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TRC

Tales of the unexpected



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Tales of the unexpected: two strange happenings at Epsom on Derby Day

Chris Smith | June 04, 2018



Cover photo: Mark Cranham/focusonracing.com

Back home at Moulton Paddocks in Newmarket the day after Derby Day: Masar with trainer Charlie Appleby (left), jockey William Buick and groom Said Bahader. Photo: Megan Ridgwell/focusonracing.com

It's the Investec Derby at Epsom. One of the contenders is a horse with a beautiful middle-distance pedigree who had the speed to finish third in the 2000 Guineas. He hasn't run since, his trainer - who is ranked fifth in the world - has been openly bullish about his chances, and he has better form going into the race than any other runner except the favourite. For good measure, he is ridden by the world's 12th-ranked jockey and owned by the biggest racing operation there has ever been.

So explain this: how come only four of the 11 others in the line-up started at bigger odds?

What kind of blind spot did Masar fall into for virtually everyone watching to dismiss his chances in the great classic on Saturday? The Godolphin colt started 16/1 joint sixth favourite yet ran out a commanding length-and-a-half winner.

If you'd woken from a 15-year sleep on Saturday morning, seen the field and done a quick study of past performances, then been asked to work out a betting market for the race,

you would surely have had Masar in as second favourite, probably at around 5/1, possibly even a shade less.

What's happened in the meantime, it seems, is that we've stopped taking Godolphin runners seriously in the prestige events outside Dubai. In those 15 years, Aidan O'Brien has led the Coolmore team on a wondrous pillage of the sport's greatest prizes. For Godolphin, it's been 15 years of under-achievement. Bloody noses at the highest altitude.

That was still no reason to dismiss Masar so readily, and maybe his fine victory confirms what we've been saying at TRC for a while now, that Godolphin, and in particular the growing talent that is Charlie Appleby, are almost back in the game. Certainly, Sheikh Mohammed's breeding operation has been flexing its muscles like never before of late, not only through the achievements of the world's second-ranked stallion, Dubawi, but also via two stellar sons of Galileo, Masar's sire New Approach, and Teofilo. Indeed, the Derby was a 1-2 for Godolphin - runner-up Dee Ex Bee is a son of their stallion Farhh.

What happens to Masar in the rest of 2018 will be important. Does this Epsom triumph signal he is to be Europe's standout 3-year-old? Does it mean he is a rival worthy of the likes of Cracksman and Enable? Does it present us with a horse who could stand eventually alongside Dubai Millennium, Sakhee, Daylami and Swain in the pantheon of Godolphin greats?

Or will the 2018 Epsom Derby be most notable ultimately for what happened to another horse entirely? Will it be remembered - much as the 1986 edition is remembered for Dancing Brave's defeat rather than Shahrastani's victory - because of the Curious Case of Saxon Warrior?

The Curious Case of Saxon Warrior

For around seven hours on Saturday, May 5, it seemed as though there was nothing Aidan O'Brien couldn't do. Saxon Warrior, who was supposed to be a stayer, and who wasn't supposed to be fully fit, had just sprinted past an elite field of 3-year-old milers to take the world's top trainer's score in the 2000 Guineas to nine (that's 43 percent of all

the winners since he had his first runner in the race in 1997). And O'Brien wasn't even at Newmarket to see it. He was at Churchill Downs instead, the excitement building with the spectacular UAE Derby winner Mendelssohn out to win him his first Kentucky Derby.

He wouldn't be able to stay in Louisville long, though. The next day he had to be at Newmarket, where he was saddling Happily, favourite to win the 1000 Guineas. Things couldn't have been more promising for 2018.

It would be ridiculous exaggeration to say it has been all downhill since that Saturday afternoon, but subsequent events have certainly illustrated something the world had almost forgotten: Aidan O'Brien is fallible.

Mendelssohn's Kentucky effort, of course, was a train wreck. Squashed on both sides on leaving the gate, he was always struggling behind horses in the slop and was eventually eased home in last place behind Justify. Happily ran a decent but uninspired third the following day, and did pretty much the same in the Irish 1000 Guineas three weeks later.

But the eclipse of Saxon Warrior at Epsom on Saturday must have been the biggest hurt. We were almost giving him the Triple Crown, and heralding the arrival of his sire, Deep Impact, as a major force on European turf because of it. O'Brien has handled numerous outstanding racehorses, but perhaps none we could call an all-time great. Now, with this horse, he was in touching distance of bringing one home.

Then Saxon stumbled out of the gate, travelled uneasily, got boxed in three times in the straight, lost his tongue over his bit, and didn't appear to know what to do once he got clear.

It didn't make sense. The horse was faster than the others in the Guineas, and he was said to have progressed hugely since Newmarket. It would be tempting to say he didn't stay the mile and a half, but he wasn't losing a lot of ground at the end, and actually ran past Hazapour close home to take fourth.

