

Bloodstock Expertise - at home & abroad -

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The David Allan Column

Kazakh Story Part 2: The low cost Ascot Sale



The Ascot Sales Ring with Brightwells.

ASCOT means glamorous racing and a grandstand on the scale of Terminal 5. Not always. Ascot also sells racehorses for 20,000 rand.

In South Africa, vendors actually getting horses sold at the cheapest levels can pay costs of maybe 40% of a small price, aside from SA's double entry fees.

At Ascot, regular sales are set up intentionally for low cost horses. Vendors pay 1.5% and buyers pay a 6% premium as at all sales but on a small price. The entry fee is minimal and payable after the event. There is no free food. Café fare is available and a cup of DIY tea costs £2 or R35.

On 4 December, Tattersalls Ireland at Ascot offered horses in training (flat and jumpers), yearlings, one foal, in-foal mares and fillies for stud. A largely domestic population – plus some Kazakhs and I -- bought horses to race, breed, on-sell, or retrain for other disciplines.

Traditionally, these sales were run by Brightwells, a versatile firm that sells other livestock, property, antiques, fine art and classic cars. The bloodstock jewels were not the Ascot Sales but their sales of jumpers at Cheltenham. Cheltenham and Ascot is as fine a pair of name-venues as could be imagined.

Tattersalls bought the Brightwells bloodstock business and rebranded it Tattersalls Ireland whose jumping experts fly over to complement the re-



The Sales Area is upper right in this picture of Ascot's Grandstand.

tained Brightwells auctioneers. In Ireland, Goffs and Tattersalls Ireland both serve huge buying markets for jumpers. Doncaster (= Goffs UK) dominates the UK jumping market. Now Tattersalls has a UK jumping presence.

The Ascot sales are not on the racecourse but at the racecourse stables, and 160 lots slotted in easily with good showing spaces between. The lorry park is of course huge. The small sales ring is permanent with an office attached situated in wide open spaces including a parade ring.

Refreshments? The nearby hostel for the travelling staff who bring horses to race is modern, purpose-built with comfortable lounge and washroom spaces plus a café.

Ascot Sales is not my regular haunt but with our Kazakhs who spend "proper money" at other sales, we put together a purchase/ export/on-sell project. It took some doing.

Rising at 5 to beat the London-bound traffic, the first priority still in the dark was breakfast at our guests' hotel near Ascot, fuelling up for a day during which there would be *no* possibility of stopping to eat.

With the sale starting at 1030, there was a daylight window for inspecting the sizeable Godolphin consignment, the latest in the Big Blue Scale-Down. From then on, it was a case of watching most horses coming into the parade ring plus an optional once-over, then wearing a path to and from the ring itself.

You had to laugh. The "high" was 3 degrees. Only once did one of us have time to run inside and grab hot take-out tea. Already "knackered" from 3 consecutive weeks of breeding stock sales, here I was wrapped up in multiple layers working my (thick) socks off to buy very cheap horses. "*What the hell are YOU doing here?*" was the ironic question asked of the few mainstream sales-stalwarts in attendance.

Tatts Ireland were old-friendly hosts knowing that our project was a seedling for extra things to come. And getting 7 yearlings and HiT horses sold to us. The minimum bid was £600 or just over R10,000. We paid up to R70,000. The most intriguing was our R25,000 unraced but raceable Godolphin 2 year old filly by Raven's Pass, the first foal of a very young winning sister to a 3 x USA Grade 1 winner 4 x Grade 1 placed with much other black type. She



was a much better prospect than some R500,000 fillies in Newmarket proven to be poor on the track out of proven to be ordinary dams. Of course we did not buy any of them but watched it happen, tut-tutting.

A clue to her price and location lay in her demeanour. A Godolphin friend warned me that she would try both barrels just for fun. Her contrastingly sweet name is TABITHA TWITCHIT, Beatrix Potter's anthropomorphic cat, thoughtfully named from her dam JELLICLE as in TS Eliot's Book of Practical Cats and of course the musical that came from it.

Later in the day I was offered profit by several non-attendees who had seen the results. I could have taken her for anyone, or ourselves. She might have made R200,000 in Newmarket. With a discount if she kicked the buyer.

My Kazakh friend had picked up on the pedigree – one of only two really decent breeding prospects there – and announced that he wanted to race her himself turning her into a sweet filly in the process then a broodmare. No doubt comforted by that thought, TABITHA TWITCHIT has behaved impeccably since on the long journey described in Part 1 last week.

The top lot brought R1.5 million rand, highest by a factor of about 10. We had a million rand for him to race in Russia (see Part 1) but the jumping boys had their scouts out and bid each other up. Mind you, four days later Tatts Ireland at Cheltenham sold a top price of R 5.4 million for a young untried jumper.

