



*Mondays* with DAVID ALLAN



*PETER Savill with young partners in his Kodiak 2yo filly raiding a Listed race at Deauville - the waistcoat on the filly's handler confirms that the trainer is Mark Johnston.*

## Who or what is in charge?

**A prominent horse player in both South Africa and UK said the other day "In UK it's all about the owner, but in South Africa it's all about the punter".**

The UK generalisation is far more true now than it was ten years ago. The owner is the principal, the enthusiast, the funding source. No owners? No racehorses to train or to bet on.

South Africa is short of owners right now – one reason would be that everything to do with SA racing is, to the outside audience, about betting not sport or the thrill of winning or the beauty of the animals. Many people don't want to be involved with betting.

In archaic parlance, there is a master/servant relationship between an owner and his or her trainer and an owner and his or her jockey, whose fees the owner pays. How these relationships are actually played out is another matter. Usually there is friendship, mutual respect and in many cases a

professional working relationship. At the opposite end of the scale of experience amongst owners, syndicate members do not deal with the trainer. That role is played by the syndicate manager who, in turn, communicates with the syndicate members. People who have 10% of something do not generally expect time consuming involvement, although many get a service as if they own 100%.

Owners of course employ and pay UK jockeys. In 30+ years I can't remember a trainer putting up a jockey without clearing it with me first. Of course, there are some stable jockey arrangements or there are pre-season agreements as to whom may be used subject to availability. But if there is a choice and especially when a rider is NOT available, which is often given seven days a week racing and three dozen racecourses, the trainer gets on **(to page 2)**

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the blower to discuss alternatives.

Something similar applies to racing venues. A Newmarket trainer – a very good friend – has a knowledgeable owner of many years standing whose patronage is much valued. Certain that a particular race at Lingfield would suit a particular filly, the owner agreed to enter with a back-up race at Thirsk, a couple of hundred miles north of Lingfield on the same day.

These would be the final two from an original short list of half a dozen possible races across a 2/3 day "window" – very different to the local racing options of one or two courses in South Africa, Australia and USA.

profits with minimal return to racing.

It was an owner who began to kick over the traces and challenge the bookies. Peter Savill, a feisty self-made business success, generated sparks as Chair of the BHB. He had many horses in training. His trainers were not allowed to make entries. He did that himself relying on the trainers to tell him when the horse was ready to run. Of course there must have been cooperative conversations but it shows the nature of the beast – and he was very successful on the course.

One of the planks of his financing plan was that owners own the intellectual property associated with their horses: names, colours, engagements and so on. Therefore, bookmakers and broadcasters needed to pay for their use. This plan seemed to be moving towards general acceptance. Why? Because the High Court in England upheld the view that William Hill should pay for using the data, as did the Appeal Court.



Comparing entries 6 days beforehand, Lingfield still looked right but the owner fancied a trip to Thirsk, costing more in transport – owners can pay up to £1,000 for a day at the races within England, something else that needs clearing – but being a nice little course if you are nippy enough to hurtle into a tight bend. Thirsk is also handy for Rievaulx and Helmsley Abbeys, Sutton Bank and the North York Moors and other wonders of Yorkshire. "To go racing with my horse" echoes as the perennial Number One reason for being a racehorse owner.

The filly ran 4<sup>th</sup> at Thirsk. I was in the trainer's living room. Had I been a cat, I would have been kicked into touch as he stormed out but I survived the tantrum and was soon greeted by a returning trainer, bearing whisky with an apology for his rage. It had been a tough day. Meanwhile the owner phoned, cheerfully blaming himself.

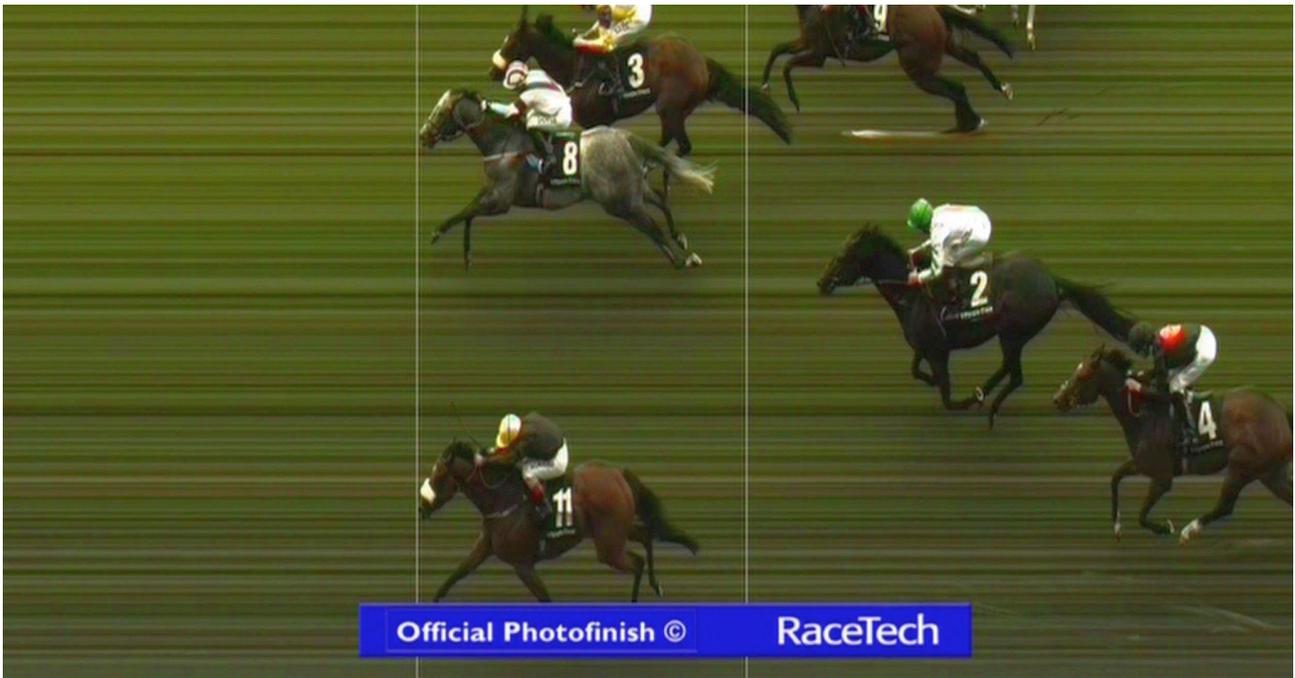
In the seemingly eternal "war" (until recently) over the financing of UK racing it was Owners v. Bookies. Racing Authorities (The Jockey Club then son of Jockey Hub the BHB then BHA) did what they could which was very little. Racecourses (not run by betting companies) sat on the fence.

