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TRC

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They're doing something very right at the farm that bred both Justify and Vino Rosso

Nancy Sexton | April 23, 2018



Justify at Glennwood Farm. Photo: Tanya Gunther

Several major outfits will head to Churchill Downs on May 5 with a hand in multiple Kentucky Derby runners. Some won't deny that such opportunity is the result of investment via the benefit of hindsight. For various others, particularly the juggernauts of our sport, it comes as the result of substantial and continued investment from grassroots level.

All of which makes the achievement of Glennwood Farm in Kentucky, owned by John Gunther (pictured left) and his daughter Tanya, all the more meritorious.

A family run operation 15 miles southwest of Lexington in Versailles, Glennwood heads to Churchill as the breeder of two major Derby hopefuls in Justify and Vino Rosso, both leading prospects in a renewal rated as one of the deepest in recent history.



Vino Rosso at Glennwood Farm. Photo: Tanya Gunther.

The pair provided Glennwood with a memorable afternoon on Saturday, April 7, when striking in their respective preps. First came Vino Rosso, who out-duelled Enticing to take the G2 Wood Memorial at Aqueduct, before Justify romped over Bolt d'Oro in the G1 Santa Anita Derby.

One of the most exciting colts of the current season, the unbeaten Justify has consistently vindicated the high opinion held of him by Bob Baffert this spring with a series of impressive front-running displays. Not since Apollo in 1882 has a colt who was unraced at two struck in the Kentucky Derby, but such has been the arrogance of Justify's wins to date that he heads into the race vying for favouritism with Mendelssohn and Audible.

Meanwhile in Europe, there are hopes for Glennwood homebred Without Parole, who reappears at Yarmouth tomorrow* after a taking debut victory at Newcastle last November that earned the colt entries in the 2000 Guineas and Dante Stakes from John Gosden.

"It was an exceptionally special day, watching Vino Rosso's gutsy win in the Wood Memorial followed by Justify's romp in the Santa Anita Derby," says Tanya Gunther. "It is hard to get my head around what it means to have these two colts among the leading 3yos right now and the prospect of watching them both compete in the Kentucky Derby. Plainly speaking it means a great deal!"

"For my dad and I personally, it underscores that we are doing something right with our programme and helps to motivate and encourage us during the many moments in this industry where you can feel discouraged."

Remarkably, that April afternoon wasn't the first time that a pair of Glennwood graduates had combined to steal the show.

Only three years ago, the farm enjoyed another major quickfire double when Materiality and Tamarkuz swept the G1 Florida Derby and G2 Godolphin Mile within hours of each other on a

Saturday in March, 2015. The difference is, of course, is that Materiality and the older Tamarkuz hailed from different crops, unlike paddock mates Justify and Vino Rosso, who were part of a 20-strong group of yearlings sold by the farm in 2016.

The Gunthers have made a point of developing various families. Take that belonging to the Storm Bird mare Marozia as an example. Bought for \$50,000 by John Gunther in 2003, Marozia went on to foal G1 winner Stay Thirsty as well as Without You Babe, the dam of Tamarkuz and Without Parole. As for Materiality and his G2-winning half-sister, My Miss Sophia, they descend from Dial A Trick, a 1991 purchase whose son, Eye Of The Tiger, ran fifth behind Funny Cide in the 2003 Kentucky Derby.

Justify's family joined the fold with the purchase of his granddam, the G1 Coaching Club American Oaks third Magical Illusion, for \$450,000 at Keeneland in January 2005. By Pulpit, she foaled Stage Magic in her second



The Storm Bird mare Marozia, one of the most important broodmares in the development of Glennwood Farm. Photo: glennwoodfarm.com

year at Glennwood, a talented filly who was G3-placed under the care of Helen Pitts after failing to sell for \$70,000 as a yearling.

Justify, by Scat Daddy, is the third foal and second stakes runner out of the Ghostzapper mare, following the listed-placed colt The Lieutenant.

"My dad purchased the dam of Stage Magic at Keeneland and loved her pedigree, physical attributes and racing ability," says Gunther. "Naturally, this strong belief sometimes passes along to the daughters and this was the case with Stage Magic.

"Stage Magic showed ability on the track and was a gutsy runner. She is not the most correct through her front limbs and this probably more than anything limited how much she accomplished on the track. Her heart and desire were never in question."

Justify is from the penultimate crop of the much-missed Coolmore stallion Scat Daddy, bred when the son of Johannesburg stood for \$25,000. At

that stage, he was very much on an upward curve thanks to the exploits of No Nay Never and a string of high-profile representatives in Chile, but his star has really ascended since then, especially - as fate would have it - in the years following his death in late 2015.

Justify is one of three colts by the stallion en route to the Kentucky Derby, alongside the spectacular UAE Derby winner Mendelssohn and remarkably versatile Flameaway, serving to further underline the extent of his loss.

"We had identified Scat Daddy early on as a sire with significant momentum and upward potential," says Tanya Gunther. "He stood for \$25,000 at the time of this mating, which we believed to represent good value (in hindsight of course it turned out to be incredible value) and so we were keen to breed a few mares to him."

In the case of Stage Magic, it was a cross that yielded several interesting

patterns, not least inbreeding to Narrate, the third dam of Johannesburg (sire of Scat Daddy) and granddam of Pulpit (sire of Magical Illusion).

"When researching the possibility of mating Stage Magic to Scat Daddy, the extended pedigree of the prospective mating was one that made my pulse race that little bit faster," says Gunther. "The opportunity to cross two full sisters who were highly accomplished broodmares [Yarn and Preach] and inbred to Narrate was one of the most interesting facets of the prospective pedigree.

"Furthermore, it meant that full brothers For The Moment and Honest Pleasure would be inbred 5x6x6. Nijinsky is also inbred in the pedigree, adding further appeal from a quality and stamina perspective. Although Justify shows a great deal of natural early speed, his pedigree has a number of top-class, classic-distance influences, so hopefully this combination will serve him well in his upcoming endeavours!"



