



# OTI GAZETTE

*The official newsletter of OTI RACING*



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## Where Do Owners Find Value?

As we get to the halfway stage in the yearling sales calendar, it's evident that it's going to be a bumper year for our breeders. Without exception, every sale has returned records results as buyers line up for every category of horse.

In a market place where prices have never been higher, it's hard for breeders, trainers and syndicators to be selling on price. Hence the word 'value' keeps popping up. Unlike 'price', which is specific and tangibly measurable, 'value' is vague. Like beauty it's in the eye of the beholder. So the question naturally arises, what is value when it comes to increasingly expensive yearlings?

Racing horses, for the economic rationalists, is not a good financial investment. Unlike property, shares and quality art, most who invest at yearling sales are likely to lose money. At one end of the scale are the high priced colts where the buyer's dream is to create the next high priced stallion. Most however will end up geldings, racing well below their expected grade.

Their female counterparts are a different story. A high priced, well-bred filly will always command strong financial worth even if she has no speed. She's a little like a quality artwork in that there will already be someone to pay a healthy price for her. Clearly here, the financial value is in fillies.

Down from the expensive end of the market, it's anyone's guess what yearlings will succeed. The varying opinions of the buyers will only come home to roost once their purchases race. The horse's health, its natural ability, the trainer's skills all mixed with good or bad luck, will dictate success or otherwise. Despite what we might like to think, it's largely a guessing game.

Yet despite this lack of financial logic, many from all parts of society are wanting to buy. The value they see lies with the dream of having a Champion. That value is not something that just exists on race days. It exists in the excitement of anticipation, involvement, shared experiences with friends and being introduced to new people. In a materialistic world there are not many activities where people can get these benefits that racing offers for owners. And although for most, it maybe costly, its real value to the recipient.

We have three runners set to represent us this weekend, who will all race on Saturday. Two of those in highly competitive Group 1's.

## At Flemington

**FUTURE SCORE** is likely to contest the 2600m Listed Roy Higgins Quality (Race 2 – 1:10pm). Having taken good improvement from his run in the Torney Night Cup and with rain forecasted, we expect to see a competitive showing. A good run would see the Group 2 Adelaide Cup remain on his agenda.

Talented three-year-old colt **SPIRIT OF GAYLARD** will get his first look at Group 1 level in the Australian Guineas over a mile (Race 7 – 4:20pm). The step-up in trip and return to Flemington are major positives, and his work in between race starts gives us confidence of an improved effort.

## At Ellerslie

**REGAL LION** takes the much-anticipated step to 2400m in the Group 1 NZ Derby (Race 9 – 3:10pm ADST), a distance which Murray Baker & Andrew Forsman feel he will relish. To read more about the gelding's background and chances in the Derby, please click [HERE](#).

## Next Week

On Wednesday, we will see **INVERELL** hit the track for the second time this preparation at Sandown as he has his final tinue up for the Group 2 Alister Clark Stakes.

Next weekend sees the return of **CHAILLOT** in the Group 3 Shaftesbury Avenue Handicap at Flemington for Archie Alexander. The talented mare has won three times on the Flemington track, two of those at stakes level.

**DAQIANSWEET JUNIOR** will be representing Phillip Stokes in his hometown Cup (Group 2 Adelaide Cup) on March 14, where Jamie Kah will once again partner the progressive galloper. As previously mentioned, he may well be joined by **FUTURE SCORE**.

## WINNERS



### EAGLEMONT

1600m BM64 Ballarat

*Trained by Ciaran Maher & David Eustace*



### VARDANI

2040m BM70 The Valley

*Trained by Archie Alexander*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Please let us know if you have any interview requests or subjects to discuss.

Perhaps you have a racing topic you'd like to write about?

**hermione@oti.com.au**

# A CONVERSATION WITH JYE MCNEIL

## On his childhood

I grew up on a dairy farm in northern Victoria. My childhood was surrounded by a lot of different things like various sports, motorbikes etc. Dad always had a few horses and I use to love going to the races with him but I wasn't interested in riding horses until I was a teen. When I was 14 I had my first ride on a horse, it was then that I decided to take the path to becoming a jockey. I loved the horses and the thrill of going fast in a situation where you have limited protection and have to rely on yourself and your skills.

