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Adam Kirby: *How a kid who left school at 12 became a Derby winner at 32*

Patrick Lawrence Gilligan | July 16, 2021

Cover: Adam Kirby and Adayar as they cross the line to win the Cazoo Derby at Epsom. Photo: Dan Abraham/focusonracing.com

Adam Kirby with partner Megan. "I was quite emotional afterwards [winning the Derby]," he says



Adam Kirby has had a remarkable journey from giving up on his education when he was barely into secondary school to start riding out for a local trainer to winning the Epsom Derby last month – 20 years later – on the Godolphin colt Adayar. He's had an interesting career along the way too – including riding winners for then Newmarket trainer Patrick Lawrence Gilligan, who now lives and works in Kentucky. Here Gilligan remembers those days, and talks to Kirby about the 'huge moment' at Epsom.

The Epsom Derby, the original Derby, is the daddy of them all. First run in 1780, 95 years before the first Kentucky Derby, it became known as 'the Blue Riband of the Turf'. In its heyday, half a million people would cover Epsom Downs, the country would stop, virtually every man, woman and child in Britain would have a small flutter on the Derby.

Legend has it that the name was decided on a coin toss between the Earl of Derby and Sir Charles Bunbury. Bunbury may have lost the toss, but he won the first running with Diomed, who in later years became a successful sire in the recently formed United States of America.

Adam Kirby recently rode Adayar to victory in the Derby for Godolphin. It was a huge moment for the well-liked 32-year-old rider, whom I remember as a kid but is now partner of Megan and father of 5-year-old Charlie and 3-year-old Evie.

'Great tutor'

I knew Adam's father, Maurice. He had a small farm outside Newmarket and a couple of horses in a shared barn we rented when I first arrived in town with two cheap yearlings and about £50 in my back pocket.

Maurice employed a small Welsh stable hand, known as Taffy, to train and exercise his horses. I remember Taffy one day asked Maurice for a new broom to sweep the yard. A

couple of days later, I came into the barn to find Taffy wandering around the place chortling and showing everyone the small plastic kitchen broom Maurice had purchased for him. Maurice knew the value of a pound, and he had a sense of humor.

Adam Kirby hated school, so at age 12 he quit, and started riding out full-time for a local trainer. As soon as he turned 16, another Newmarket trainer, Michael Wigham, took his licence out for him.

"Michael was a great tutor, and a top man, but it was Gay Kelleway who gave me my first ride and that was my first winner," says Kirby.

Maurice would drive his son to the races in the early days and some of Adam's earliest winners were for me. The first winner he rode for me was a little filly called Avit, in a lowly claimer. Neither of us were the tidiest or most fashion-conscious individuals and, Adam Kirby and I could be seen sporting Covid hairstyles around the racecourses of Britain well over a decade before Covid hair was even a thing.

A day or two after winning on Avit we were riding back home together after training on the heath. Sir Mark Prescott was standing waiting for his horses to come round, so I thought I would give the aspiring young jockey a plug. I said good morning, pointed to Adam and said, "This is the young

apprentice who won on mine the other day, Sir Mark."

Prescott took a look at Kirby, pulled his cigar out of his mouth and said, "Well its got F-all to do with the jockeys has it!"

Young Kirby didn't let that encounter throw him off his stride, and the trickle of winners soon turned into a stream.

"I finished second twice in the apprentice championship," he says. "Luckily, after losing my weight allowance, things kept going and I built up a link with Walter Swinburn and then Clive Cox, who started to give me quality horses in bigger races."

Upward trajectory

Kirby's career continued on a gentle upward trajectory. He had to miss his first-born's birth to ride a G1 winner on Profitable at Royal Ascot in 2016 and won a few more at the top level in the years since, but he had yet to taste glory in one of the Classics.

"I was asked to ride John Leeper in the Derby this year, which was great," he says. "But then Frankie [Dettori] came available, so I lost the ride. Then Charlie [Appleby, Godolphin trainer] called me and said I could ride Adayar.

"I break Charlie's yearlings in at our farm and actually broke in Adayar as a yearling. That was the last time I sat on him before I rode him in the Derby. He was lovely and laid back.

"I was pretty laid back about the

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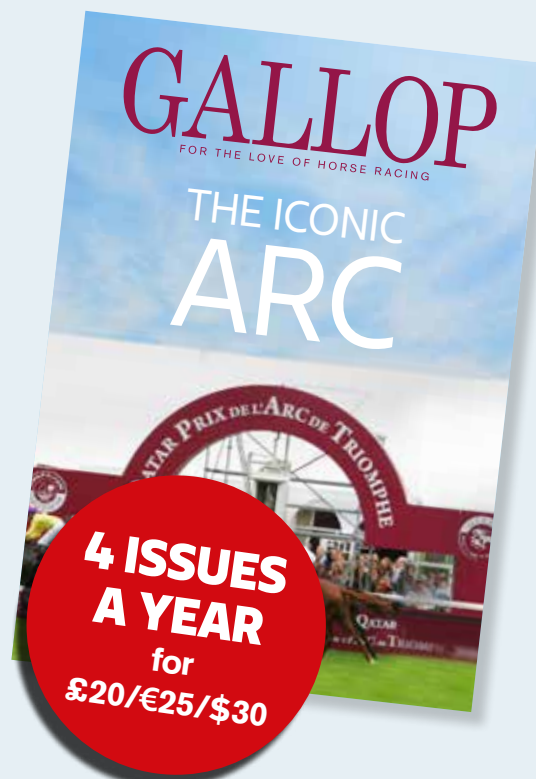
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race. He'd run in the trials and it was just nice to pick up a ride in a race like that. Charlie is a top man and a gentleman and we get on very well, and he is an excellent trainer and a nice person, which counts for a lot. I'd gone out to Dubai a couple of times and rode a couple of winners for Charlie there as well, which was great."