Playmates: the 2011 Glennwood foals My Miss Sophia and Bookrunner (the one doing the nipping). The filly went on to run second to Untapable in the Kentucky Oaks, and Bookrunner, who ran in Night Of Thunder's 2000 Guineas at Newmarket, was G1-placed in Italy. Photo: glennwoodfarm.com

Upward trajectory

It was at the same time that Vino Rosso's sire, Curlin, was on a similarly upward curve. Then available for \$25,000, the son of Smart Strike now commands \$150,000 at Hill 'n' Dale Farm off the back of a series of strong seasons. He is also well represented on the classic trail by champion 2yo Good Magic, in addition to Vino Rosso.

"If a breeder wants to breed a horse with classic potential, I think Curlin is one of the best stallions to include in the breeding programme," says Gunther.

"Having identified Curlin as a potentially top stallion in the making, we were keen to get the mare on an upward trajectory as well. We thought that Curlin offered the chance to do just that and hopefully produce a talented racehorse to help 'make' the mare."

Vino Rosso is the second foal out of Mythical Bride, a winning daughter of Street Cry. In turn, she is a half-sister to Breeders' Cup Sprint runner-up Laugh Track and Belmont Stakes runner-up Commissioner; both emerged to enhance the family following the mare's \$42,000 sale to Glennwood in November 2011.

"Mythical Bride did not prove herself on the racetrack and so, when breeding her initially, there was a necessary balancing

of stud fee level and quality of stallion, with the constant aim of breeding to the best stallion possible and trying to breed a top racehorse that will then facilitate breeding to any stallion on the market," says Gunther.

She adds: "Breeding Mythical Bride to Curlin inbreeds both Mr. Prospector and Deputy Minister relatively close up in the pedigree. I typically like to see a combination of both stamina and speed elements in a pedigree and this mating suited the purpose quite well."

The resulting colts were commercially rewarding, with Vino Rosso realising \$410,000 to Mike Repole and St. Elias Stable and Justify selling for \$500,000 to the China Horse Club and Maverick Racing. Both were sold by Glennwood at the 2016 Keeneland September Sale.

Justify was the cocky one

"Justify seemed to enjoy and thrive on the action and attention while Vino Rosso seemed unfazed by the activity, taking it all in stride," remembers Gunther.

"Justify was a strong-bodied, imposing individual with a willful character and a clear understanding and high opinion about his rank versus his peers.

"Vino Rosso was a well-balanced, attractive colt but more laid-back and

he really enjoyed his beauty sleep.

And, while Vino Rosso never lacked confidence, he wasn't as cocky as Justify!"

While attention is focused on the first Saturday in May, hopes are also building in Europe behind Without Parole. The Gunthers have long held a presence in Europe - they are regular investors at auction and were represented in the 2014 2,000 Guineas by homebred Bookrunner - and this particular son of Frankel, who was retained for 650,000gns as a yearling, made quite the impression when winning his debut by six lengths at Newcastle last November.

He has several high-profile entries coming up, although, like for many based in Newmarket, the wet spring has not made setting a definitive early season schedule easy.

"He is training well and we are looking forward to his seasonal debut, which we hope is imminent, though the weather in England has not been exactly accommodating," says Gunther.

"We also have a 2-year-old Kingman half-sister to Without Parole who will similarly be trained by John Gosden and, in France, we have a 2yo colt by Noble Mission in training in Chantilly."

Considering the select numbers involved, this is a farm that consistently punches above its weight.

Before Justify and Vino Rosso, there was Mo Town, successful in last year's G1 Hollywood Derby. Delve further back into history and there was Stay Thirsty, Materiality, My Miss Sophia, Stevie Wonderboy and First Samurai (fittingly the Gunthers have one of his best horses, multiple G3 winner Last Gunfighter). And let's not forget Tamarkuz, who defeated none other than Gun Runner to win the 2016 Breeders' Cup Mile. The son of Speightstown now stands at Shadwell Farm in Kentucky and has understandably been well supported by the Gunthers, which recently welcomed a close relation to Justify by the stallion.

Formula for success

So is there any particular secret to the farm's success?

"I believe the ability to breed and raise young horses consistently well can be attributed not to any one thing but rather a combination of many elements all coming together well," says Gunther.

"The strength and the potential of the broodmare band are very important. High mare quality alone isn't usually enough though; finding the right stallion that best complements or enhances that mare's specific qualities, both physically and from a bloodlines perspective, is also imperative.

"The land is another key ingredient to successfully raising young horses – the quality and lay of the land, maintaining and managing pastures to a high standard, the layout of the farm – all of these aspects are essential in order to provide an effective environment that will facilitate the desired growth path and development of young stock to their full potential."

While hands-on herself, Gunther also pays much credit to the stud's team of staff.

"Attention to detail and a proactive approach facilitate our ability to keep the herd healthy and prospering," she says. "From time to time, like many farms, we struggle to have the right amount of staff with the requisite level of experience and expertise. Having long-term employees

that really care about the horses is so important in terms of factors such as them working closely with and knowing the horses well, making sure little issues are noticed and action taken before minor issues grow into bigger problems, and noticing small changes in a horse that could be indicative of pending illness or some other aspect that needs to be addressed."

She adds: "Having both Vino Rosso and Justify on the Derby trail is also rewarding for the whole team at the farm plus our extended team.

"I think or hope it gives meaning to all those long days during the deep, dark cold of winter and through the hot and sweaty summer months as well. The accomplishments of these colts are something for the whole team to be proud of – each person has a part to play and collectively they help to make it happen."

Indeed, few farms deserve to be as proud heading into the first Saturday of May.

*Without Parole was an impressive six-length winner of the Yarmouth race.