## On his first rides and first winner

I had five rides on my first day. It went that quick I can barely remember it, other than the location which was Swan Hill (close to home), so all the family were there. I slept well that night! My first win was at Kerang (even closer to home) on a horse called De Mars for trainer Jim Lake. It felt very exciting for two reasons, my family and school friends were there to witness my first win and I had had close to 30 rides prior to this day, which made me feel like I had really deserved it and had to work hard for the achievement.

## On his mentors

Gerald Egan was my master and a great mentor, he gave me opportunities and a great education early in my career. After a few years of riding I developed a relationship with well respected form analyst Deane Lester, who I would say has been the biggest mentor in my career. We have now developed a great friendship as well which has become very important to me. He gives me great insight and confidence in each and every race I ride in. In terms of finding inspiration I would have to get that from a great mate of mine, Harry Coffey who does a phenomenal job to be able to compete at the top level with his condition (Cystic Fibrosis).

## On the day to day life

I have a strict fitness regime all year round but I only need to have a strict diet when riding light, so possibly a couple times a year like I did with I'm Thunderstruck in the Rupert Clarke and the Toorak. Friday would be my busiest day with an early start for Flemington jump outs after a late finish at Pakenham races the night before. I have a few hours break after the jump outs before heading to the night meeting at Mooney Valley. I don't usually mind driving but as you could imagine the traffic is very busy getting to both of these meetings.



## On the changes he would make if he were in charge of the sport

If I was in charge of racing for one day I would cut cost for the public to attend the races. We are forever talking about how to attract the next generation of people and then when they come to the races they are being charged a fortune with all the costs of entry fees, food, alcohol, race books etc.

## On winning the Melbourne Cup

It was definitely a fantastic feeling to win the Melbourne Cup, and also very emotional and overwhelming. There is a lot of extra attention and media after the race which was very tiring, but I embraced it as best I could and hope that I get to experience it again at some stage throughout my career.

## On his interests away from work

I'm a very competitive person so away from racing my hobbies are usually sport related. Tennis and golf are my favourite's but I would prefer tennis over golf as there are fewer obstacles in the way! My passion is Formula 1, I spend a lot of Sunday nights staying up very late watching the races and following the season.

## On I'm Thunderstruck

I'm Thunderstruck's return in the C.F.Orr was terrific. Not many horses were able to make ground up from back in the field in that particular race but he finished off well and I'm really looking forward to the All-Star Mile. What makes him such a talent is his ability to be able to quicken, he has an explosive turn of speed, to complement that he is both very competitive and determined.

# MATT STEWART

It's one of the most delicate, subjective and emotive scenarios in racing.

You say my horse is not fit to race, I disagree; your vets see one thing, mine another; I've got a colt worth \$15 million if he wins the Blue Diamond Stakes, you pull the rug and now my colt is in career limbo.



There was nothing unique about the story behind the scratching of Lofty Strike from last Saturday's Blue Diamond Stakes.

Industry-employed vets have always been the gate keeper and many horses have famously been stopped at the gate.

Tawqet won the 2006 Caulfield Cup and was Melbourne Cup favourite before eagle-eyed Racing Victoria vets deemed him lame after he cast a shoe. He trotted scratchily and was scratched on race morning. Five years earlier, Bede Murray was adamant Universal Prince was fit to contest the Cup but that dreaded trot up said "lame" and RV vets took him out.

Murray and his vet had been in furious disagreement with RV's vets and Murray spent Cup Day drowning his sorrows in the front bar of the Emerald Hotel.

In recent years, the RV vets have mostly turned their focus to Werribee and the annual arrival of Cups raiders who have suffered countless injury setbacks in training and occasional catastrophic ones during the Cup. Because of these breaky-breaky internationals – Anthony Van Dyck mainly – RV vets have become very jumpy, and very "safe" in their judgments, when it comes to the vetting process for Group One races.

The rules are different for these races and they exist more for "perception welfare" than horse welfare. If it was all about welfare, every horse would be subjected the same intense focus every day of the week.

But if an allegedly risky horse slips through the net in a maiden at Tatura or Woolamai, no one will really notice. It's different in a Blue Diamond. Everyone is watching, many outside the racing bubble.

It was this heightened scrutiny that tripped up Lofty Strike and his scratching not only robbed the Diamond of its feel-good story – of Sandhu and his popular jockey Jamie Mott – but demanded questions of the process.