Adayar had to work fairly hard early on in the Derby. "I had to use a bit of petrol the first furlong and a half to get a good position," says Kirby. "But from there on it went very smooth he took me into the straight lovely, and luckily we found

a gap on the inside. I had a lovely position throughout and he always travelled so I had a great ride and he made things very easy for me.

"Charlie had told me he would stay very well and he was right. It was quite emotional afterwards. It's hard to describe. I thought about my mum and dad, my family."

What of the future?


"Champion jockey is never going to happen," he says. "I'm 5 foot 11 inches, so I can't ride the lightweights. Nine stone (126 lbs) is my minimum, so to win the Derby was big. I'm not the type of guy to

get a big head or anything. I just carry on. But, when I got home that evening, there were a lot of people there waiting for me and everyone seemed to have a good time. It was a great day, never to be forgotten.

I said it must have felt nice waking up the next morning. "Not really. I had a headache!"

Sadly, Maurice Kirby died suddenly eight years ago. He missed most of Adam's career, and his grandchildren. "It was very sad. He missed all of it really, my big successes, but he is always with me in my heart."

"I was asked to ride John Leeper in the Derby this year, which was great," he says. "But then Frankie [Dettori] came available, so I lost the ride. Then Charlie [Appleby, Godolphin trainer] called me and said I could ride Adayar."



He helped change race-calling for ever, but even *Trevor Denman* has to practise

Jay Hovdey | July 12, 2021

Trevor Denman in the paddock at Del Mar
alongside a celebration of two of his most
notable catchphrases. Benoit photo



After missing his first Del Mar meet since 1984, Trevor Denman was anxious to get back to his announcer's booth and its view of the Pacific Ocean in time for the opening of the summer racing season on Friday, July 16.

Trevor Denman: "I've had long breaks before – seven, eight months – but never close to two years like this," he says. Benoit photo

The Covid-19 pandemic kept Denman and his wife, Robin, isolated at their farm in southeastern Minnesota for the past year, much to the dismay of his legion of fans. But the races at Del Mar went on without him, with only a trickle of spectators in the stands and veteran caller Larry Collmus ably deputizing at the microphone, describing a product relegated to video screens.

Now, with the coast beginning to clear and Southern California's pandemic restrictions eased, Denman is gearing up for his 37th season as the voice of Del Mar. Restrictions have been lifted on attendance capacity – as they have

been at most tracks across the nation – and nothing will say "horse racing is back" like the opening day tones of the announcer's Americanized South African accent echoing off the seaside bluffs in the distance.

But first, he had to practice. Yes, Trevor Denman had to practice.

"I've had long breaks before – seven, eight months – but never close to two years like this," Denman said. "And it bothered me."

The last race he called was on closing day of the Del Mar autumn meet, December 1, 2019.

"So I got on TVG and started calling a few races, just to oil the parts," Denman said. "It's doing something

so totally different than day-to-day communication that I had to get my brain reoriented. My first try, I was very confused. But, after four or five races, it was the same old story, and, after ten races and a couple hours, I was feeling much more comfortable."

Although memories of specific horses have disappeared in the mists of time, Denman's recollection of his first Del Mar season remain vivid. Perched above the press box, high above the original grandstand structure built in 1937, the announcer's booth was an open-air plywood cage that commanded a 180-degree view northward across the hills of Solana Beach.



“At least the weather was perfect,” Denman said. “And the only other person up there was the photo-finish guy. The sound system, though, must have been put in when the track was built. You might as well have shouted through a tin can. But we were all younger then, and nothing really bothered us. Certainly not working six days a week. After Del Mar I’d go on to 16 straight days at the Pomona fair, go out every night and never miss a beat. Now, if I did one of those nights I’d be out for three days.”

Del Mar is down to a 4-day week to accommodate a chronic Southern California horse investment shortage. This is nothing Denman necessarily welcomes.

“Once you’re there and turn your mic on, you’re immediately into it,” Denman said. “You don’t really think beyond what’s in front of you and the energy and concentration required. I will say, though, that leaving home as we do for the summer to come to Del Mar, you might as well get on with it. Working only four days a week leaves a lot of time on your hands.”

Although Del Mar has trended well recently in the size of its fields, at least

in the opening weeks of the 7-week meet, they tend to dwindle as the season progresses. Denman is not fond of the trend.

“I’d rather have 12 horses than a 4-horse field,” he said. “You can focus so much better with a larger field. You can’t get up high in the beginning with just four runners, and you go through them 20 times. It becomes a bit futile. The intensity drops off, at least until you get to the top of the stretch.”