O'Brien went into the race with the prospect of experiencing possibly his best Derby ever, but it turned out to be just about his worst. One of Coolmore's chief drivers is to breed horses to win the Epsom Derby, and in the last ten years

O'Brien has had 13 of them finish in the first three (that, again, is 43 percent of the total), including four winners. He had five runners on Saturday, finishing 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th and 12th. It was his worst result since 2008, when none of his five that day made the first four. (The winner then: Masar's sire, New Approach.)

With four more of his middle-distance 3-year-olds finishing down the field in yesterday's Prix du Jockey Club at Chantilly, suddenly the suspicion is that, after his record-breaking 2017, O'Brien has a much weaker squad for 2018.

Unless, of course, Saxon Warrior makes the grade after all.

"I wouldn't be making excuses for Saxon Warrior," O'Brien said after the Derby. "We'll take him home and see how he is. Everything out there today at Epsom might just have been new to them, and it would have been a big shock to him coming to this track, but I don't know. I've seen it happen to horses where they leave a run here behind them very quick."

The Irish Derby may give the horse another opportunity to prove himself over a mile and a half, and indeed O'Brien has won that race six times with horses beaten at Epsom. The Curragh may also be the next stop for Masar.

In the meantime, however, O'Brien still has his fillies. Forever Together, a 7/1 shot ridden by son Donnacha, was an impressive winner of Friday's Investec Oaks, one of four Ballydoyle runners in the first five.

Then there's the excellent 4-year-old Rhododendron, already a G1 winner this term, and last year's 2-year-old champion Clemmie, who made a belated return down the field in the Irish 1000 Guineas but should be more competitive next time. And don't forget Deep Impact's daughter September, who has had a setback and has yet to reappear. She was unlucky in two G1s at the end of last season and won the listed Chesham Stakes at Royal Ascot last June (with Masar back in third).

She's another helping raise the profile of her Japanese sire in Europe. Deep Impact's biggest win outside his homeland came at Chantilly yesterday, when his son Study Of Man prevailed in a blanket finish to the Prix du Jockey Club. It looks like there's hope for him after all.

Think Justify is inexperienced – then look at what this horse achieved in his first four runs

Amanda Duckworth | May 16, 2018



Lammtarra at Dalham Hall Stud in Newmarket in 2011, three years before his death. Photo: Darley Europe

No matter what happens during the rest of the Triple Crown, Justify has guaranteed his place in the history books by breaking the so-called Curse of Apollo. Until he splashed to victory in the Kentucky Derby, no horse had won the race after failing to run as a 2-year-old since Apollo in 1882.

Next up is the Preakness Stakes on Saturday, when Justify will be making only his fifth career start. As he looks to add to his accomplishments,

Justify's exploits bring to mind another improbable campaign, except this one took place in Europe in 1995 and involved a Derby hero who raced even less.

Lammtarra, who ran once as a juvenile and three times as a 3-year-old, left a huge mark on racing during a brief but unquestionably successful career that also featured records, life-threatening illness, and murder along the way.

Unlikely Derby hero

Unlike Justify, Lammtarra was seen on the racetrack as a 2-year-old, but only once. Bred in the United States by Sheikh Maktoum's Gainsborough Farm, the chestnut was sent to Europe to compete. He made his debut a winning one in August 1994 by taking the Washington Singer Stakes at Newbury,

*“This is a dream come true, but my thoughts are now of Alex...
he made this horse early in his career and was quite
convinced he would win the Derby.”*

racing in the name of Sheikh Maktoum's teenage son, Saeed Maktoum Al Maktoum.

After his victory at Newbury, Lammtarra's trainer, Alex Scott, put £1,000 on him to win the Epsom Derby at odds of 33/1. The young trainer, who was best known for conditioning the likes of champion sprinter Cadeaux Genereux and Breeders' Cup Sprint victor Sheikh Albadou, was confident in his charge, but he didn't live to see if he was right. That September, Scott was shot and killed in his Newmarket stables by a groom. He was 34-years-old.

Lammtarra was sent to Godolphin, the racing operation of Saeed Maktoum's uncle, Sheikh Mohammed, to continue his career. He went to Dubai for the winter, where his own luck also took a bad turn, as he developed a life-threatening abscess on his lung. Upon recovery, he returned to Europe in the spring of 1995 and progressed enough that he was entered in the Derby by trainer Saeed bin Suroor.

With 302 days between races, Lammtarra came from the clouds to take the original Derby by a length, and in doing so, he became the first colt to win the famed contest without a prep race since Grand Parade in 1919.

He also did it in record time, stopping the clock in 2:32.31, breaking the mark set by Mahmoud at Epsom in 1936. That record would stand for 15 years, until being lowered by Workforce in 2010.

The victory was a bittersweet moment for Lammtarra's connections.

“This is a dream come true, but my thoughts are now of Alex,” Sheikh Mohammed said immediately after the race. “He made this horse early in his career and was quite convinced he would win the Derby.”