In all of these cases, not just Lofty Strike, the main bone of contention has been familiarity. Sandhu and his two stable vets were adamant Lofty Strike was good to go. He'd carried a sesamoid issue from birth, one that required some management but did not mean he presented lame either before the Diamond or his two previous starts.

He trotted scratchily his whole life but was smooth at a canter and lethal at a gallop.

RV stewards who did not possess his history profile trotted him twice in two days and declared him lame. They said he became irritated when his fetlock was inspected, suggesting lameness. Sandhu's team said the colt became irritated because he was fed up with being poked and prodded.

Dwayne Dunn told RSN on Saturday that the system was wrong. He said he had suggested to RV that its vets invest in profiles of horses entered for these big races that might reveal the difference between lameness and individuality.

He told the story of a stable he'd ridden for in Hong Kong. He said many of the horses trotted up so scratchily on hard surfaces that you'd swear they were about to break.

But HK's then chief vet Brian Stewart had developed profiles of these horses that proved that while they trotted like old men, they were safe to race.

It's mostly prudent for RV vets to play the cautious card but over-playing is the risk; not to them but for trainers like Sandhu whose colt could have won and been worth \$15 million but is now in limbo, a two-time winner with a funny trot that he will have for life.

# KNIGHTLAILA TO JOHNNY MURTAGH

- Exciting Irish-based three-year-old -



**KNIGHTLAILA** (pictured above as a yearling) has put in two eye catching runs to date, and recently arrived into the stables of Johnny Murtagh at The Curragh.

Whilst being relatively green, he was placed on both occasions, including giving 5kgs to the winner last start when only beaten a head.

On the evidence of his previous runs, as well as his breeding, **KNIGHTLAILA** should be at his most effective over middle/staying distances. His next run is likely to be in April/May in Ireland before targeting suitable races throughout Europe.

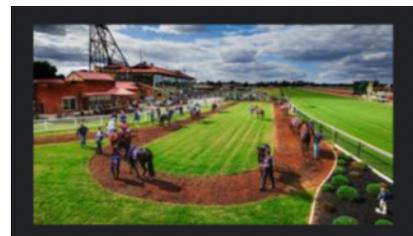
By Decorated Knight and out of a Dark Angel mare, **KNIGHTLAILA** has a similar profile to **OTTOMAN EMPEROR** who Johnny Murtagh trained successfully to win the Group 3 Gordon Stakes at Goodwood in July for OTI and connections.

For more information: [oti@oti.com.au](mailto:oti@oti.com.au)

## OTI QUIZ

1. The world's most valuable race, The Saudi Cup was run last weekend. Who was the winner and where is he trained from?
2. Who won the 2021 Australian Guineas?
3. Capitalist was the busiest stallion in Australia in 2021. How many mares did he cover?

### NAME THE RACECOURSE



Hint - 590 kms from Perth

# GAILO CHOP TO LIVING LEGENDS



OTI is proud to announce that Gailo Chop will this week head to Living Legends, where he will join former OTI-stablemate Tom Melbourne in his retirement.

The now 11-year-old gelding enjoyed a fascinating journey with respected show horse producer Dale Plumb, making his debut in a Racing Victoria Off-The-Track show during December last year. However, a recent vet assessment unfortunately revealed signs of arthritis, drawing a halt to Gailo's time in the show scene.

Gailo will now join a star-studded lineup at Living Legends, where he will take part in a range of tours and in-home events.

OTI's Equine Welfare Program, which has already been of great benefit to new owners of retired OTI gallopers, will support Gailo and Tom throughout their time at Living Legends.

After race careers that took them both through Europe, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth, it seems fitting that the highly decorated pair will live out retirement together in the paddocks of Living Legends.

[Click here](#) for more information on the OTI Equine Welfare Program.

## OTI QUIZ RESULTS

### NAME THE RACECOURSE

1. Emblem Road, who was trained locally in Saudi Arabia
2. Lunar Fox
3. 243

Kalgoorlie.  
Racing started in 1896. The Kalgoorlie and Boulder race clubs merged in 1953.

OTI Management Pty. Ltd.  
204/425 Docklands Drive | Docklands | VIC | 3008 | Australia  
oti@oti.com.au | +61 (0) 3 9670 0255  
hermione@oti.com.au