The Denman origin story has become part of racing lore. Born in the Johannesburg suburb of Germiston, from a family of British descent, he came to racing as an exercise rider with ambitions of becoming a jockey. Such a dream was not meant to be, but he found a home for his talents in the announcer’s booth at a variety of South African tracks before a chance encounter with Bill Kolberg, a publicist with Santa Anita Park, who was on north-to-south adventure of the African continent.

When it came to pass that Santa Anita was looking for an announcer, Kolberg threw Denman’s name into the mix. He passed his audition, and the rest is history.

Superstars together: Trevor Denman with legendary South African golfer - and racehorse breeder - Gary Player. Benoit photo

In very short order, Denman joined a handful of North American racing personalities for whom it can be said there was before, and then after. Willie Simms and Tod Sloan popularized the short-stirrup American style of race-riding on an international stage. Ben Jones and Calumet Farm proved that classic colts and fillies could be produced with the relentless pace of military aircraft. Jack Van Berg pioneered the national chain store training stable that was taken to even greater heights by Wayne Lukas.

Before Denman, then 31, took the mic in the fall of 1983 during the Oak Tree meet at Santa Anita Park, most racetrack announcers were mired in the traditional style of reporting a snapshot of the field as it reached certain intervals around the track. It was “so-and-so by a length over what’s-his-name by two lengths over this-other-horse” all the way around until one of them finished in front of the others.

“I’d rather have 12 horses than a 4-horse field... You can focus so much better with a larger field. You can’t get up high in the beginning with just four runners, and you go through them 20 times. It becomes a bit futile.”

A legendary announcer like Joe Hernandez, who served Santa Anita for 37 years, prided himself on a deadpan style that relied on the background tumult from large crowds to supply the drama. Harry Henson, his longtime counterpart at Hollywood Park and then Del Mar, possessed a voice of Thor but rarely strayed from the established standards, except to occasionally identify a gray horse as “the gray”.

The most popular announcers of bygone eras could be easily identified by their vocal instruments: The lilting tenor of New York’s Fred Capossela, Phil Georgeff’s “spinning out of the turn” at Chicago tracks, the reliable Maryland institution that was Dick Woolley. As the value of televised racing increased in the 1970s, Chic Anderson and Dave Johnson were the stars of New York and California, then Tom Durkin emerged in the 1980s with a creatively theatrical style in his Breeders’ Cup calls that paralleled Denman’s transformation of the craft.

It was Denman, however, who dared fellow announcers to analyze the players on the fly. He fashioned himself as a painter of mental pictures for the fans in the stands staring up at tiny TV monitors or peering into the distance, without the benefit of powerful binoculars.

For his off-track audience, Denman’s intent is to provide a soundtrack for the race unfolding on a screen view limited to the whims of camera operators. His calls can raise hopes before half the race has been run or dash them with a deadly honest observation that a horse was being asked early, but not answering.

Denman holds a special place in his announcer’s heart for horses like

Precisionist, Bayakoa, Silver Charm, Alysheba, Best Pal, Lava Man, Songbird, Tiznow, and John Henry, who was at the tail end of his career when young Denman came to town. In addition to Del Mar and Santa Anita, Denman had a long association with the LA County Fair meet as well as a brief run at Hollywood Park, as well as stints at Atlantic City, Laurel, and Pimlico.

Denman’s call of Cigar’s journey through the 1995 Hollywood Gold Cup is a prime example of foreseeing an outcome in progress. Sometimes he would allow himself the luxury of honest surprise, as he did when describing the moment Beholder seized the 2015 Pacific Classic by the throat. His description of the 1999 Santa Anita Handicap is two minutes of pure tension that is unresolved until one last thrust of Free House and Chris McCarron under the wire.

When asked for his favorite races, of the thousands he has called, two immediately and consistently come to mind.

“Zenyatta would be one, and then Sunday Silence and Easy Goer in the Preakness would be the other,” Denman said. “Those two would be head and shoulders above the rest.”

Denman was on loan to the Maryland Jockey Club in the spring of 1989 when Sunday Silence and Easy Goer brought their Kentucky Derby feud to Baltimore for the 114th Preakness. While Dave Johnson called the race for network TV, Denman did the honors for the Pimlico in-house system, preserving for all time his account of the see-saw battle between the two protagonists. As the two colts locked together at the top of

the stretch, without breaking stride Denman proclaimed, “And here’s the race we’ve been waiting for!” He was right.

Denman’s call of Zenyatta’s victory in the 2009 Breeders’ Cup Classic at Santa Anita ranks with Anderson’s description of Secretariat “moving like an incredible machine” and with Durkin’s “incomparable, invincible, unbeatable Cigar”.

To that point in Zenyatta’s career, having called six of her 13 victories without a defeat, Denman was ready for anything but assumed nothing. He charted Zenyatta’s every step through the first 9 furlongs of the mile-and-a-quarter Classic as she came from far back to thread her way through the large field.

When Mike Smith steered her sharply to the right at the eighth pole for a clear run, Denman delivered a loud warning shot. Then, with nearly a sixteenth of a mile left to run, he dropped any pretense of impartial reportage. In lyrical rhythm with her closing strides, he slowed his cadence and announced to the world, “This – is – un – be – lievable!”

The first race on opening day of Del Mar is usually a claiming affair with horses who have never done anything remotely unbelievable. Still, the return of Denman will be welcomed by those happy pilgrims in attendance, and chances are they will give him good reason to offer his traditional cry of “there’s the roar of the crowd” when the gates for that first race open.

