

Pedigree and performance vital to the path of success

■ Sally Parkyn

“BREED from the best mare you can afford, and put her to the best stallion you can afford,” summed up breeder Andrew Hughes who was one of a high profile panel at the Teagasc supported Equine Breeding Demonstration event held at Kildalton College in Co Kilkenny last Tuesday night.

Hughes of Ennisnag Stud, together with Marion Hughes (HHS), Tom Brennan (MHS) and Richard Sheane (Cooley Farms) shared their thoughts and successes on *Breeding For High Performance*, while a few days earlier in Co Sligo, Chris Ryan (Scarteen), Andrew Gardiner (Doonaveeragh) and Liam Lynskey (Derryronane Stud) had focussed on *Optimising Traditional Bloodlines*.

Around 200 breeders and producers attended the two fixtures, which delivered a fascinating insight into the breeding and buying philosophies some of the county's most successful sport horse studs and yards. Hosted by Teagasc's Crea English and Wendy Conlon, the demonstrations showcased varied examples of breeding stock, three-year-olds and ridden horses – all of which had been especially chosen for their differing attributes.

PARADE

In Kilkenny, the session opened with a parade of some top-drawer show jumping mares, including a sister to the Olympic performer MHS Going Global, together with the grey Triest Star (1.50m), who has already bred the 1.60m jumper Zilverstar.

It soon became evident that panel considered the dam's pedigree and performance as the vital ingredient to the path of success. “You have to have a good mare in the first place,” Marion Hughes stated. Agreeing, Tom Brennan added: “The stallion can only bring one of two things to the table, the mare brings everything else – and to my mind it's 90%.”

Of course both Marion Hughes and Tom Brennan were fortunate to inherit their equine families which go back generations, but for Andrew Hughes, his breeding pro-



Richard Sheane of Cooley Sports Horses speaking at the Teagasc breeding evening at Kildalton College this week

gramme began with just one mare eight years ago. When assessing a possible broodmare, Hughes will always look at the pedigree first, and if that doesn't stack up, then he will go no further. Interestingly Hughes progressed to add that ideally he would like to see 1.60m horses appearing in the dam's pedigree the whole way through, as well as a good proportion of thoroughbred blood.

WORLD CHAMPION

This ethos gained weight when the Murphy family's wonderful mare Gipsy III, dam of the recent Lanaken world six-year-old champion Columbcille Gipsy, came forward to parade. Looking in top condition and belying her 27 years, Gipsy is by the thoroughbred sire Grundyman, while her maternal grandam is by Sacramento Song (TB). As regards the choice of stallions, the panel all agreed that they should be chosen to improve the mare.

The obvious cost of sourcing these well-bred mares is

likely be prohibitive for many breeders, so the possibility of mare sharing between friends was also discussed.

Both Brennan and Hughes remained clear cut and commercial throughout, with both admitting that they cull mares if they are not breeding success, and if their progeny are not up to a standard they are sold before being broken.

Next up were a quartet of three-year-olds, two from Tom Brennan's own show jumping bloodlines, and two traditionally bred potential event horses.

All four pundits were complimentary about the quality, the movement and the conformation of the four horses on show, and confirmed the necessity of a correct, athletic horse for the market place. The event horses were both heading for the Go For Gold sale in 10 days' time, and as a result they were a little more polished and less fazed by the occasion than their counterparts. Brennan's jumpers meanwhile were greener but nevertheless showed definite

glimpses of things to come.

From a breeder's point of view, it would have been an interesting exercise to discover the differing production costs of the two.

Presentation, and its importance was another well aired topic. The auction-bound three-year-olds were beautifully presented by Henry Foley and Joanne Curtin, and it was Richard Sheane who commented: “fewer people can see through the raw material now, and they are prepared to pay extra to buy what they want.”

The same viewpoint carried through to the ridden horses, and closing the evening was a display by Richard Sheane's world number one ranked six-year-old AKD Cooley Lockdown partnered by Katie O'Sullivan, and Marion Hughes seven-year-old HHS California (1.40m), ridden by Louie Deplace.

FALSE ECONOMY

In Sligo, Andrew Gardiner commented on the false economy of sending a youngster to be prepped for sale just two weeks before an auction.

“Six weeks is needed to do the job properly,” he said. “And if you have a long distance to travel, consider even arriving at the sale the day before.”

Fellow panel members Liam Lynskey was mindful of the importance of using approved stallions, saying. “The day you choose your sire is the day you sell.” Chris Ryan meanwhile remarked that breeding choices should be market orientated and ideally performance based.