Although bookmakers typically cancel a bet if the person who placed it dies, Ladbrokes paid the winnings of Scott's wager to his widow.

Adding to Lammtarra's triumph was a breeding accomplishment that had never before been achieved. Lammtarra's sire, Nijinsky, had won the Derby, and his dam, Snow Bride, was awarded the Oaks, making him the first Derby winner produced from winners of the two classics. Australia, a son of Galileo out of Ouija Board, would match the feat in 2014.

Adding to the legend

Lammtarra, which means invisible in Arabic, was anything but that, making his next appearance against open company in the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Diamond Stakes at Ascot. Although it was no easy task, and he was in fact passed two furlongs from the wire, Lammtarra remained undefeated in his third start when he battled back to beat Pentire by a neck.

Pentire, also a 3-year-old, had impressed when taking the King Edward VII Stakes at Royal Ascot. He would go on to defeat Singspiel in the Great Voltigeur Stakes in his next start before ending his season with a victory in the Irish Champion Stakes at Leopardstown. The following year, Pentire finished fourth behind Cigar in the inaugural running of the Dubai World Cup before winning the King George in his second attempt.

Meanwhile, Lammtarra would make his fourth and final career start in the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe. Like his three previous races, Lammtarra refused to lose, beating Freedom Cry by three-quarters of a length, while Swain checked in third.

Freedom Cry had finished second by a short head to Pentire in the Champion Stakes in his previous race, and after the Arc, he shipped to the United States, where he finished second by a neck to Northern Spur in the Breeders' Cup Turf.

Swain would race on through 1998, winning such contests as the Coronation

Cup, Champion Stakes, and King George (twice), while finishing second in the Dubai World Cup and third in the Breeders' Cup Classic.

With his victory at Longchamp, though, Lammtarra became just the second horse — after Mill Reef in 1971 — to win the Derby, King George, and Arc. It was also his swansong.

Quiet ending

Named Europe's 3-year-old champion, Lammtarra was retired to Dalham Hall Stud. He bred a full book of mares in 1996 — which included most notably Urban Sea — before being sold for \$30 million to Japan, where he had a fairly quiet stallion career at Arrow Stud.

A decade later, when word came Lammtarra was going to be sold to Korea, Sheikh Mohammed bought the champion back and returned him to Dalham Hall to live out his retirement as a pensioner. He received visitors there until he died at the age 22 in 2014.

“Lammtarra was a horse that was very close to Sheikh Mohammed's heart,” said Liam O'Rourke, Darley's stud director, upon the horse's death after a short illness. “He was very intelligent, a true gentleman and never gave anyone a moment's trouble. He will be missed by everyone here at Dalham.”

Last year, Lammtarra was again in the news, and perhaps true to his racing career, it was for both tragic and jubilant reasons, this time relating to the two men who rode him to victory.

That February, coroners ruled that Walter Swinburn's death in December 2016 was the result of an accident, not suicide, after he fell from a window. Although best known for his partnership with Shergar, Swinburn also rode Lammtarra in the Derby.

Then, in October, Frankie Dettori won a record fifth Arc aboard Enable. His first?

Lammtarra.

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NYRA learns harsh lessons from a brutal winter – but will that be enough?

Bob Ehalt | June 03, 2018



"Trying to run a race meet in the middle of the winter is not an easy thing to do," says NYRA's Martin Panza. Photo: NYRA.com

There's always a cause for celebration among New York Racing Association (NYRA) officials when the Kentucky Derby winner prevails in the Preakness. And this year, when neither rain nor slop, nor Baltimore fog, could stop Derby victor Justify in the Preakness, bottles of champagne were no doubt popping at Belmont Park.

Getting a Triple Crown bid in the Belmont Stakes and all of the prosperity linked to it was probably the best news of the year for NYRA after a winter that was as brutally cold as any the Big Apple has endured in years.

"Trying to run a race meet in the middle of the winter is not an easy thing to do," said Martin Panza, NYRA's Senior Vice President of Racing Operations. "We're the northern-most track open at that

“People can ask why we run in the winter and the biggest answer is jobs. Year-round horse racing and breeding accounts for about 19,000 jobs in New York State. If IBM wanted to move with 200 jobs, there would be a bill passed tomorrow to try and keep them in New York.”

time and you can't mess with Mother Nature. When you get three days in a row when it's minus 15 degrees at night, what can you do?"

Arctic cold

Prolonged blasts of Arctic cold in January were just one of the reasons NYRA was waving a white flag by the time spring arrived.

The bitter cold and the havoc it wreaked on Aqueduct's limestone main track led to a stretch of nine straight cards through Jan. 12 when all or part of the program was cancelled.

Among other woes, there was also a quarantine of two barns and a power failure in the Belmont Park barn area that left backstretch workers without electricity during the frigid days of early January.

"Obviously winters in the North East have particular challenges," said Joe Appelbaum, who became President of the New York Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association in December.

