



Mondays with DAVID ALLAN



A winner, but fill that grandstand! (Gold Circle).

After the Lord Mayor's show...

FOR any not familiar with the headline expression, it refers to anti-climax: the refuse carts following the glamorous annual parade to the Mansion House, picking up rubbish and droppings. As a brief ironic remark, it is often funny, but in sporting terms, we have another "Lord Mayor's Show" and another and another. With a quick scan of the array on offer, we may observe how much there is to teach the uninitiated about horse racing.

The glorious Ascot extravaganza is done and dusted for another year, leaving hundreds of thousands of people exhausted whether from accomplishing professional duties, from partying in boxes, on lawns, in restaurants or at picnics or from singing their heads off at the Bandstand at 6. The excellent ITV presentation and coverage with so many cameras from all angles fills non-attending days.

So what's next? In sporting terms, "what's next" has already happened. Other Lord Mayor's Shows.

Yesterday (Sunday) it was necessary to have two

TVs, a PC, a laptop and a tablet on the go, and to glance at a phone to check on what we might need to know.

Football is played mostly with feet. Please don't call it soccer – or "sakker" with an American accent.

"Soccer" was a schoolboy nickname for Association Football, the proper name of the sport. "FC" after a club name is a modern alteration from the traditional "AFC", dumbing it down but at least confirming the word "football". It coincided with "rugger" as a sort of upper class laddish language **(to page 2)**



The Mansion House, City of London.

DAVID ALLAN (cont...)

at Oxford where all sorts of items sprouted an "er":
tenner, topper, copper etc.

In the USA "saker" (an official title) became used widely to distinguish it from American Football. In that country, the game that is all about feet on the ball doesn't have "fooball" in its title whereas the game that has minimal foot-ball contact does.

With approaching 4 billion fans of football, "soccer" as a word has zero resonance for 3+ billion non-English speakers who call the game Football/Fussball/Futbol etc. Thus can marketing corrupt.

It is the Football World Cup that is going on at the moment in Russia. Today – post-Ascot – England beat Panama 6-1, as they jolly well should. This Panama team – present through the regional qualification system – is about as good as Aldershot Town down the road. Also, Panama has played two matches despicably and only cleaned up its act in the second half of this one after a referee finally got a grip on the variety of (rugby) holds and swipes of the arm.

Also post-Ascot, at a packed and stunningly redeveloped Old Trafford, England's ODI cricket team completed a 5-0 series win over a weakened but attractively polite and chastened Australia team that will rebuild. While that was going on, Japan drew 2-2 with Senegal with a bunch of the players familiar from the English Leagues.

On another screen, Formula 1 freaks like me enjoyed Lewis Hamilton winning the first French Grand Prix to be held for ten years –ironic given the name and origins. Hugely attended by "proper fans", this was only one of the many festival events to be enjoyed the day after Ascot's fifth day.

Sir Michael Stoute, when congratulated on beating Sir Henry's record of Royal Meeting wins made a modest comment that was tinged with some regret – in addition to the natural regret still felt at Henry Cecil's passing. He said "Most of Henry's wins were achieved when it was a four day meeting".

Coping with five days – since the Golden Jubilee - is in some respects "too much". On the other hand, Ascot is packed every day and it means that racing is doing what it does best: being available.

Football disappears for three or four months every summer, if no European Championships or World Cup. That may be a good thing but millions of people are left "without" for that time.

Cricket does a better job of availability being year round, with overseas tours, but with brutal time changes causing some commuters to walk into lamp posts on the way to work having been up all night. Where many sports are "once a week" or like Wimbledon "a two week blitz once a year", cricket gives many multiple- and single-day options for a Great Day Out.



Padded lamp-post for distracted texters, and all-night cricket watchers.

Racing is always there for us – and we make too little of this – in most countries including South Africa. Yes, "the Flat" in UK stops for five months through the winter except for the all-weather stuff, but jumping has arguably the stronger fan base and fills the winters. Racing marketers add bands, fashion shows or food festivals. Racecourse explanations often dumb racing down so people, who mostly don't care if there for the band, might understand and a few, a very few, might come back.

Dumbing down is a pathetic approach and a big mistake. The best pastimes have complexities that make their followers experts and thus dedicated. If trivialised, the whole thing is – well – trivial.



Old Trafford.



Where the explanations to the uninitiated start.

DAVID ALLAN (fm p2)

Meanwhile, real racing fans populate racecourses generously even on a wet Wednesday. They are the means of spreading the word and attracting yet more people, if properly nurtured and motivated.

Punting plays a major part in horse racing as a large source of funding to add to the investment by owners that puts on the show. One cannot live without the other, yet armchair punting in absentia can never be the lifeblood of a sport.

Attendance is paramount – for “live” experience – whether to punt or not to punt. That may be the question. But either answer or somewhere in between is absolutely fine.

The complexities must be advertised. What a shame that 100/6 and 100/8 have gone with only 100/30 remaining. Computerised odds are so dull. The mental arithmetic of racing – handicapping, odds, distances, dates – are the “weights and measures” to be added to the stars, human and equine, not to mention celebrating the enormous numbers of races to be enjoyed compared to the number of other sporting events.

One football match lasting 90+ minutes which might be a nil-all draw v. eight races with eight results across four or five hours?

At English football home games, across 92 league clubs and many non-league, the fan is there in most cases because born nearby. Dad took him or her as a nipper. You can’t break the habit. Or you have moved away but remain hooked and needing to follow the match. You just hope that the good moments outweigh the bad to make it all worthwhile, albeit consoled by irony or gallows humour if things have gone wrong on the pitch. “My” team had a spell of being set up so defensively as to rarely be in possession. 25,000 people would suddenly chant “We’ve got the ball We’ve really got the ball”.

Racing gives us a result – lots of results per day - lots of days of the week. Jockeys ride half a dozen races every day, or more, many being true sports stars. To deny the exciting complications by dumbing it down is nothing short of an insult to our wonderful sport and industry. - *tt*.



BETTING WORLD'S LATEST BETTING, VODACOM DURBAN JULY:

18-10 AFRICAN NIGHT SKY

- 13-2 Do It Again
- 9-1 (15-2) Majestic Mambo
- 12-1 Made To Conquer
- 14-1 Elusive Silva
- 17-1 Abashiri
- 20-1 White River, Tilbury Fort, Dark Moon Rising
- 25-1 Coral Fever, Platinum Prince, Yakeen, Pack Leader
- 33-1 (50-1) Royal Crusade, (40-1) It's My Turn
- 35-1 (25-1) Cascapedia
- 45-1 (33-1) Liege
- 50-1 and upwards others



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