“An objective evaluation of breeding and youngstock should be made at an early stage, as a precursor to the amount invested in production cost to the young horse and to the stallion nomination to the mare,” he said. “The better the dam line, the better the projected return of the stock.”

With an emphasis on traditional lines, the Sligo meeting featured a selection of well-presented Connemara ponies, the RDS winning Connemara performance stallion Black Shadow, a five-year-old performance horse, as well as a three-year-old by ISH sire Sligo Candy Boy.



Tom Berney of Berney Bros. Kilcullen with Kildare huntsman Peter Cahill and Mr. Bojanles at the launch of the 2017 Berney Bros. Huntsman's Team Challenge on Sunday, November 19th at the PuncHESTOWN Winter Festival

Huntsman's Challenge gears up for bumper year

NO less than 18 hunts are set to take part in the Berney Bros. Huntsman's Team Challenge which takes place on Sunday, November 19th at the PuncHESTOWN Winter Festival and aims to raise over €10,000 for the Irish Injured Jockeys.

Generously sponsored once again by Tom Berney of Berney Bros in Kilcullen, the event has grown from last year where the victor was Niall Mahon from the Westmeath Foxhounds from 11 participating hunts taking part.

The centrepiece Berney Bros. Huntsman's Cross Country Challenge demonstration will take place over a one and a half mile section of the famous PuncHESTOWN banks course. An introduction parade of challengers will commence at 10.50am in the parade ring prior to the demonstration at 11.20am. Another addition is the parade of hounds by the Carlow Farmers and the Bray hunts.

There'll be great fun also with the sack race taking place in the parade ring between races, while the fashion stakes will be well catered for with the *Most Appropriately Dressed for Racing Hunt Member* competition.

The only qualifying factor for the style stakes is that contenders must be aged 40 years and over. The three elements of the day will be scored on a points system with the hunt that has accumulated the most points being crowned as 2017 Berney Bros. Huntsman Team Challenge Champions.

All hunt supporters are encouraged to come along on the day to support their respective packs and in doing so, raise funds for a brilliant cause. There will be a reserved hospitality zone in the newly refurbished Budweiser Sports Bar for Berney Bros. Huntsman's Team Challenge participants and sup-

porters where they can enjoy the seven-race card including the Grade 1 Unibet Morgiana Hurdle. Live music will take place after racing.

Event sponsor Tom Berney of Berney Bros said: “Further to the success of the inaugural event last year it is great to see it growing and attracting even more support. We see customers from hunting and racing coming through the doors of the shop every day so this is a super opportunity to give something back. Berney Bros. Kilcullen are delighted to be involved in what is the coming together of racing and hunting for a very worthwhile cause.”

Each participating hunt representative must raise a minimum of €600 for the Irish Injured Jockeys to qualify for the 2017 Berney Bros. Huntsman's Team Challenge.

Each hunt has been issued with an allocation of discounted tickets.

2017 HUNTING CHALLENGE

1. Kildare Hunt
2. Meath Hunt
3. Farney Harriers
4. Carlow Farmers Hunt
5. North Tipperary
6. County Down Stag Hounds
7. County Galway Blazers
8. Ormond Hunt
9. Kilworth & Araglen
10. Island Hunt
11. South Union Hunt
12. Leitrim Hunt
13. Ballymacad Hunt
14. Westmeath Foxhounds
15. Limerick Hunt
16. Louth Hunt
17. Bray Hunt
18. North Kerry Hunt

The PuncHESTOWN Winter Festival also takes place on November 18th and 19th. See www.puncHESTOWN.com further details.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pony team says thanks

MADAM,
We, the 2017 Irish Pony

Dressage Team would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who helped and supported us in achieving our goal of qualifying and competing at the 2017 European Pony Championships in Kaposvar, Hungary.

A huge thank you to Anne Marie Dunphy, our chef d'equipe, for her patience, encouragement and expert coaching in preparing us for these championships

and for her continued help, support, patience, training and expertise during the championships.

We are also extremely grateful to all the team sponsors: GAIN Equine Nutrition, TRM, Dubarry, Charles Owen, Horseware Ireland and Berney Bros for their generosity.

A final thank you to both Horse Sport Ireland and Dressage Ireland for making

the trip possible.

Yours etc,
Leah Murphy
Robyn O'Neill
Sive Kearney
Vicky Campbell



Fixtures and Results
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