Those challenges were painfully reflected in the final figures for the Aqueduct meet. From Jan. 1 through April 22, there were 54 race dates at Aqueduct, compared to 60 in 2017, while the average daily all-sources handle dipped to \$5,968,959. In 2017, it was \$6,330,989.

The all-sources handle on NYRA races checked in at \$322,323,808 after totaling \$379,859,33 in 2017 - a difference of more than \$50 million.

"It was a bizarre winter. It was so brutal it's unfair to use last winter in any kind of comparisons with other years," said trainer Rick Violette,

the past president of the NYTHA, who stepped down last December.

Realistically, there's little any racetrack can do in the face of adverse weather. Yet the winter also exposed deeper problems for NYRA than the whims of Mother Nature. Despite offering purses better than any winter track other than Oaklawn Park, Aqueduct was plagued by woefully small fields that, coupled with the spate of lost dates, helped fuel the financial nightmare for NYRA.

"You can lead horses to water, but you can't make them drink. Owners are saying they are losing money, but they have to pay attention," Panza said. "They are running in a 12-horse field at other tracks for half the money. We try to advertise what we're doing and talk to people about it, and we'll keep doing that, but the horsemen at some point have to help themselves."

'You wonder about the future'

In February, while Aqueduct offered a \$60,000 purse for a maiden special weight race, the same race carried a \$50,000 purse at Gulfstream Park. Yet filling races was a herculean struggle throughout the winter. During Feb. 8-11, for example, in 33 races there were only 197 starters, working out to an average of just 5.96 starters per race.

"The purses [at Aqueduct] are large. At some point horsemen have to support the winter meet or there will not be one. It's as simple as that," Panza said. "We can try all types of things but, if horsemen are not responding to it or entering their horses, you wonder about the future."

"I'm not saying NYRA is not

dedicated to having a winter meet, but you can't do it without their help. If everyone wants to leave for the winter, so be it. It doesn't do us any good if they just leave their New York State-breds behind. That's not going to work. At the same time, you can't force people to stay here. It comes down to time changing everything and the clock is running. If we can't get more trainers to stay here and run their horses, something has to give."

A late surge in the spring brought the average number of starters per race for the 2018 portion of the Aqueduct meet to 6.94, not far removed from the 2017 figure of 7.13.

'Biggest albatross'

While those numbers finished better than expected, they could not hide the bigger issues - the lack of support from horsemen for the meet and owners and trainers' unhappiness with the exceedingly high cost of doing business in New York, due in part to the cost of insurance for jockeys and exercise riders and workers' compensation for grooms and hot walkers.

"The biggest albatross is the cost of doing business here, led by the cost of workers' compensation," Violette said. "It's a tough place to do business and that has to change because we need winter racing."

"People can ask why we run in the winter and the biggest answer is jobs. Year-round horse racing and breeding accounts for about 19,000 jobs in New York State. If IBM wanted to move with 200 jobs, there would be a bill passed tomorrow to try and keep them in New York. The VLT

(Video Lottery Terminals) program is a jobs program. It helps to support jobs and keep the breeding industry afloat. If you mess with it and we lose the VLT money and the New York State breeding program will dissolve. Overall, I know what people say, but the winter product here is better than most."

Trainer Gary Contessa, who races in New York year-round, says workers' compensation costs account for 29 percent of his weekly payroll, leaving him awash in red ink.

"The workers' compensation situation is awful and something has to be done about it. I'm going broke because of workers' comp. Trainers can't survive because of it," Contessa said. "What used to cost 16 percent of our income now costs 29 percent."

"What NYRA has done to keep racing going in the winter has been an admirable thing, but what they need to work on is why we don't get the shippers like we used to. What

do we have to do to get people here. Usually purses attract horsemen. We have damn good purses, but we're not getting the horses. My thought is that people from Parx or Laurel who want to come here can't afford it. We're pricing them out of the game. We have to address workers' comp and how to get other people here."

At NYRA tracks, New York-based owners and trainers pay into the New York Jockey Injury Compensation Fund at rate of a base annual payment of \$2,150. Owners are also charged two percent of purses earned and trainers pay \$1.60 per day for each stall in their backstretch barns.

Helping hand

Workers' compensation, however, is each trainer's responsibility and their costs can vary due to the number of employees and their claims against that policy.

"Trainers are paying various rates based on their loss experiences and they have no negotiating leverage, so

insurance companies are charging them a high rate. That's what we're working on, to find some collective solutions," Appelbaum said. "Workers' comp is insurance, so it's tied to your losses. Keep losses down and it will keep rates down."

A helping hand in dealing with workers' comp costs was provided in the recently enacted New York State budget. According to Appelbaum, money from the general purse account can now be used as collateral for workers' comp, which should help reduce costs.