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France now the main target as more British trainers target prizes overseas

James Crispe | April 08, 2018



Enable and Frankie Dettori winning last year's Arc at Chantilly was the headline British victory in France in 2017, but British-trained horses are heading there in increasing numbers at much lower levels. Photo: John Gilmore

International racing is growing all the time, but where is it really booming, where is it dwindling, and which countries are likely to offer most fresh opportunities in the near future? James Crispe, the International Racing Bureau's associate director of editorial, sifted through a wealth of statistics going back more than 30 years, to find out the trends as far as British-trained runners are concerned.

To add the factual meat to the bones of the internationalisation of our sport, 30 years ago there were 555 British runners in overseas European races. By 2017 that figure had risen to a new record of 902.

And, to provide a slightly broader perspective, in the year 1997, British, European and United Arab Emirates trainers made 67 sorties outside Europe. Come 2017, and this number had risen to 385.

But the most detailed statistics I possess concern Britain alone, so I will concentrate on these while attempting to figure out in which direction

international racing is going.

From a British point of view, the main growth area over recent seasons concerns our nearest neighbour, France. Thanks to the excellent levels of prize money and owners' premiums on offer, the number of runners there has more than doubled since 2010 with new annual record totals for cross-Channel raiders set in five of the last seven years.

Britain had 75 wins from 519 runners there in 2017. Back in 2004, it was 20 wins from 205 runners.

Despite its geographical remoteness, Australia has also flourished as a target for foreign visitors during the same period, mainly because overseas trainers are beginning to realise that, with Aussie dollars galore on offer, the Melbourne Spring Carnival need not just be about the Melbourne Cup. Britain had four wins from 20 runners in 2017. In 2004, it was no winners from four runners.

In terms of strike rate, of late by far the best port of call for adventurous British trainers has been Veliefendi in Istanbul, Turkey. The last four renewals of its early September International Racing Festival have witnessed the hoisting of the Union Jack on no less than 17 different occasions (from 50 starters), meaning more than one in three of the British shippers returned home triumphant.

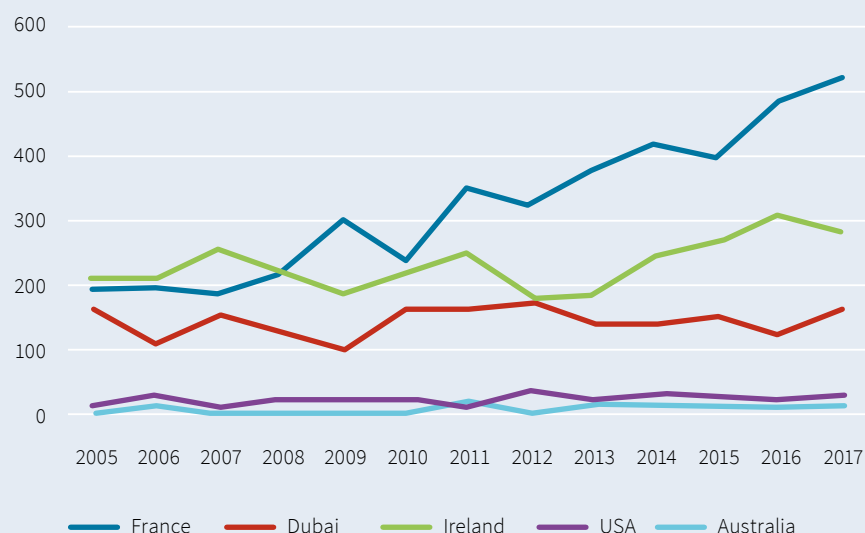
Less positive pictures are portrayed by the statistics provided by Italy, Japan, Hong Kong and America.

Italy is the one major racing nation to have suffered a genuine financial meltdown over the past decade, and its plight has been mirrored by a downturn in overseas competition. Britain had 97 Italian runners in 2002, yet just a combined total of 39 runners there over the past five years.

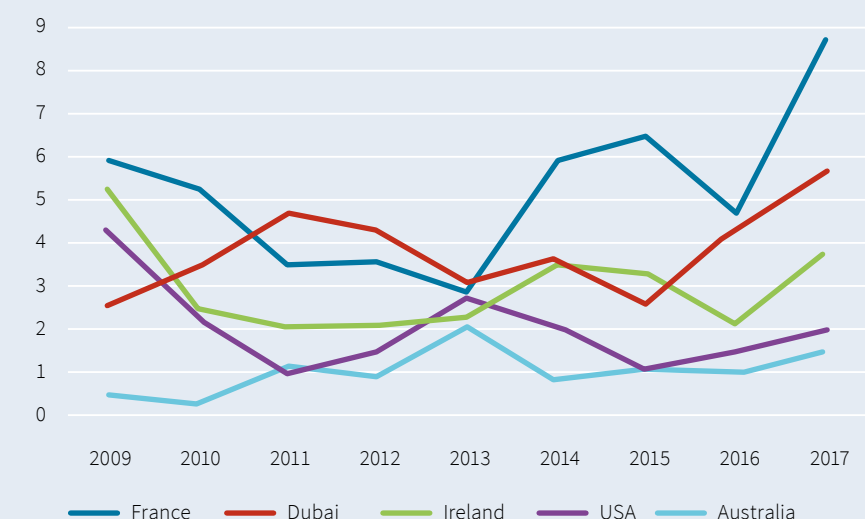
In comparison, other countries' problems are insignificant. Indeed, in the case of Japan, the major reason why not a single yen has been pocketed by a British-trained horse over the last four years is the strength of the local opposition. Tokyo is a long way to go unless you can be sure your horse will be highly competitive.

Hong Kong has, to a lesser extent, suffered from a similar issue, hence no British victories there since 2012 and

British-trained runners abroad 2005–2007



Prize money earned by British-trained runners abroad (in millions sterling)



no prize money in two of the last three years.