Bookies, since 1961 legislation when High Street shops were legalised following powerful lobbying, had license – actually and figuratively – to cream off

The process was then taken to the European Court of Justice (in 2004). That body of foreign judges decided against the BHB and in favour of William Hill reversing the UK judgements. There was no further right of appeal. Brexit anyone?

Later, with "Racing" rudderless in its battle for funding, other owners stepped forward harnessing the considerable power of the Racehorse Owners Association along with good input from the TBA, Jockeys and Stable Staff. Success in greatly – even hugely – improving racecourse service to owners is down to a lot of constructive work. In parallel, such groups have heavily influenced the now far healthier relationship between owners, racecourses, government, administrators and bookies to very good effect.

Last weekend, Hintlesham Racing (UK version) had a runner at Ascot. Allowed 6 free Owners & Trainers Badges, we negotiated the number up to 10. We were 16 in total with families therefore paid for only 6 (at half price £20). Ascot knows us well and gave us use of a lovely suite, fully catered at a reduced cost described as "worth it at twice the price", overlooking Ascot's gorgeous pre-parade ring. We finished 2<sup>nd</sup> by a pixel then were looked after by



*The agony of No 8 losing by a pixel was soothed by the racecourse hospitality.*

**DAVID ALLAN (cont...)**

knowledgeable racecourse staff giving some of our number a day to remember.

Some will have had a bet, some not. All the enquiry (made to me as we mingled over lunch before the first – nobody wanted to be trapped indoors eating during the day’s racing) was updating our NewsMemos about his condition, the ground (Good to Firm but a great cover of grass and the top might be loose enough in September to avoid jar), whether the rain would arrive (it didn’t), how the course was riding and where was the pace in our race for him to track.

Everyone was made aware of what would be said to the jockey beforehand – she had won on him before - and the jockey herself helped with weighing room gossip about the pace which we quickly circulated. The racecourse was not the only entity working its socks off to look after the owners.

Quite how we in South Africa translate the passion of knowledgeable owners into cohesive action, along with equally dedicated trainers and perhaps other elements, I am not sure. What is clear is that the current structure must be overhauled. But at whose behest? Who or what is in charge? - **tt**



*Dressed down and back with their hero.*



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*ROSE In Bloom (Piere Strydom), good winner at Turffontein.*

## Ramsden's small raiding party off to good start

**CLASSY** filly **Rose In Bloom** posted an overdue third career win in an Assessment Plate over 1450m at Turffontein on Saturday and with some improvement to come, she is sure to be a factor in her targeted race, the Gr2 Spring Challenge for fillies on 6 October.

Trainer Joey Ramsden's assistant, Alson Ndzilana, has brought a raiding party of six to contest races in Gauteng this summer and he said on Monday: "Rose In Bloom has a few lengths in the tank and we hope to have her spot on that day."

He noted about the other five: "We have Catkin aimed at the

male equivalent of the Spring Challenge, he's a multiple winner effective between 1400m and 1600m. Four-year-old Morning Catch is a promising horse, he has raced in good company. We'll be looking for a suitable handicap for him, also for Cardiff Castle, a five-year-old who stays well.

"Then there is Lily Theresa, who lost narrowly at the Vaal earlier this year, we're bringing her back. She was a little disappointing in Durban. Professor Brian is the last one, he's a six-time winning sprinter, we may go for a feature like the Merchants with him." - *tt.*

### Vaal Thursday may be moved

GRASS growth normally triggered by the arrival of spring has been stunted at the Vaal this year by recent cold snaps coupled with a severe frost. There is excessive wear and tear in several sections of the Classic course, especially on the turn. Phumelela's national track manager Dean Diedericks said that the race meeting at the track this Thursday may be able to take place as scheduled. "The current warmer weather will stimulate grass growth dramatically and by the moving the false rail to zero it may be possible to race there on Thursday."

Track staff, in conjunction with trainers, jockeys and stipendiary stewards, will inspect the track today and a decision will then be made whether the surface is deemed suitable for racing. If not, the meeting will be switched to the Turffontein inside track.— *TAB News.*