reason to use a female jockey so, if it works, then great! The most important thing is for us to prove ourselves and improve our standard of riding once we get that chance. All the girls currently riding have done so, and well done to them all for that.

"It takes time to change people's minds, however, and there still isn't a woman riding in Quinte handicaps or listed races regularly in France. A weight allowance doesn't make the jockey. People don't say that when an apprentice beats jockeys. Female jockeys have to work twice as hard to be judged on the same level."

Atmosphere in the weighing room

Has the sudden influx of female riders created any tension in the French weighrooms?

"Certain jockeys definitely don't agree with the weight allowance. We have to respect them but at the same time make sure that we are respected. I understand where they are coming from as before there was only them, but now they have lots of women to deal with.

There was quite a bit of grief early on from the male jockeys, but it has eased off now."

The female changing rooms on French racecourses are a lot busier now than they ever were before, which brings a whole new set of problems as many were not originally designed to the same level as those of their male counterparts.

"There was a lot of jealousy in the changing rooms for a while when I started doing well," explains Michel. "It has calmed down a lot now that everyone has found their place. There are around a dozen of us riding regularly so we have had to learn to get along in such tight quarters."

'I still have much to learn'

What does the future hold for this bright and talented young jockey who is currently paving the way for a future generation of female jockeys in France?

"Every jockey will give the same answer to that question - we all want to ride Group winners. For me, however, my objective right now is for trainers to trust me as a jockey once I lose my claim. To be judged on the same level as a man would be a huge advantage.

"I am currently improving my English as Fred feels it is very important to be able to work with foreign trainers when they run their horses in France. I would love to travel to the States and the UK to learn more about how they train there too. I am only at the beginning of my career and I still have so much to learn."

Learning her trade will no doubt be made easier under the tutelage of Fred Spanu, who has the final word on his protégé:

"The content is solid, both physically and mentally, she is the full package!"

I for one am sold after just one afternoon in her company watching her ride. Sign me up for the Mickaëlle Michel fan club.

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What They're Thinking: the views of Taylor Made President Duncan Taylor

Q&A interview | July 24, 2018



Duncan Taylor: "When we start working for our customer (the horse better), our business will grow. Photo: Laura Donnell

Duncan Taylor is one of the most influential horsemen in America. The President and CEO of the 1,600-acre Taylor Made Farm in Kentucky, one of the world's leading consignors of Thoroughbreds, he is also a director of Keeneland, Horse Country and the Kentucky Equine Education Project. Taylor owns and operates the two arms of the business - Taylor Made Stallions and Taylor Made Sales - with brothers Ben, Frank and Mark. The brothers learned at the feet of their father, Joe, who ran nearby Gainesway Farm for four decades. Duncan founded Taylor Made in 1976 at the age of 19 with business partner Mike Shannon.

Among the outstanding stallions to stand at Taylor Made have been the late Unbridled's Song, sire of Arrogate and U.S. champion sire in 2017, and, currently, the two-time U.S. Horse of the Year California Chrome.

When we start working for our customer (the horse bettor), our business will grow. We have found the enemy, and it is ourselves

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

I have chosen two people who I believe have impacted America's racing. Both of these individuals I admire because their efforts were focused on what any industry's focus should be on: the customer.

The first is Harry Strauss, a horse bettor and an electrical engineer, who started the company Am Tote. Harry was frustrated with the current way of horse betting in the late 1920s. He was quoted as saying, "I was just tired of going to the races and having my day spoiled. I got to thinking what a great thing it would be to have an efficient system of betting so that you would always know the correct odds on your horse and not be disappointed by the payoffs.

"I was fast losing faith in the old pari-mutuel system because it was always and continually incorrect, and that agitated me greatly."

His refinement of the totalisator system improved and increased wagering by creating a better customer experience. And, yes, he knew the customer was the horse bettor.

The second person I believe is John R. Gaines. He created the Breeders' Cup, a year-end world championship of racing for the horse bettor and the fans. John not only had the vision, he was able to unite a bunch of competitors who really weren't the best of friends around a good idea with the Breeders' Cup World Championships, which is still growing today.

Unfortunately, John had to step down as the President so that others could take the credit they so greatly desired. I have always admired his brilliance and character to step aside to ensure what was best for him and his competitors was accomplished.

His vision was only partially achieved. He wanted to use the Breeders' Cup platform to grow the business by focusing on the customer, not having another day for the insiders.

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

My favorite race is the Kentucky Derby. It is the race that can change lives, a horse's value by tens of million dollars. It usually is a great betting race because young horses come from all across the USA and sometime other countries, all running a mile and a quarter the first time.

The atmosphere is electric and, when My Old Kentucky Home plays, the emotions are so strong you feel like you could reach out and touch them. A good glass of bourbon and a great horse race, it doesn't get any more Kentucky than that.