The next highest but only R175,000 was a lovely 2yo CACIQUE (full to DANSILI) daughter of KATY NOWAITEE with three black type siblings that I should have bought. High enzyme levels had prevented her running and that is easily fixed. Somebody hadn't bothered.

When the sale finished at around 3pm, the precinct rapidly emptied. Job done by all. Our priority was food and warmth on Ascot High Street. By 6pm exhaustion set in. Time to rest before a sight-seeing tour of London for our visitors. - **tt**



Tabitha Twitchit 2yo, a very low cost filly by Raven's Pass with a big family bought by AllanBloodlines - butter wouldn't melt...



@turftalk1



KLAWERVLEI  STUD



The David Allan column will return on 9 January. David wishes readers a Merry Christmas and Happy and Prosperous 2017. From ourselves and readers, same to David, who will be spending time in South Africa over the next several weeks. We look forward to his reports in the New Year. - tt.





Kentucky barn fire kills 23 horses

A lightning strike is believed to be the cause of a shocking fire that engulfed a barn at Eric and Kay Reed's Mercury Equine Center near Lexington, Kentucky in the U.S.

The blaze broke out early on Sunday morning and tore through one of three barns on the 60-acre property. Thirteen of the 36 horses in the barn were able to be saved, but sadly, 23 perished.

A devastated Eric Reed said "It was like a nightmare that I still haven't woken up from. My night watchman gave me a holler at 12.45am and said the barn was on fire, he thought it had been hit by lightning. I got there probably 20-25 minutes after the call. We were getting the horses out, but the barn was fully engulfed. We were lucky to get the 13 out that we got.

"We lost 23, we saved 13. Of those that perished, 18 were yearlings, while the five others were of racing age. Every loss of a horse has been devastating to us, in the few times we've been through it, but to lose these horses to a fire, there's

just nothing that compares to the sadness and the destruction that you see, it's absolutely horrifying."

Most of the horses were well-bred yearlings, while one of the horses killed was a three-year-old filly who had recently won \$100,000 in a stakes race.

It's estimated that between the horses and the value of the barn, more than \$2 million was lost in the fire.

Reed paid tribute to his brave staff, who, with the inferno raging, bravely rushed into the wooden barn, trying to save as many of the horses as possible.

"I can't say enough about them," said Reed. "One of my employees (Emory Brenklin), who's been with me about 30 years, when they knocked on his door he had just gotten out of bed and he had no clothes on. He didn't even go back in the house to get a pair of shoes, he ran out barefooted, unclothed. He pulled horses out of the barn in the nude. He saved five by himself, running into the burning building.

"It was incredible the bravery and the love that these guys showed. They risked their lives for these horses, it was amazing and I'll never be able to thank them enough." - GX1.com

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The Finch family in the winner's enclosure with Icy Trail (Grant Van Niekerk up). In the blue dress is Mom Kathy, on the right is son Troy and daughter Briannah. Our man Brian covers the rear, far left. (Wayne Marks).

Icy Trail hasn't stopped improving

WE admire Brian Finch and his family because of their love for racing and their great attitude to life.

Purely on paper, Brian and wife Kathy's four-year-old gelding Icy Trail could not have won Saturday's Gr2 Premier's Trophy over 1800 at Kenilworth, but he emerged the victor anyway under a good ride from jockey Grant Van Niekerk, delighting his connections.

Icy Trail came into the race 4kg worse off with the favourite Prince Of Wales for two narrow beatings at the course and distance recently and while form students gave him a good place chance, there wasn't one who thought he could win at the weights.

But Icy Trail, a four-year-old by Lammerskraal Stud's stallion Go Deputy obviously hasn't stopped improving and showed plenty of courage to get up in a driving finish from Krumbambuli and Bold Rex, with Prince Of Wales fourth, a length in his wake.

Icy Trail is trained by Candice Bass-Robinson, who posted her biggest success since taking over from her father Mike at the start of the season. The stable also saddled three-year-old Horizon to an eye-catching second in the Listed Jet Master Stakes; their charge Nightingale finished second in the Gr3

Victress Stakes; Three Balloons finished second in the Gr3 Cape Summer Handicap and Maidens Silver Master and Come On Sonny finished one-two in the final race of the day.

A R270 000 National Yearling Sale purchase, Icy Trail has won 6 races with 3 places from 14 starts, for stakes of R566 025.



THE modest MJ Byleveld: Celebrating his excellent Gr1 Cape Guineas on William Longsword at a Christmas lunch with Vaughan Marshall's stable on Sunday.