"We can take \$5 million from the purse account as collateral and it's a very good, necessary first step," he said. "There are no quick fixes or easy answers. It's a lot of hard work and negotiations and meetings and that's what we are doing. We've already brought down the cost of jockeys' insurance by nine percent. There's steps we need to take and we're focusing on steps in the right direction."

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“The other states... pay the workers’ comp 100 percent out of the purse account. The problem with that is that it’s why the purses in so many states are poor.”

Shipping bonuses

NYRA did its part to combat those costs in November, when it instituted a new per-start credit program for Dec. 6 through March 31 that gave owners an extra \$300 for horses who were sixth or worse and \$300 for trainers when their horses were fourth or worse. Yet the timing of the program came after some horsemen had made plans to leave New York for the winter and race at circuits with lower costs and lower purses.

“The other states do not have lower workers’ comp costs. They all have high workers’ comp costs,” Appelbaum said. “Those states pay the workers’ comp 100 percent out of the purse account. The problem with that is that it’s why the purses in so many states are poor.”

In the face of day after day of small fields, Panza and the NYRA racing office enacted several measures to address the problem on an immediate and long-term basis.

Shipping bonuses were offered for horses arriving from Oaklawn Park, Gulfstream Park and Tampa Bay Downs. Horses who made their most recent start at Oaklawn became eligible for a \$1,500 bonus plus a 30 percent boost of any purse money earned in that horse’s first start at either the Aqueduct spring meet or the Belmont Park spring/summer meet. Horses who last raced at Gulfstream Park or Tampa Bay were credited with \$1,500 toward shipping expenses if they ran at Aqueduct from April 6-22.

To help trainers of claimers with small stables, an ‘Under 20s Claiming Challenge’ was initiated with a prize pool of \$80,000 for the top eight trainers based on results in claiming races at the Belmont Park spring/summer meet. The contest is open to all NYRA trainers with 20 or less horses under their care nationwide.

Loyalty initiative

The contest will run through July 15, with the top three finishers getting \$18,000, \$15,000 and \$13,000. As of May 20, the leaders, in order, were Ed Barker, Randi Persaud and Oscar Barrera III, who have a combined 22 wins in 2018.

In March, NYRA unveiled a Starter Loyalty Program, which pays purse bonuses based on four tiers of participation in the circuit’s races. It has been well-received. The initiative began April 2 and runs through April 1, 2019, and starts with a five percent purse enhancement for horses making their fifth start at a NYRA track during the program’s time frame. After that, it’s 7.5 percent for starts 7-9, 12.5 percent for starts 10-11, and a 15 percent boost for 12 starts and beyond.

“We’ve had a great response to the Loyalty Program,” Appelbaum said. “The more and more I look at it, the more I like it. I told people if the Loyalty Program was in place a year earlier, they would have received another \$5,000 or \$6,000 for a win in March and that’s real money. I think, come October and November, you are going to see an enhanced claiming game in New York as people try to go in on horses who already have a lot of races in. That should buttress the claiming game.”

While the Belmont Stakes and Saratoga are far more pleasant thoughts for NYRA officials at the moment, in six months’ time another winter will be at hand and the lessons learned during this past winter as well as NYRA’s recent initiatives will be put to the test, along with any new ideas put forward in the coming months.

How successful they prove to be will shape the next winter of racing at Aqueduct and there are at least some promising signs. It’s difficult to imagine another winter with weather as ruinous

for a race meet as the last winter in New York, and perhaps the new programs will encourage owners and trainers to keep more horses at Aqueduct and entice new faces to the Big Apple.

‘I’m a big fan of winer racing’

A meet without quarantines will surely help the field size dilemma and another boost will come when an unexpected situation is rectified next winter. Trainer David Jacobson headed west to Santa Anita in the winter with a large string of horses and had just 39 starters at the winter meet. A year ago, he had 85.

But Jacobson’s decision had nothing to do with icy temperatures or high insurance costs. It was a highly personal reason stemming from two new additions to the Jacobson family. In November, Jacobson’s son, Howard, who trains a small division David keeps in California, and his wife became the parents of twin boys and the New York-based trainer shifted the bulk of stable to the West Coast so he could be close to his infant grandchildren for the winter.

“I’ll be back with my full stable in New York for next year,” Jacobson said. “I am a big fan of winter racing.”

In a nutshell, getting more horsemen to develop that same affinity for winter racing as Jacobson is Job One for the next Aqueduct meet.

“I think it’s a good deal to race in New York in the winter, and I think guys are missing out by not staying for the winter. We need to do a better job of changing people’s view of it,” Appelbaum said. “They are missing out on a great opportunity to get some nice amounts of money in the winter. When you are running in \$60,000 or \$70,000 pots with six-horse fields, what horseman can ask for a better situation that? Clearly we need to change people’s perceptions about what happens here in the winter.”

The Epsom classics: which stallion outshines the rest when they go head to head?