“I certainly hope so,” Denman said. “It will be very good to be back.”

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Gone but not forgotten: *Desert King's* awesome contributions to racing legend

Kristen Manning | August 29, 2021

“A champion becomes a legend.” Five words etched into Australian racing folklore - Greg Miles’ famed call describing Makybe Diva’s third Melbourne Cup victory.

“A gem of a horse”: Desert King with Lauriston Park Stud’s Chris Bakker. Photo: Kristen Manning



After a year earlier becoming just the fifth horse to win two editions of the world's richest staying race, Makybe Diva headed back to Flemington on November 1, 2005, for a crack at uncharted territory in the world-famous two-miler.

At that stage she had under her belt the first of her two Australian Horse of the Year titles and another four G1 victories, in addition to her Melbourne Cup double. While in previous years she had arrived at Flemington via the 2400-metre Caulfield Cup, this time she took a different route - winning the country's premier weight-for-age contest, the W.S Cox Plate, over just 2040m (a mile and a quarter).

That too was a memorable contest, Makybe Diva part of the amazing - a line of eight horses (from a field of 14) making their runs together, spread across the track approaching the turn at Moonee Valley. But she had them in couple of strides, and those present doubted they'd see anything better that spring.

'I was there' moment

Just ten days later, though, all at Flemington experienced one of those "I was there" moments that come along just two or three times in a lifetime.

Buried back in the field, Makybe Diva looked to have a job ahead as the 24-strong field made their way to the corner. But jockey Glen Boss was not panicking, keeping her balanced until the runs came - and when they did, well she was off and away.

"Here's Makybe Diva. The nation roars for a hero," announced Miles.

One of the many roars ("we were having a barbecue and cheering like crazy") came from a stud farm on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, where a dashing bay stallion was serving his first Southern Hemisphere book in three years. Previously a shuttler between Coolmore's Irish and Hunter Valley bases, he had also spent time in Japan.

Lynden Park Stud's Julie Nairn and Jill Ross could not have been prouder on that famed first Tuesday in November, able to watch the race and then head out to a paddock and give that horse a bit of scratch, an extra carrot.

The sire of a legend, Makybe Diva's dad, Desert King, who for the last



few years has called Lauriston Park, Creightons Creek, in north-eastern Victoria his home. Who earlier this month, at the age of 27, laid down for a gentle sleep from which he did not wake.

Julie Nairn still remembers the day she first laid eyes on the imposing son of Danehill. "We were so impressed with him," she recalled. "He had the most wonderful temperament, and boy what an action; he just filled your eye with his presence."

"He was a beautiful stallion and a gentleman in all respects; it was a privilege to have played a part in his stud career," Nairn added, sentiments echoed by Christoph Bruechert, who also briefly stood Desert King, at Bombora Downs in Victoria.

"He is fondly remembered by all at Bombora Downs as an equine gentleman, a really nice horse to work with."

Desert King: "He had the most wonderful temperament, and boy what an action; he just filled your eye with his presence," says Lynden Park Stud's Julie Nairn. Photo: Kristen Manning

Five months before Makybe Diva's third Cup, Lachlan River had become Desert King's 20th stakes winner when outstaying his rivals in the G1 Queensland Derby. And, a month before, Desert War had won his second G1 Epsom Handicap at Randwick.

Normally a horse of Desert War's quality, with his six victories at the elite level, would be considered a stallion's star representative. He had to play second fiddle in the Desert King story but what a grand



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“We threw everything at him because he was our first good horse and he took it all on the chin. He was an amazing horse.”

horse he was, one of star trainer Gai Waterhouse's favourites ... “he beat the best horses in the land, breaking their hearts in doing so,” she said.

“One of our stables at Randwick bears his name, so he will be forever immortalized as part of our legacy and team.”

A truly international stallion, Desert King sired 661 winners in 29 countries. His progeny amassed in excess of A\$70 million, with his 27 stakes winners, including the G1 gallopers Makybe Diva, Desert War, Lachlan River, Mr Dinosaurs, Darsalam and Chelsea Rose.

Start of the Aidan O'Brien era

Thanks to his star progeny, his place in history is assured, but there is even more to the Desert King story, that of his racing career ... which saw him, on September 21, 1996, at the Curragh, become the first G1 winner for one of the most successful trainers in history.

Having just his fourth start for the young Irishman Aidan O'Brien, Desert King took on and defeated Ireland's best juveniles in the G1 National Stakes. The start of an era.

Eight months later at the same track, he took the G3 Tetrarch Stakes, and a few weeks after that Desert King added to his resume the G1 Irish 2000m Guineas - just 24 hours after Aidan O'Brien had cheered home his first Classic winner, the Irish 1000 Guineas winner Classic Park.

Danehill was starting to make his mark at this time, but he was a sprinter and speed was what was generally expected from his progeny. And so there were questions raised as Desert King made his way to the Irish Derby. Would the testing 12 furlongs be to his liking?

Jockey Christy Roche was not one of the doubters. He had been a Desert King fan from the start. Aidan O'Brien, in an interview with Horse Racing Ireland, remembered an early discussion about the stable's Derby aspirants.