America, the pioneer of intercontinental racing through its inauguration of the Washington DC International in 1952, was the largest single contributor to Britain's overseas coffers way back in 1985, when transatlantic shippers earned £1.64 million.

Remarkably, 30 years on, two of Britain's most recent U.S. prize money tallies have failed to surpass that figure and the other, from 2017, topped it by little more than £250,000, while the

number of runners crossing the pond has been relatively static throughout this century.

There has been the odd bonanza year – 2009 springs to mind, when a quartet of victories were achieved at a Breeders' Cup made Euro-friendly by a synthetic dirt surface at Santa Anita – but America is no longer necessarily the premier destination for globetrotting Thoroughbreds.

That title looks to have shifted to Dubai, especially since the three-month long International Carnival there was instigated back in 2004. Interestingly,

British and European runners worldwide 1995 - 2017

	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2010	2007	2005	2002	2000	1997	1995
British runners in Ireland and Europe	902	889	784	795	662	604	568	547	499	636	538	555	457
European (inc. GB) and UAE in USA/Canada	85	82	76	64	46	85	57	55	76	65	80	36	62
European and UAE in Hong Kong / Macau	22	10	15	12	24	22	23	20	24	23	23	10	13
European and UAE in Japan	3	3	4	3	3	5	8	5	6	14	12	7	9
European and UAE in Australia	35	22	22	22	23	18	13	7	5	11	8	2	2
European and UAE in Singapore	0	0	2	4	6	5	3	2	4	10	6	0	0
European and UAE in Qatar	240	216	243	277	288	274	248	187	183	23	20	12	0

however, there are signs that even Meydan's brightly floodlit star may be beginning to wane.

After last month's World Cup Night, there have been just 104 British runners at the Carnival this year – compared with 168 at the same time in 2016. Indeed, the overall number of British raiders in Dubai is the lowest since 2004.

This can partly be explained as a delayed reaction to Meydan's shift back to dirt in 2015 after the first five seasons at the world's most shiny new racecourse had seen the non-turf racing contested on Tapeta, a more familiar surface for British visitors.

While Dubai may be starting to experience a decline, its neighbour Qatar is very much the coming force

of international racing thanks to two new racing festivals – the Qatar Derby Festival in December and the Emir's Sword Festival in February.

Are there any other countries that may soon become stamps on the passports of the best racehorses in the world?

Going back two decades and more, Brazil, Russia, Tatarstan (a Russian republic) and Macau have been among the exotic locations ventured to by European Thoroughbreds, though each has enjoyed short-lived status as part of the global racing calendar.

It is great to see Singapore returning to the fold in 2018, thanks to the internationalisation of May 26's US\$1.14 million Kranji Mile, after two years in the wilderness.

And Casablanca in Morocco at present stages an international meeting in November, which regularly attracts runners from France and Spain but possibly won't appeal to visitors from the rest of Europe until it begins to stage some turf racing – it currently plays out entirely on sand.

Of course the holy grail for the global racing industry would be the legalisation of gambling, and therefore justification of racing, in the home of the world's most prosperous economy - China. But, despite numerous experiments with trial meetings and newly-built courses hosting expatriate trainers, that scenario looks no more likely now than it did a quarter of a century ago.



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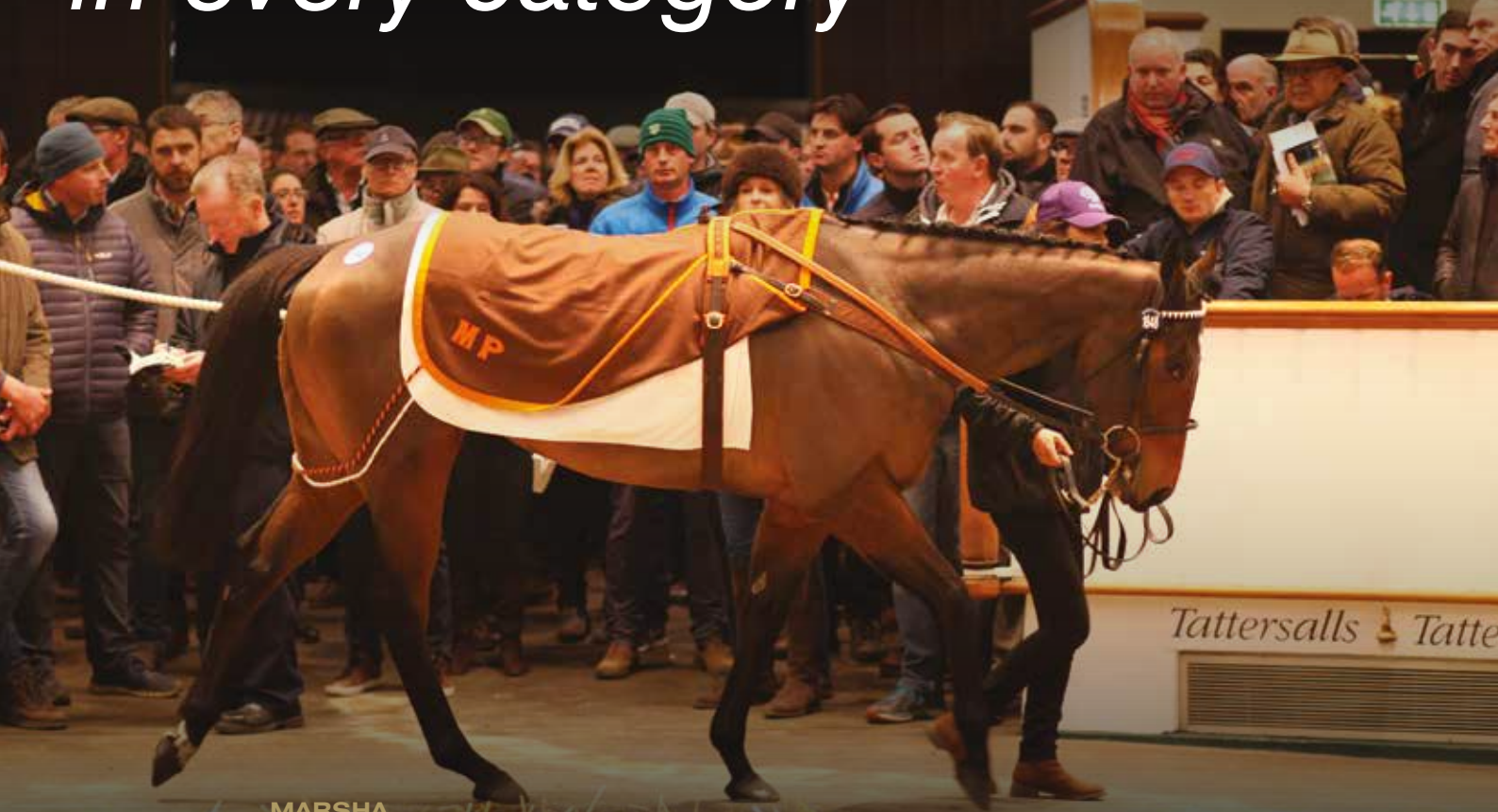