James Willoughby | May 31, 2018



Deep Impact: the Japanese champion comes out on top in our head-to-head test of the world's great turf stallions. Photo: Michele MacDonald

TRC Global Rankings are different from many others in the world of sport because they are designed to be predictive. Every week, the system looks at all head-to-head match-ups between Jockeys, Owners, Trainer and Sires and tests its own predictions, learning from the results.

In some ranking systems, the way players and teams from round the world are arranged is highly arbitrary. The compilers select coefficients to weight the results in various countries or tours, so that the result tallies with intuition. TRC Global Rankings are having none of this.

So, in the week of The Derby and The Oaks at Epsom, let's test the theoretical predictions of the rankings of leading sires on turf against actual results achieved around the world. We have chosen ten stallions who have runners in Saturday's Derby or Friday's Oaks and compared the record of their progeny

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in actual head-to-head competition in Group races around the world since 2011.

Here are the competitors:

Galileo, 20yo, stands Coolmore Stud, Ireland; sire of four Oaks runners and three Derby runners.

Deep Impact, 16, stands Shadai Stallion Station, Japan; sire of Derby favourite Saxon Warrior.

Sea The Stars, 12, stands Giltown Stud, Ireland; sire of Derby runner Knight To Behold

Kitten's Joy, 17, stands Hill 'n Dale Farms, USA; sire of Derby second favourite Roaring Lion.

Shamardal, 16, stands Kildangan Stud, Ireland; sire of Derby runner Hazapour.

New Approach, 13, stands Dalham Hall Stud, Britain; sire of Derby runner Masar.

Redoute's Choice, 21, stands Haras de Bonneval, France*; sire of Derby runner Sevens Star.

Frankel, 10, stands Banstead Manor Stud, Britain; sire of one Oaks runner and one Derby runner.

Fastnet Rock, 16, stands Coolmore Stud, Ireland; sire of Oaks runner I Can Fly.

Dubawi, 16, stands Dalham Hall Stud, Britain; sire of Oaks favourite Wild Illusion.

(* Location of sires as per racingpost.com on May 30, notwithstanding other shuttle locations.)

The competitors were evaluated by all head-to-head meetings between their offspring in Group races, with one win awarded to the sire whose runner finished first. Where sires had multiple runners, no debit is made for

the number of runners because the mere presence of a runner in a Group or Graded races is a positive sign for a stallion.

TRC Global rankings points are awarded based on performance in ALL Group and Graded races, weighted by the quality of the opposition in those races and their rarity value. In this exercise, we will examine the specific interaction between only the best sires on turf.

You could think of the difference like this: TRC Global Rankings is like the Premier League table after each team has played all other teams; that is, with an equal strength of schedule. In this exercise, we are looking at games between the top few teams only, removing performance against the rest of the league. Here are the results in a matrix:

	Galileo	Deep Impact	Sea of Stars	Kitten's Joy	Shamardal	New Approach	Redoute's Choice	Frankel	Fastnet Rock	Dubawi	WINS
Galileo		20	52	39	75	73	25	28	100	129	541
Deep Impact	29		3	12	17	13	26	13	15	14	142
Sea of Stars	47	8		9	17	9	2	7	19	27	145
Kitten's Joy	30	6	7		8	11	3	3	4	22	94
Shamardal	63	11	18	7		17	30	5	60	65	276
New Approach	30	2	5	8	14		11	3	26	23	122
Redoute's Choice	37	6	3	0	35	17		4	115	46	263
Frankel	16	7	2	5	4	2	4		4	11	55
Fastnet Rock	53	11	13	7	56	27	124	7		63	361
Dubawi	109	11	40	23	78	41	48	16	73		439
LOSSES	414	82	143	110	304	210	273	86	416	400	



Galileo: he's the world's top-rated sire, but is he still ahead of the others in this special test for Derby weekend? Photo: Coolmore Stud

This is how to read the results matrix. In each row, are the number of head-to-head results won by the stallion. So, for instance, looking along Shamaardal's row to the rightmost column, one finds his stock won 65 head-to-head match-ups with the stock of Dubawi in races all round the world. To find the reciprocal results – how many times Dubawi's stock beat Shamardal's – look along the final row to the column headed by Shamardal. The answer is 78. So, in head-to-heads between the stock of the two stallions, Dubawi won 65 and Shamardal 78.

In the margins of the column, the aggregate of each stallion's WINS and LOSSES can be found. Alongside is a tabulated form of these results, ranked by PCT – the winning percentage in all these head-to-head encounters:

	TRC Rank	WINS	WINS	PCT
Deep Impact	3	142	82	63.4
Galileo	1	541	414	56.6
Dubawi	2	439	400	52.3
Sea of Stars	16	145	143	50.3
Redoute's Choice	45	263	273	49.1
Shamardal	62	276	304	47.6
Fastnet Rock	11	361	416	46.5
Kitten's Joy	14	94	110	46.1
Frankel	5	55	86	39.0
New Approach	100	122	210	36.7

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The main findings can be summarised as follows:

The world's top 3 stallions according to TRC Global Rankings duly finished 1-2-3. But Deep Impact (63.4%) – a former world #1 – comes out a lot better than Galileo (56.6%) and Dubawi (52.3%). From the matrix, one can see that the great Japanese stallion has gone 29-20 v Galileo in the 49 races where they have both had a runner and 14-11 v Dubawi in the 25 races in which both their stock has been represented.