Silencing the Danehill doubters

“When I mentioned Desert King's name, Christy's eyes lit up. The Danehills were not staying far at that time, but from his reaction I knew that Christy thought this was the horse. He had so much faith in him.

“It was unusual for us to step a horse straight up from a mile to the mile and a half, but Desert King was a seriously good horse. He was tough, genuine and sound - all those things.

“We threw everything at him because he was our first good horse and he took it all on the chin. He was an amazing horse.”

The Irish Times's Brian O'Connor reported on that Irish Derby, noting that “Desert King silenced the doubters with his thrilling victory, providing further evidence that his trainer Aidan O'Brien possesses a rare talent.

“As the Christy Roche-ridden colt accelerated past the gallant outsider Dr Johnson in the final furlong to win by a length, it was the final confirmation of the passing of the mantle from the old maestro Vincent O'Brien to his young namesake.”

Finishing out of the first two on only two occasions, Desert King was renowned for passing on his toughness, with his progeny always ready for a great battle.

Retired from stud duties three years ago, he spent his days in peaceful

retirement at Lauriston, enjoying the company of his buddy, Rock Hero, in the adjacent paddock.

He did have one somewhat dramatic experience at Lauriston, the December 2014 bush fires that tore through Creighton's Creek, threatening the farm. Fortunately there was no loss of life and Desert King was one of a very calm group of horses whose relaxed response impressed the stud's Chris Bakker.

“When you walk up to the paddock having to evacuate you are thinking ‘gee I hope you are at the gate waiting for me to come and put your head collar on’, and Desert King was.”

Fire, smoke, helicopters, it was a frightening scene, but each of the Lauriston horses remained calm as they were moved as far from the imminent danger as possible - a blessing for Desert King as the fences lining his paddock fell victim to the flames.

“I thought with the heat, the smoke and the noise that the horses would be spooked,” Bakker said, “but they were so calm - including Desert King, he was a gem of a horse.”

“A lovely horse,” he continued, “completely hassle free.” And one, he added who “touched a lot of people throughout his life and who was part of the beginnings of the Danehill story.

“It was a privilege to give him a nice home in his twilight years.”

Lauriston Park was also home to the champion mare and 1991 Melbourne Cup winner, Let's Elope, who died in 2016. Desert King has been buried next to her.

**Breeding note: Desert King hailed from an outstanding European family, among his fifth dam, Circassia - also sixth dam of Frankel.*

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VIEW CATALOG

The lessons I learned from working with Keeneland that have stood me in such good stead

Charles Hayward | August 31, 2021

I have always looked back on my years as a Thoroughbred racing enthusiast and racetrack operator with great affection and personal business satisfaction. I feel very strongly about my many positive experiences in the industry, and particularly with Nick Nicholson, who was President of Keeneland for the years when I was President of the Daily Racing Form and then President and CEO at the New York Racing Association.

Indeed, in 2019, around seven years after I left NYRA, I wrote this TRC column - Keeneland, a unique and powerful force for the industry. I admit I am a bit biased, but I think you might enjoy it.

Keeneland was always a special place for me - for two entirely different reasons. The first is straightforward: It is one of the most successful businesses in Thoroughbred racing. It is the best track in the country for visiting the paddock and saddling area, and to bet and watch a race. I hope that I have outlined my view of Keeneland's accomplishments successfully in the 2019 article.

The second reason is far more subtle - it helped me expand my human and management skills while employed in the industry.

Tradition of innovation

People think, and often speak, of the many important traditions at Keeneland. However, a quote from Nick Nicholson in a Blood-Horse video produced for the 75th anniversary in 2011, presented an enlightened point of view. "I think that Keeneland's tradition is to be innovative," he says. "We've tried to do that. We're absolutely convinced that you cannot grow the sport - you cannot grow the fanbase — unless you are true to some threshold fundamentals. The game has to have integrity; it's got to be an honest game.

"You have to be able to justify that you care about the safety of the horse. You can't say that Keeneland was built for the horse and not care for the safety of the horse."

Nicholson was absolutely right, and I saw him live that in the many business dealings that we had and other issues, problems and opportunities that we shared in the 12 years we worked together on Keeneland, NYRA and racing industry issues.

The first opportunity that I had to meet and work with him was when he was Executive Vice President and Executive Director of the Jockey Club. He was loaned by the Jockey Club to successfully launch the National Thoroughbred Racing Association (NTRA), which they did in 1998, and he was its first Chief Operating Officer.

I had left the book-publishing business in 1996 and worked diligently with Steve Crist and the principals of Alpine Equity Partners (AEP), Richard Goldstein and Bruce Greenwald, to purchase the Daily Racing Form (DRF) over the summer 1998. Our team worked collaboratively with Nicholson and his team while they were putting together the many new issues facing the NTRA.

In late 1999, Nicholson was recruited as the sixth President of the Keeneland

Association. He started in his new position on January 15, 2000.

I had been working full time with Steve Crist at DRF since the acquisition. The Racing Form had offices in California, Arizona and New Jersey at the time of our DRF acquisition. AEP had decided to consolidate our business/ editorial operations in New York City. Crist was upgrading the editorial team, enhancing the editorial product and launching a transactional website. I was working on finding a consolidated office in lower Manhattan, building relationships with the tracks and enhancing sales and creating accounting and human resources departments.