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View from the Rail: forget Lasix for now – let's solve the fundamental issue first

Charles Hayward | April 24, 2018



If we cannot get control of the integrity of our racing product... then it will not matter whether our horses are running on Lasix or not. Photo: NYRA.com

View from the Rail is a new fortnightly TRC series in which Charles Hayward gets a few things off his chest about what's right and what's wrong in the world of horse racing. He starts today with a simple answer to one of the biggest problems facing the industry in the United States.

The U.S. Thoroughbred breeding and racing industry is in serious trouble. The lack of consistent, proper, state-of-the-art regulation by the individual state bodies

is a huge threat to its future. Yet there is a solution in sight that should be acceptable to everyone across all aspects of the sport, even those on opposite sides of the big

sticking point - race-day medication.

The Horse Racing Integrity Act was introduced in the summer of 2015 by Congressman Andy Barr (R-KY) and Congressman Paul Tonko (D-NY) to replace the largely ineffectual network of state regulatory agencies currently managing all medication rule-making, testing and penalties for the industry.

In my view, the bill, which would put the independent U.S. Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) in charge of all anti-doping activities, was the most important development in the regulation of Thoroughbred racing for decades.

Three years later, it still hasn't been

passed, but there are sound reasons for believing that a modified version of it would go all the way. But more of that later.

Clearly it will need a lot of collaborative effort from the industry to get the support to get this bill passed. There is built-in resistance from the participants of the current state regulatory structure, but there are strong arguments to be made against the current structure, or lack of it.

Look how badly it's all working at the moment:

Uniformity

To date only 11 of the 32 Thoroughbred horseracing states have adopted all components of the Racing Medication Testing and Consortium's 2012 National Uniform Medication Program (NUMP), which deals with all medications, penalties, lab accreditation and third-party Lasix administration. Clearly, the current status quo does not want uniformity and enhanced integrity in Thoroughbred racing.

Out-of-competition testing

For any effective integrity program for drug testing, a robust out of competition testing program is essential. Of all the U.S. drug tests, less than two percent are out of competition. In England, France and Hong Kong that figure is between ten and 14 percent. Joe Gorajec, 25-year former Executive Director of the Indiana Horse Racing Commission and an industry expert and TRC contributor, was asked by the Paulick Report's Natalie Voss in an article on September 7, 2016, "What is stopping states from out-of-competition testing?"

"It is either a lack of funding or a lack of will or a combination of both," he told her. "Without out-of-competition testing, horsemen can cheat with impunity. This is a disservice to the sport and the betting public."

Owner, breeder and industry expert Barry Irwin wrote on this site in September, 2016, "Today in racing, there is abundant reason to believe that cheating is being conducted at the highest level of the game. Yet very little, if anything, is being done to detect it. As far as I can tell, there is no regulatory body that is actively involved in conducting investigations aimed at detecting cheating by uncovering physical evidence of illegal substances for which tests can be developed."

Wagering

Total wagering on Thoroughbred racing in the U.S. peaked in 2003 at \$15.2 billion and it has bottomed out in the last five years, 2013-2017, to between \$10.5 and \$10.9 billion - an approximate decline of 30 percent.

If you owned a business or worked in a business that sustained a consistent loss of revenue of that proportion, you would likely sell or leave that business.

Confidence

As noted in an earlier commentary here, in 2015 the Daily Racing Form conducted a major survey of 1,860 industry participants and bettors that found:

- 78 percent believed states are not effectively catching trainers or veterinarians using illicit drugs
- 77 percent thought regulation and enforcement of Lasix and other race-day medication rules should reside in a national entity
- 60 percent believed states were incapable of adopting uniform regulations without the structure that would be imposed by the Horse Racing Integrity Act
- 64 percent were in favor of the passage of the Act

So what's the solution?

The original 2015 bill was silent on Lasix and race-day medication. I believe this was the proper approach. The Jockey Club, the Breeders' Cup and other industry organizations have been strong advocates of the abolition of Lasix and secondarily all other race-day medications, and this had become a controversial and divisive issue in racing.

More than 95 percent of Thoroughbreds run on Lasix in the U.S. There are strong arguments and feelings on both sides.

I have first-hand experience of this. I was working at the New York Racing Association (NYRA) when the Lasix issue became front and center. It was the most polarizing issue I have witnessed in 30 years' following Thoroughbred racing.

I took part in a NYRA Board meeting where it was agreed to keep the status quo and not eliminate Lasix. NYRA had just gotten out of bankruptcy, we had just received a new 25-year franchise and the renovation of the VLT (Video

Lottery Terminals) facility was about to get underway. NYRA did not need a controversial issue that would divide the racing community and jeopardize the future of the restructured NYRA. I believe the proper decision was made at the time.