As far as the venue, it is Saratoga Springs. It's the history of America's wealthy, migrating before air conditioning to upstate New York to find comfort in the summer, bringing their best horses to compete against each other at Saratoga. You can actually feel the satisfaction and love the Saratoga racegoer has for our sport. The fans and horse bettors at Saratoga know how to have a good time.

What is your fondest memory in racing?

It has to be California Chrome's Dubai World Cup win in record time, although, if ownership bias was put aside, my favorite memory was watching the race between Seattle Slew and Affirmed (1978 Jockey Club Gold Cup).

I was watching the race with my father, Joe Taylor, who was so pro-Gainesway Farm, where he managed for 40 years, and my mentor at Taylor Made, partner Mike Shannon. Seattle Slew and Affirmed

went to the lead. Affirmed's saddle slipped and he started to run off. Seattle Slew stayed with him step for step. Seattle Slew finally put Affirmed away.

Meanwhile, Willie Shoemaker on Exceller was 30 lengths behind and closing. He passed Slew deep into the stretch by surprise. Slew started to fight back but Exceller, a Gainesway stallion, won by a nose. I don't believe I ever saw my father happier in his life.

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

The lack of a central authority that is focused on current customers and the most probable next customer. For example, if everyone who worked at the Taylor Made organization had an equal say in every decision when the person approached the company with a great idea that would serve our customers well, you would have to get all 130 people to agree to implement the idea. By the time you approached all 130, the first people you asked would have forgotten the idea or changed their minds.

This is how it works currently in the Thoroughbred Industry, where no one is in charge and everyone has an opinion.

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

The horse owners would form an organization that was democratically run that would own their own racetracks. A board would be elected and a CEO would be hired to focus on attracting new customers with new betting products, while esteeming the current customer (horse bettors) while making a profit.

The best horse bettors are very intelligent people who should be esteemed. When we start working for our customer (the horse bettor), our business will grow. We have found the enemy, and it is ourselves.

TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



The Thoroughbred Racing Industry's ranking system

Available at thoroughbredracing.com

Thoroughbred racing has its rankings of the world's leading horses and the world's best races, but the sport is devoid of meaningful classifications of the humans involved, the jockeys, the trainers, the owners.

After two years in development, Thoroughbred Racing Commentary (TRC) filled that void with the creation of TRC Global Rankings. Updated weekly, this is the only system in the world that assesses the accomplishments of every jockey, trainer, owner and sire.

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TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



29 July 2018

Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1125
2	Mike E Smith	USA	1065
3	Mirco Demuro	Japan	1060
4	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1055
5	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1053
6	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1038
7	William Buick	Great Britain	1035
8	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1034
9	Javier Castellano	USA	1031
10	Christophe Soumillon	France	1019
11	Kerrin McEvoy	Australia	1017
12	Joao Moreira	Australia	1016
13	Zac Purton	Hong Kong	1014
14	Florent Geroux	USA	1013
14	Yutaka Take	Japan	1013

Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	A P O'Brien	Ireland	1085
2	Bob Baffert	USA	1067
3	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1055
4	Chad C Brown	USA	1052
5	John Gosden	Great Britain	1045
6	Darren Weir	Australia	1040
7	Chris Waller	Australia	1020
8	Saeed bin Suroor	Great Britain	1019
9	A Fabre	France	1015
9	Sir Michael Stoute	Great Britain	1015
11	A S Cruz	Hong Kong	1011
12	J Size	Hong Kong	1010
13	John Moore	Hong Kong	1005
13	Mark Casse	USA	1005
13	Yasutoshi Ikee	Japan	1005

Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1090
2	Godolphin	Australia	1063
3	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1039
4	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1036
5	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	Great Britain	1028
6	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1024
7	China Horse Club Et Al	Australia	1019
8	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1016
9	H H Aga Khan	France	1014
10	Al Shaqab Racing	France	1009
11	Head of Plains Et Al	USA	1008
12	Hajime Satomi	Japan	1006
13	U Carrot Farm	Japan	1002
14	Te Akau Syndicates	New Zealand	1001
15	Stonestreet Stables	USA	1000

Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Galileo	Great Britain	1074
2	Dubawi	Great Britain	1062
3	Scat Daddy	USA	1056
4	Deep Impact	Japan	1048
5	Frankel	Great Britain	1044
6	Snitzel	Australia	1028
7	Curlin	USA	1025
7	I Am Invincible	Australia	1025
9	Sea The Stars	Great Britain	1022
10	Dark Angel	Great Britain	1020
10	Kitten's Joy	USA	1020
12	Ghostzapper	USA	1018
13	Street Cry	Australia	1017
14	Fastnet Rock	Australia	1016
15	Iffraaj	Great Britain	1015