I was promoted to the position of CEO of DRF on January 1, 2000, and ran the business side, with Crist managing the editorial and publishing functions.

I started planning an extensive series of meetings with racetracks for the first quarter of the year, and my very first meeting was with Nick Nicholson at Keeneland in early February.

Pressing issues

We had a very engaging meeting in his office, and then his CFO joined us at a restaurant not far from Keeneland. There was a lot to discuss with Nicholson's early thoughts on Keeneland, and how the NTRA was going to insinuate

itself into the recently created racing conglomerates Magna, Churchill, Penn Gaming and the powerful independents such as NYRA, Del Mar, Oaklawn and Monmouth. After dinner, we walked to our cars and Nicholson and I kept talking until he suggested that we return to the bar, get warm, have a drink and talk further.

When we got back to the restaurant, he said Keeneland was running out of space in the main building and the area that was occupied by the library was desperately needed for additional offices for both the racing and sales operations. We then touched on a number of pressing issues for the Daily Racing Form.

The Racing Form had a substantial amount of valuable historical racing material that consisted of almost every daily DRF edition dating back to the first publication in 1896. DRF had two major problems with these newspapers/publications. All 5,000 copies of books, newspapers and magazines were sitting

in offices, conference rooms etc in the Phoenix office with no temperature and humidity controls and, as a result, some of the older issues were starting to deteriorate. However, the DRF could not store these valuable publications at any reasonable cost in Manhattan. We had no practical use for them, and they would continue to deteriorate and with no access for scholars, authors and historians.

I told Nicholson it would take almost a full tractor trailer truck to transport the DRF material from Phoenix to Lexington. We would need to get them into proper storage while the library could be built. Further, I told him that the DRF would donate them to Keeneland and they could use them in any manner they chose. He needed to discuss this further and seek approval from the Keeneland board.

Interesting proposition

I felt very energized as a 20-plus year book publisher in trying to find these materials a proper home.

Things went smoothly from there. Within the next two weeks, Nicholson was able to secure approvals to ship and store the material from Phoenix. Clearly, he had convinced Keeneland this was an interesting proposition.

The published materials arrived and went into storage in Lexington in early April 2000. It was planned for most of the DRF material to be housed in a beautifully constructed basement level, with a sophisticated fire prevention system where the oxygen can be immediately withdrawn from the room and no damage would threaten the publications. Keeneland retained the same architectural firm that had built any building at Keeneland in the last 50 years and the exterior stone and materials were carefully chosen. The Keeneland Library was finished in the early summer and Keeneland held the grand opening on July 15, 2002

In December 2002, the NTRA announced that the new Keeneland

Keeneland: It has always a special place for the author - for two entirely different reasons



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No rider is allowed to participate at a Jockey Health Information System track until the jockey has provided his/her medical records to the racing office so that all jockey medical records are immediately available as needed.

library, one of the world's largest public-access repositories for information related to Thoroughbred horseracing and the Thoroughbred breed, has been selected to receive a Special Eclipse Award for 2002.

Perhaps the best-known book containing information researched at the Keeneland Library is Laura Hillenbrand's national bestseller, *Seabiscuit: An American Legend*.

Jockeys' health initiative

A little known but important initiative Keeneland started was the Jockey Health Information System. In 2008, Keeneland along with the Jockeys' Guild and the Jockey Club developed the system, which creates a sophisticated medical history for all jockeys that is immediately available online if an injury occurs on track. This allows the ambulance transporting the jockey to the hospital to send an injured jockey's medical records over the internet to an area hospital for review before he or she arrives.

I had left DRF in July 2004 and was hired at NYRA in November. Nicholson had kept me apprised of this initiative at NYRA, and we were able to implement the Jockey Health Information System shortly after the launch at Keeneland. This was important because at that time NYRA was racing 250 days a year at three different racetracks, utilizing six different hospitals depending on the severity of the injury. No rider is allowed to participate at a Jockey Health Information System track until the jockey has provided his/her medical records to the racing office so that all jockey medical records are immediately available as needed.

This program has also proved to be helpful for a rider to know that the track is looking out for their health and best interests.

Another important track safety initiative was the development of the National Safety and Integrity Alliance accreditation in 2009. I was one of three NTRA board directors who interviewed the final candidates to run this new initiative. It set out to develop a racetrack accreditation program that involves six areas - injury reporting and prevention, a safer racing environment, aftercare of retired racehorses, uniform medication testing and penalties, safety research, and wagering security.

Keeneland and NYRA were two of the first tracks accredited and both continue to participate and collaborate as industry leaders in this initiative. NTRA track board members were helpful in structuring the program.

An important business initiative that Nicholson personally assisted NYRA on was advising a sophisticated settlement system for the reconciliation of all wagering activities with any contracted track, OTB, account wagering company etc. Keeneland had sought out the California Horse Racing Information Management System (CHRIMS) to provide them with detailed settlement and payment reconciliation for all licensed entities that are wagering on Keeneland.

This provides the track with detailed wagering records by bet types. It also generates a report for each category of bet on the track's wagering menu and shows whether the track's customers are winning or losing compared to the statutory percentage takeout for each bet type.