This NYRA experience does have some similarities with this current legislation. If we cannot get control of the integrity of our racing product and clean up what has become a dirty game, then it will not matter whether our horses are running on Lasix or not.

Important priority

The 2017 version of the Horse Racing Integrity Act (about 100 additional Congressmen and women have signed on to support it since it was introduced) does mention Lasix. It prohibits administration of any medications on race day, including Lasix.

Yet, to get this legislation passed, it is my strong opinion that we have to set Lasix off to the side, get USADA in place, clean up the game and deal with the Lasix issue as an important priority of the new regulatory body. Lasix has to come out of the proposed bill.

It is an important moment in time, one in which we need all industry participants to work together to support the Horseracing Integrity Act of 2017.

From my NYRA experience, I am fully aware of both sides of the issue and also the intensity of the positions for each side.

We need owners, breeders, trainers, jockeys, regulators, racing executives, front and backside employees, customers and executives/employees of related companies that support the Thoroughbred racing and breeding business to come together and support a newly revised bill that would not stipulate the elimination of Lasix.

Incidentally, many industry participants have grave concerns about getting the Federal Government involved in the Thoroughbred racing and breeding industry and, given the partisan nature of Washington at this time, I can certainly understand the concern.

However, the federal law that authorized simulcasting of racing signals over the phone, internet and over state lines is the Interstate Horseracing Act of 1978, which gives the Federal Government oversight of over 90 percent of the U.S. annual wagering business. So Washington is already deeply involved in the racing business.

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Turf racing a key ingredient in this spectacular Woodbine of the future

Emily Shields | April 11, 2018



Bright future: the plan is to create a city within the grounds of Woodbine Racetrack, complete with an entertainment center, apartments, and retail. Artist's impression: Woodbine Entertainment

Sandwiched between Pearson International Airport and an industrial area north of Toronto sits Woodbine Racetrack, a 700-acre property of sprawling, green paradise. It is easy for frequent visitors to take the landscape for granted, but Woodbine's sheer size dwarfs even that of its closest North American rival, Belmont Park.

There is the racetrack itself – a unique outer turf course, an inner synthetic main track, and an even smaller harness racing strip – nestled under a looming grandstand. There is a one-mile dirt

training track, another seven-furlong grass course within that, and even a peaceful, half-mile path called Baker's Acres tucked into a corner behind the barns.

Despite all that, Woodbine still has acres of open, unused space. Plans have been made to create a city within the grounds, complete with an entertainment center, apartments, and retail, all while keeping the horses and horsemen at the focal point of the experience. But, before those plans could come to fruition, Woodbine executives labored to improve the workplace dynamic.

Woodbine Entertainment's CEO, Jim Lawson, understood the challenges ahead when he was named to that position in 2015. "Racing has competition that we didn't have years ago," he said. "Toronto is a world-class city, but we're competing with the Blue Jays [baseball] and the Raptors [basketball]. The competition for the entertainment dollar is intense."

Before addressing the Woodbine product that guests see and experience, Lawson turned inward. “I polled the management team and asked what the first thing we need to fix was,” Lawson said. “Six out of eight said culture.”

Lawson defined culture as having “a workforce that loves coming to work every day”. “This is a fun place to work - the employees look forward to coming here - and that sort of enthusiasm and momentum spills over to our customers,” he added.

To test the level of satisfaction within Woodbine’s 1,700 full-time employees, the business took part in the Great Places to Work survey. “The first year we had something like 20 or 25 percent participation,” Lawson said. “We had a lot of internal communications, a lot of town halls, we hired a culture specialist and added recognition programs. This is something other companies do well, but the horse racing industry does not. Racing is not attracting good young talent, such as the star of the commerce department at Vanderbilt.”

Last year, 80 percent of employees participated, and Woodbine did so well in the ‘Trust Index’ it is now on the list of top 20 employers Canada. “Three years ago that would have been unheard of,” Lawson said. “We’re getting young people out of top Canadian universities from commerce and business programs. It’s fun here, our employees have a say in what is going on.”

Once the internal culture improved, it became time to advance the racing product.

Woodbine is famous for its 12-furlong E.P. Taylor Turf Course, with its grass races not only drawing worldwide interest but also driving a significant portion of handle. But Woodbine’s Thoroughbreds also shared their racing season with Standardbreds, who raced on the innermost track at night once the Thoroughbred card was completed. The idea to replace the harness surface with a second turf course, which gives Woodbine the option of running six grass races a day, was made possible after a chain of events.

In addition to the main property outside Toronto, the Woodbine Entertainment Group also owns Woodbine Mohawk Park, another 450-acre parcel of land that raced harness horses in the summer and fall.

When the Ontario government decided



to privatize and thus permit the expansion of gaming at Woodbine and Mohawk, they awarded that ability to Great Canadian Gaming and the development company Brookfield Asset Management. “Brookfield has aggressive plans to invest over \$1 billion on our site, from expanded gaming to a music auditorium, restaurants, tiered parking, and hotels,” Lawson said. “Part of the agreement is that the same process would happen at Mohawk.”

Starting in 2018, Mohawk is becoming a year-round harness racing facility.

Jessica Buckley, the president of Mohawk said, “We’ve made \$10 million worth of investments to winterize the facility and get it ready. The number one priority was winterizing the paddock for our horsemen, with new doors, new windows, and new heat curtains for the winter months. The second biggest thing we did was replaced all of the glass in front of the dining room, which was original glass to the building. We upgraded the bathroom facilities and will continue to invest in the coming years.”



Woodbine chief executive Jim Lawson: “The competition for the entertainment dollar is intense.” Photo: Michael Burns

With the Standardbreds now year-round in their own facility, that left more options open for the Thoroughbred track.