Should the algorithm therefore have Deep Impact above Dubawi and Galileo, rather than behind them? What we are doing here is removing the vast majority of Deep Impact's results at home in Japan and on dirt. His dam, Wind In Her Hair, was a turf horse with turf breeding who finished second in the 1994 Oaks at Epsom. Could Deep Impact turn out to be a stallion whose stock are well suited to racing in Europe on turf?

While this exercise provides nothing like the evidence to say

this definitively, it is an interesting prospect, especially considering that he is the sire of Coolmore's Derby favourite Saxon Warrior – a colt out of a mare by Galileo, no less. All being well, we are poised to see a lot more examples of this cross in future.

But we still should not rank Deep Impact ahead of Galileo and Dubawi bearing in mind the other data we consider for the rankings. It's just not safe to do so. We are still betting on Galileo in future match-ups with Deep Impact when the latter becomes more widely represented. The encouraging thing is that the top 3 stallions collectively dominate this exercise, just as they do the main rankings.

Frankel does less well than expected, winning just 55 of his 141 match-ups. This is also extremely misleading, but for a different reason. Of those 141 head-to-heads, the matrix shows that 96 have come against Galileo (44), Dubawi (27) and Deep Impact (25)!

Redoute's Choice fared better than his overall TRC ranking. Again, however, this is a function of strength of schedule. Of the 536 match-ups in which he was involved, 269 were against Fastnet Rock (in which Redoute's Choice went 115-124) who won only 46.5% of his match-ups in general. Against the top 3 stallions, Redoute's Choice went 37-25 v Galileo, 46-48 v Dubawi and 6-26 v Deep Impact. In aggregate, the Arrowfield legend has gone 89-99 against the Top 3.

Our main TRC Global Rankings algorithm attempts to equalise strength of schedule across all a stallion's head-to-heads using machine learning. When we allow for this in the results of the head-to-heads in this exercise, the results are highly similar. And this is what we would hope to see.

The TRC algorithm makes millions of computations just like the ones involved in this exercise every week, sorting the world's top Jockeys, Owners, Trainers and Sires into an order that really does reflect their results in head-to-head match-ups when they occur.

Our main TRC Global Rankings algorithm attempts to equalise strength of schedule across all a stallion's head-to-heads using machine learning.

What They're Thinking: John Messara takes a turn in our quickfire Q&A series

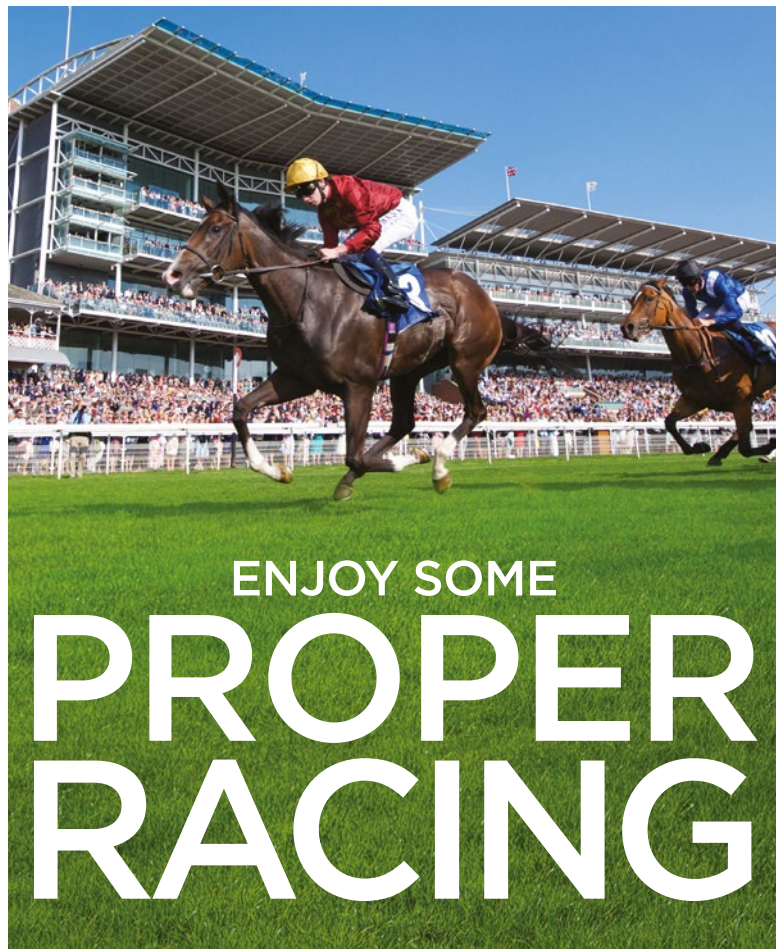
John Messara | May 29, 2018



John Messara: for all his achievements in the industry since, his fondest racing memory dates back to his first G1 win as an owner 35 years ago. Photo: Bronwen Healy