CHRIMS was set up in 1989 to service only California racetracks. Keeneland was one of the first non-California tracks to take advantage of the sophisticated detail that is available to evaluate all aspects of the wagering and settlement processes. At NYRA, I discovered that we had a 'home-grown' system that was barely able to settle bets with a wagering account and had no tools to help NYRA truly evaluate all the detailed performances of bet types. Nicholson provided me with some detailed reports from CHRIMS that NYRA's system never could have generated.

Enduring relationship

To be honest, it was embarrassing. Keeneland was running around 36 days a year and NYRA was running 250 days, with an average daily handle multiple times larger than Keeneland.

Nicholson also put me directly in touch with Mark Thurman, the CEO and President of CHRIMS, as well as a new related company in 2012 called Pari-Global Solutions. Thanks to Keeneland and Nicholson, I developed a strong enduring business relationship with CHRIMS and Thurman. They built a new settlement system for NYRA, a new complete purchasing system and increased financial reporting in a number of areas.

In addition to a national portfolio of tracks, CHRIMS and Pari Global Solutions handles all of the major U.S. account wagering businesses: Ebet, Elite Turf Club, NYRA Bets, TVG, Twin Spires, Watch and Wager and Xpressbet.

One of the most forward looking and important organizations in American racing today is the Thoroughbred

“We’re absolutely convinced that you cannot grow the sport — you cannot grow the fanbase — unless you are true to some threshold fundamentals. The game has to have integrity; it’s got to be an honest game.”

Aftercare Alliance (TAA). It was founded in 2012, and Keeneland, the Breeders’ Cup and the Jockey Club provided the funding to launch it.

Concerned horsemen

When news broke early this decade of poor situations for multiple retired racehorses, concerned horsemen came together to create the TAA to raise the standard of racehorse aftercare.

Organized by Jack Wolf, of Starlight Racing, the first meeting to start the process of creating the TAA took place during Belmont Stakes weekend in 2011, with the group then meeting again at Keeneland that fall. I personally attended a meeting at Belmont Park and, in addition to Jack Wolf, I recall Mike Repole and Rick Violette all taking active roles in the initial Belmont stages.

NYRA had just gotten out of bankruptcy in late 2008 and, unfortunately, had no funds to devote to the initiative - money from the Aqueduct casino did not start flowing to NYRA until very late 2011. In February 2012, the creation of TAA was announced with some major names in racing taking part in supporting its early efforts.

“We got instant seed money support from the Jockey Club, from Keeneland, from Breeders’ Cup and that helped us get off the ground,” TAA President Mike Meuser said about the formation of the alliance.

One very significant individual in the launch and the continued growth is Stacie Clark-Rogers, who was an original board member and assumed the leadership/management position as Operations Consultant. She and her TAA team have done a brilliant job in engaging people and organizations throughout the racing industry.

The TAA is a great example of the racing industry working collaboratively when it wants to.

Incentive offers

I could go on, but Nick Nicholson said it best: “I think that Keeneland’s tradition is to be innovative. We’ve tried to do that.”

One final brief story that demonstrates further that Nicholson is collaborative and a team player.

In the mid-2000s, as account wagering was growing and embraced by some larger companies, Keeneland discovered what every racetrack in the country learned at that time: If your racetrack had some strong simulcast locations but did not have its own account wagering business to service them, account wagering companies then and up until this very day send recruiters to tracks and simulcast operations to recruit customers with incentive offers.

To combat this, Keeneland decided to bid out an account wagering white label contract to a group of six ADWs, including at least two companies outside the U.S. Nicholson invited three U.S. track operators who were NTRA Board members to come to Keeneland for two days and sit in on the six account wagering presentations and assess them.

We were all good friends and the group included Craig Fravel, who was then President at Del Mar, Ron Charles, President of Santa Anita and manager of all Stronach tracks, and me, Charlie Hayward, President of NYRA. The presentations were professional, the deliberations

spirited, and Nicholson felt he could make the final selection decision of the vendor with great confidence.

Threshold fundamentals

I learned a lot from my racing management experience at both NYRA and the Daily Racing Form.

The Thoroughbred racing business has been struggling as wagering dollars have been declining for almost two decades. The economic model of Thoroughbred racing revenues today is not sustainable if account wagering companies that have very little capital tied up in their racing business operations can make more money than the racetracks and owners. ADW operations with scale can substantially make more money on most races than the racetracks and owners combined.

I refer back to an earlier quote from Nick Nicholson on the occasion of Keeneland’s 75th anniversary.

“We’re absolutely convinced that you cannot grow the sport — you cannot grow the fanbase — unless you are true to some threshold fundamentals. The game has to have integrity; it’s got to be an honest game.”

I learned a great deal about collaboration, integrity and honesty by watching the conduct of people who care about the greater good. And conversely those who don’t.

I think we will learn a great deal about the conduct of people as the plans are being developed and rolled out for the Horseracing Integrity and Safety Authority. I guess the cheaters think if they say enough bad things about good people, they will prevail. Don’t count on it.

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What They're Thinking **Kevin Ryan: British interference rules should be the same as in France**

Sally Ann Grassick | August 03, 2021

Kevin Ryan: "The cost of keeping a horse in training [in Britain] compared to the prize money they are racing for is ridiculous." Photo: focusonracing.com



Irish-born Kevin Ryan cemented his status as one of the leading trainers in Britain when his filly Glass Slippers won the Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint at Keeneland last November. It was her third G1 win, and Ryan's fifth since 2019. His career total of 12 G1 victories also includes 2014 Prix du Jockey Club and Irish Champion Stakes The Grey Gatsby.