More wagering on turf races

“We had some debate,” Lawson said, “as to whether we should turn the old Standardbred track into a dirt course or another turf course. Like a lot of racetracks, we struggle with horse supply. Our view is that, in order to attract horses up to Canada, we can offer five or six turf races a day at all levels for eight months of the year. The turf goes hand in glove with our Tapeta surface; when we get monsoon rainstorms, a lot of horses transfer nicely from the turf to the Tapeta and aren’t faced with running on a sloppy track.”

Lawson is pleased with the ultimate decision of a second turf course. “How can Woodbine be effective at recruiting and keeping horses? We think the answer is more turf racing. Owners, trainers, and jockeys like the turf, and on an apples to apples basis we get more wagering in our turf races.”

Now comes the challenge of building the new course while the live Thoroughbred meet, which opens on April 21, begins. “We are well under way now to putting the irrigation system in,” Lawson said. “We’ve spent \$250,000 to add fiber to it to ensure that it drains well, similar to the turf course in Hong Kong. We will be full bore on installation, and we plan to be racing on it in June of 2019.”

Woodbine board member John Fielding added, “It’s been proven to us that turf racing does attract more wagering and larger fields and is a very positive thing for the Thoroughbred product, particularly to the other parts of the world such as in Australia and the United Kingdom. We are really trying to do the right thing for the horsemen as well

as to grow our business, and our simulcast business. We have a great broadcast that we keep trying to upgrade as well.”

Woodbine’s Senior Vice President of Technology, Chris Lush, noted exciting developments are being explored a broadcast perspective.

“Last year we did a partnership with DirecTV, where we did the first network broadcast of a live horse racing event in 4K [resolution], first with the Woodbine Mile and then the Canadian International. Our product looks good on simulcast, but even better in a 4K broadcast, which in turn leads to higher wagering. And we want to stop focusing on just North America; where does our product appeal internationally?”

In 2017, Woodbine streamed what Lush classified as a “network level broadcast” for the Natalma Stakes, a G1 Breeders’ Cup ‘Win and You’re In’ event.

“We took feed from live high-definition cameras, got separate on-air personalities, and streamed it live to Facebook in partnership with Breeders’ Cup,” he said. “We had over 8,000 simultaneous viewers streaming and watching, which is spectacular for our first go round. People

from Asia, Australia, South Korea, and Italy were watching live and commenting. This is where the market is going.”

International markets

Integration into international markets has long been a priority at Woodbine. “This sport, which used to be very regional, has grown so global,” Lush said. “We host separate pools for Australian racing here. Our partnership with the Hong Kong Jockey Club has been fantastic. We have a substantial Asian population in Canada, and having direct content from Hong Kong is well received. We’ve introduced simplified Chinese language on our advance-deposit wagering platform. Now we are trying to get our simulcast over there.”

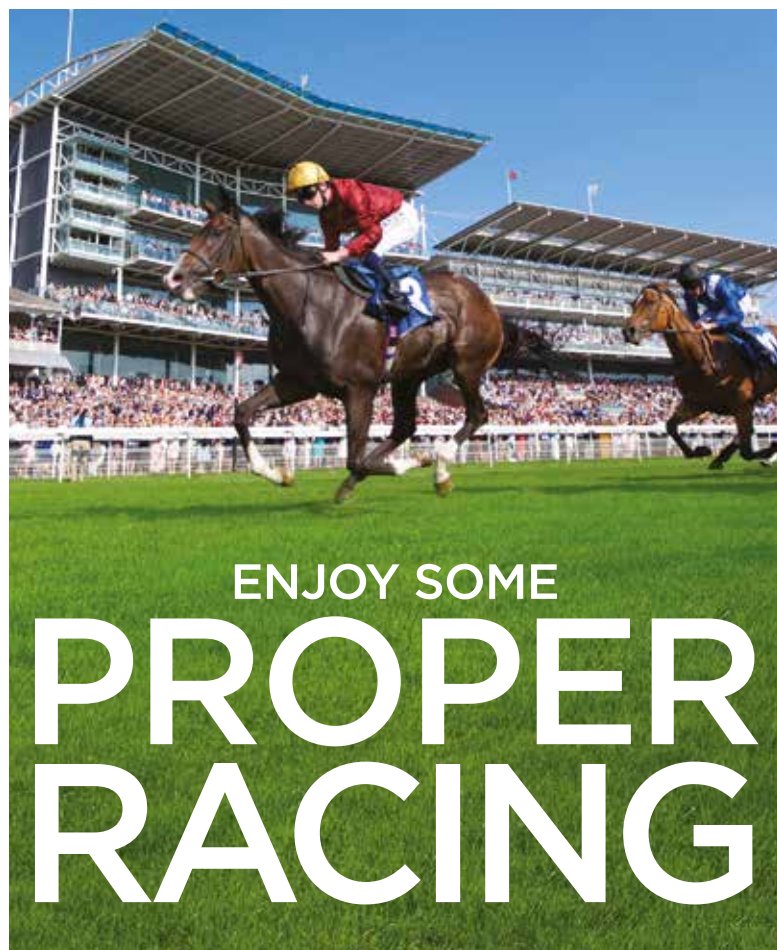
Last year, Woodbine released a guest-experience mobile application. “It shows what’s happening here, our racing schedule, and you can book a reservation. We are launching new websites under a simplified address, woodbine.com, to make it easier for our customers to find us. “In order to have a true branding experience, we felt we had to tie Woodbine and Mohawk together under a moniker that makes more sense.”

With all the developments coming for this season and beyond, the mood at Woodbine is undeniably optimistic. American trainer Mike Maker has decided to send a string north of the border, a decision that Fielding said was, “Really great. Having more trainers makes our whole product better.”

He had nothing but praise for the way Lawson has handled the innovations at Woodbine. “The leadership here is fantastic,” Fielding said. “Jim Lawson has done a phenomenal job assembling a top team, and they’re not just sitting on their laurels.”

“We as an industry cannot be complacent,” Lawson said. “We all face the challenge of attracting a new generation of fans and owners. We’re investing for the long term here, and our mindset is to make decisions that will benefit horse.