John Messara is possibly the most influential figure in Thoroughbred racing in the Southern Hemisphere. The chairman and owner of Arrowfield Stud in New South Wales, he has an international reputation as a maker of stallions, among them Danehill, his son Redoute's Choice, and his son Snitzel, currently the sixth highest-ranked sire in the world.

A past chairman of Aushorse Marketing (2001-08) and Thoroughbred Breeders Australia (2007-08) and member of the Australian Pattern Committee (2006-16), he led Australian racing through a dynamic period of reform as chairman of Racing New South Wales (2011-16) and Racing Australia (2013-16), and contributed at an international level as vice-chairman of the Asian Racing Federation (2014-16).



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

I think Sheikh Mohammed is possibly the most important figure in all my time in racing. I do not say this only because of the breadth of his financial commitment to the sport, but because of what he puts into our industry to benefit others, such as Darley Flying Start, the Godolphin Stud and Stable Awards and numerous other initiatives in research, Thoroughbred aftercare etc. In the many countries where Darley and Godolphin operate and beyond, Sheikh Mohammed puts in more than he takes out.

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

There are some great racetracks around the globe, and in my country, Australia, Randwick and

Flemington are two iconic tracks where much racing history has been created, staging great events such as the Melbourne Cup, The Championships and The Everest. Those big days mean a lot to me, although no one can fail to be touched by the Kentucky Derby or the Royal Ascot meeting.

What is your fondest memory in racing?

It dates back to 1983, when Starzaan, a filly I purchased as a foal out of a paddock in New Zealand, went on to win the Australian Oaks at Randwick, my first Group 1 winner, as something of an outsider in what was arguably one of the strongest renewals in the race's history. I had a fervent belief she would win it and ensured that my parents, family and staff were all in attendance at the time. It was unforgettable!

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

I think it's clear to all that racing needs to find ways to appeal to the younger generations in this era when there are so many other leisure and gambling options. We also need to be acutely aware of animal welfare issues if we are to maintain our social licence. Having said that, I know that bona fide racing people love their horses and treat them well.

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

I would be unrelenting in driving out the cheats and maintaining a level playing field for all participants.

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.

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TRC GLOBAL RANKINGS



3 June 2018

Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1119
2	Mirco Demuro	Japan	1063
3	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1060
4	Mike E Smith	USA	1054
5	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1053
6	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1045
7	Javier Castellano	USA	1034
8	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1027
9	Kerrin McEvoy	Australia	1024
10	Christophe Soumillon	France	1022
10	Joao Moreira	Australia	1022
10	William Buick	Great Britain	1022
13	Yutaka Take	Japan	1012
13	Zac Purton	Australia	1012
15	Florent Geroux	USA	1011

Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1090
2	Godolphin	Australia	1065
3	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1042
4	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1031
5	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	USA	1023
5	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1023
7	China Horse Club Et Al	Australia	1019
7	H H Aga Khan	France	1019
9	Al Shaqab Racing	France	1017
10	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1015
11	Hajime Satomi	Japan	1009
12	U Carrot Farm	Japan	1005
13	Mayfair Speculators Et Al	South Africa	1003
13	Te Akau Syndicates	New Zealand	1003
15	Stonestreet Stables	USA	1000

Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	A P O'Brien	Ireland	1083
2	Bob Baffert	USA	1057
3	Chad C Brown	USA	1049
3	Darren Weir	Australia	1049
5	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1046
6	John Gosden	Great Britain	1042
7	Chris Waller	Australia	1023
8	J Size	Hong Kong	1016
9	Saeed bin Suroor	Great Britain	1014
10	John Moore	Hong Kong	1012
11	Yasutoshi Ikee	Japan	1011
12	A Fabre	France	1010
12	A S Cruz	Hong Kong	1010
14	Mark Casse	USA	1009
15	Todd Pletcher	USA	1007

Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Galileo	Great Britain	1071
2	Dubawi	Great Britain	1062
3	Deep Impact	Japan	1052
4	Frankel	Great Britain	1045
5	Scat Daddy	USA	1040
6	Snitzel	Australia	1038
7	I Am Invincible	Australia	1026
8	Curlin	USA	1025
8	Street Cry	Australia	1025
10	Not A Single Doubt	Australia	1021
11	Fastnet Rock	Australia	1020
12	Dark Angel	Great Britain	1017
12	Ghostzapper	USA	1017
12	Medaglia D'oro	USA	1017
15	Kitten's Joy	USA	1015