Ryan, 57, has close to 1,800 winners to his name, including seven at Royal Ascot, since he began training in 1998. He is based at Hambleton Lodge stables in North Yorkshire.

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

I think the investment made by the Maktoum family in all aspects of the industry, both the breeding and racing sides, puts them at the top of the list. There are so many things they have invested in our industry that we are not even aware of. I don't think we will ever see investment in racing like it again.

What is your favourite racing venue and race?

My favourite venue is York. Obviously it is our local track, but it also has great facilities, brilliant racing and good prize money. We have had a lot of success there. It is a very fair track and a great place for an owner to have a runner as they really push the boat out to look after them well. It is a great place to take an owner.

I've been lucky enough to have success in the French Derby, but I would love to win a British Classic. Everyone would like to win the Derby. Epsom is such a unique track and it takes a very special horse to be able to do it.

I grew up not far from Ballydoyle during the time of Vincent O'Brien and it was the race we looked forward to sitting down to watch every summer.

What is your fondest memory in racing?

I would have to say my first Royal Ascot winner with a horse called Uhoomagoo. He was a real character; he used to fall out of the stalls and he would nearly tail himself off. Halfway through a race you would think he was going to be last, and then he would just sprout wings and take off in the last couple of furlongs.

He gave me my first Royal Ascot winner in the Buckingham Palace Stakes back in 2006. He was a really special horse to me as he was only small but he was very talented with loads of character, a joyful horse to train who loved his work.

What is the biggest challenge racing faces today?

It has been well documented, but the major challenge we face in Britain is prize money. The cost of keeping a horse in training compared to the prize money they are racing for

is ridiculous. Something has to happen here soon. We have to try to make it commercial for a lot of our owners, so that is why a lot of our horses get sold. It makes it difficult for a trainer to hold on to talented horses.

This is an expensive hobby, so God bless the owners who keep coming into the sport and investing in yearlings. Syndicates have helped too as they have continued to grow and are so professionally run now. It has to be addressed and the time has come to stop talking about it and start doing something about it.

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

I would love to see our interference rules made the same as those in France. There is no grey area in France. If you interfere with a horse, then you finish behind it.

They are too inconsistent over here, whereas in France generally the best horse wins. They race so tightly in this country, especially around the all-weather tracks, that it would make the races a lot safer and a lot fairer.

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



29 August 2021

Horses

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Palace Pier GBR	GBR	2179
2	St Mark's Basilica FRA	IRE	2068
3	Mishriff IRE	GBR	2054
4	Essential Quality USA	USA	2046
5	Golden Sixty AUS	HKO	1996
6	Adayar IRE	GBR	1957
7	Tarnawa IRE	IRE	1950
8	Snowfall JPN	IRE	1949
9	Gran Alegria JPN	JPN	1947
10	Chrono Genesis JPN	JPN	1946
11	Knicks Go USA	USA	1941
12	Jackie's Warrior USA	USA	1939
13	Gamine USA	USA	1920
14	Hurricane Lane IRE	GBR	1907
15	Skalleti FRA	FRA	1878

Jockeys

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Frankie Dettori	GBR	2003
2	Joel Rosario	USA	1929
3	Flavien Prat	USA	1872
4	Christophe Lemaire	JPN	1830
5	James McDonald	AUS	1825
6	William Buick	GBR	1806
7	Ryan Moore	GBR	1800
8	Irad Ortiz Jr	USA	1782
9	Luis Saez	USA	1642
10	Yuga Kawada	JPN	1612
11	Pierre-Charles Boudot	FRA	1595
12	Florent Geroux	USA	1584
13	Jim Crowley	GBR	1498
14	John R Velazquez	USA	1491
15	Joao Moreira	HKO	1480

Trainers

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Chad C Brown	USA	2746
2	John & Thady Gosden	GBR	2712
3	Aidan O'Brien	IRE	2570
4	Charlie Appleby	GBR	2549
5	Brad H Cox	USA	2363
6	Chris Waller	AUS	2314
7	Bob Baffert	USA	2308
8	Jamie Richards	NZL	1918
9	James Cummings	AUS	1766
10	William Haggas	GBR	1698

Owners

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Godolphin	AUS	3155
2	Coolmore Partners	IRE	2733
3	Shadwell Estate Company	GBR	2341
4	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	JPN	1739
5	Silk Racing Co Ltd	JPN	1704
6	Klaravich Stables Et Al	USA	1688
7	Peters Investments Et Al	AUS	1634
8	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	USA	1631
9	Jean-Claude Seroul	FRA	1498
10	H H Aga Khan	FRA	1493

Sires

Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	Galileo IRE	IRE	2312
2	Deep Impact JPN	JPN	2309
3	Dubawi IRE	GBR	2127
4	Frankel GBR	GBR	1835
5	Kingman GBR	GBR	1821
6	Into Mischief USA	USA	1761
7	Sea The Stars IRE	GBR	1733
8	Shamardal USA	GBR	1612
9	Lord Kanaloa JPN	JPN	1592
10	Australia GBR	IRE	1548