“We are taking this 700 acres and building it into a small city for one purpose, and that is to promote and sustain horse racing. In 25 years I want Woodbine to be healthier than it is today. I want to build something we can all be passionate about.”



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What They're Thinking: our quick-fire Q&A series starts with Todd Pletcher

Bob Ehalt | April 17, 2018



Moment to savour: Todd Pletcher with jockey John Velazquez after Rags To Riches won the Belmont Stakes in 2007. Photo: NYRA.com

Welcome to a new fortnightly TRC series of short Q&A sessions with leading figures in Thoroughbred racing. In What They're Thinking, we will be putting the same five questions to each subject, and it should take you no more than two or three minutes to read what they have to say.

We start with one of America's greatest trainers. Seven-time Eclipse Award-winning Todd Pletcher ranked tenth in a racing industry poll of the

top U.S. trainers of the last 50 years last December. The country's all-time leading money winner, he is currently #10 in the TRC Global Rankings.

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

It's hard for me to answer in regards to the history of horse racing, but in the last 20-25 years you would have to say it's John Magnier because of his international presence in the breeding industry and the stallions he has developed through Coolmore and Ashford. He also has a big presence in Australia.

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Which is your favorite venue and race?

The Kentucky Derby is certainly the race. I've been fortunate enough to be in Dubai and Royal Ascot and numerous other places, but to me there's no race event like the Kentucky Derby. It's something very, very unique. I think the atmosphere at the Kentucky Derby is the equivalent of what you'll find in any other sport.

In terms of a venue, you would have to say Churchill Downs on Derby Day is the best, though Saratoga still has great historical ambience. The New York Racing Association has been able to maintain that historical feel while staying with the times, which is really great to see.

What is your fondest memory in racing?

I've been blessed with a lot of great moments, but I would have

to think the win of Rags To Riches in the 2007 Belmont Stakes (video below) was the most exciting one and the one I hold in very high regard. I take every opportunity I can to promote her for the Hall of Fame. I'm so stunned she's not in the Hall of Fame and I'll use this opportunity to give her a plug once again.

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

I think racing faces the same challenges that the entertainment industry and sports leagues face. We're trying to appeal to the next generation. I have children who are 19, 18 and 15 and they never have to be home at a certain time to watch a sporting event or television show. Everything is on the phone or on their iPad and is accessible. Trying to generate interest from that demographic is vital for the sport.

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

We need racing to promote itself in a positive manner. We have one of the most exciting sporting events there is in the Kentucky Derby and there is an immediate gratification in that most of the races are done in less than two minutes. It's a very, very exciting sport and we need to promote it as such, showing people how clean it is and focusing on all the positive aspects of it.

A lot of times we sabotage ourselves by not promoting all the good things we do. We're a sport where every one of our winners is tested, so instead of focusing on the negative, let's focus on how great of a sport it is and how clean it is. Compared to other sports, let's say it's the cleanest and most exciting.

Let's all work in the same direction to promote the well-being of the sport and help it to grow.

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



22 April 2018

Jockeys

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Ryan Moore	Great Britain	1105
2	Mirco Demuro	Japan	1058
3	Hugh Bowman	Australia	1055
4	Mike E Smith	USA	1040
5	Frankie Dettori	Great Britain	1032
6	Christophe-Patrice Lemaire	Japan	1028
6	Javier Castellano	USA	1028
8	Christophe Soumillon	France	1014
9	Kerrin McEvoy	Australia	1010
10	Joao Moreira	Australia	1009
10	Jose L Ortiz	USA	1009
12	William Buick	Great Britain	1002
13	Yutaka Take	Japan	1001
14	Florent Geroux	USA	999
15	Joel Rosario	USA	995

Trainers

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	A P O'Brien	Ireland	1077
2	Bob Baffert	USA	1049
3	Charlie Appleby	Great Britain	1041
4	Chad C Brown	USA	1038
5	Darren Weir	Australia	1037
6	John Gosden	Great Britain	1023
7	J Size	Hong Kong	1018
7	John Moore	Hong Kong	1018
9	Saeed bin Suroor	Great Britain	1014
10	Chris Waller	Australia	1013
11	Todd Pletcher	USA	1009
12	A Fabre	France	1006
13	A S Cruz	Hong Kong	1002
13	Peter & Paul Snowden	Australia	1002
13	Yasutoshi Ikee	Japan	1002

Owners

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Coolmore Partners	Ireland	1096
2	Godolphin	Australia	1072
3	Magic Bloodstock Et Al	Australia	1040
4	Sheikh Hamdan Al Maktoum	Great Britain	1033
5	Juddmonte Farms / Prince Khalid Abdulla	USA	1027
6	Sunday Racing Co Ltd	Japan	1021
7	Al Shaqab Racing	France	1015
8	WinStar Farm Et Al	USA	1013
9	China Horse Club Et Al	Australia	1010
10	H H Aga Khan	France	1008
11	Hajime Satomi	Japan	1005
12	Mayfair Speculators Et Al	South Africa	998
13	Stonestreet Stables	USA	996
14	Peters Investments Et Al	Australia	994
15	Te Akau Syndicates	New Zealand	993

Sires

Rank	Name	Modal Country	Points
1	Galileo	Great Britain	1052
2	Dubawi	Great Britain	1044
3	Snitzel	Australia	1029
4	Deep Impact	Japan	1025
5	Frankel	Great Britain	1021
6	I Am Invincible	Australia	1017
7	Not A Single Doubt	Australia	1010
7	Scat Daddy	USA	1010
7	Street Cry	Australia	1010
10	Curlin	USA	1009
11	Medaglia D'oro	USA	1005
12	Fastnet Rock	Australia	1004
12	Iffraaj	Great Britain	1004
14	Dark Angel	Great Britain	1001
15	Kitten's Joy	USA	1000