

NZTR Over the JUMPS

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The season is over... let the new season begin

There is no doubt that 2008 finished on a high on National Jumps Day at the tail end of September. The meeting, run in glorious spring sunshine, attracted solid local sponsorship, a great crowd and outstanding racing. It was a perfect advert for the wonderful spectacle that jump racing can be. It would be a pleasant thought to think that the feel good factor of that event is replicated in five months time when we reach the season's conclusion once again. Are there any reasons why this can not be achieved?

Many people I speak to seem convinced of pending doom and gloom for jump racing in New Zealand. Personally I am confident that it can survive and prosper, otherwise I wouldn't have put my hand up for the job of Jumps Manager again this year. I certainly won't subscribe to opinions that I am the Captain of the Marie Celeste. Rather than, how long can jumping survive, the real question that should be being asked is, how can we best manage the great assets that the New Zealand jump racing scene possesses to guarantee a rosy future? Let's be optimistic. Racing has never been kind to pessimists.

The main reason for people's concern is what is happening in Australia, where the jump racing sub code has been analysed to the core by racing administrators. Report has led to report – suggestions have led to change – and whilst prize money has gone up year on year the alterations to the infrastructure there has led the country's jumping stalwarts to quiver in anticipation of the big full stop. It has not come to that yet but the bones of the sport have been significantly altered – and probably forever.

My personal thoughts are that New Zealand is far better equipped to become a jumping stronghold than Australia ever has or will be. Our weather, our tracks, our horses, our life style are more akin to the English custom, where jump racing is arguably at its strongest time in history. We should look there for inspiration – it means looking a lot further – but those with the vision to examine what happens beyond their back door usually end up winners. With Trackside showing the Cheltenham Festival live, it gave everyone an opportunity to peek at how great jump racing can be.

We have just enjoyed a highly successful year according to most performance indicators and there seems to be a new-born enthusiasm amongst the rank and file – let's use this as a spring board to a positive future. Us jump racing fans are the only ones who can make it happen.

Last year saw many changes. There was friction in some quarters but the pruning back has given life to new sprigs of green – as it so often does.

Not long after the last hurdle was jumped NZ Jumps Inc commissioned a survey on jump racing. Anybody who had trained, ridden, owned or just held an opinion was invited to answer a set of questions and put their thoughts forward. I am glad to say that most industry participants of note took the time to respond.

The results in their entirety have been published for some time on nzracing.co.nz so there is no need to replicate them here – however it was extremely pleasing to note that 88% of respondents were content with the new direction. So far so good. Always room for improvement.

The truth is that I for one was surprised that NZ Jumps Inc and NZTR didn't cop more criticism. There were some quite hefty alterations to what had been "the norm" traditionally. Don't get me wrong, there were plenty of concerns raised and each and every one has been and will be considered. It is pleasing to know so much passion exists. Some respondents went to great length to table

additional information, well beyond what was requested and their contribution is appreciated.

So what about this year? What lies ahead?

There is no getting away from the most noticeable change. The dramatic drop in stakes.

Everybody appears to be realistic about the necessity for cut backs of all sorts due to the downturn in betting and the subsequent reduction in income for racing. Total jump racing prize money available for distribution has been reduced by 20%. The demand to take out the knife to stakes came at the same time as a call from trainers for more races, in particular, at the beginning of the season. It was no easy task to make the cuts but it was decided that the prestige and open class races should be clipped as opposed to the lower class. The top liners had after all enjoyed a more significant rise going into last season. The new stakes levels would still be higher or at least on par with 2007 stakes levels – so although disappointing it should not be considered a full blown disaster. The minimum levels for maiden jumping events are to remain at \$7000.

The promised \$50,000 jumping infrastructure fund that was to be distributed to clubs to spend on fixing up jumping related amenities was also chopped originally, but was given a last minute reprieve by the NZTR board, which was a relief as it had been taken as promised by many clubs.

The two day jumping festivals at Hawke's Bay and Ellerslie have also been removed from the programme. The pressure on the clubs to prepare the track and venue for two consecutive days was the main reason for their demise. It is also felt that the slim resources available for marketing and promotion may be better focused on just one great day rather than two "ok" days. Make no mistake, both the Hawke's Bay and Great Northern Hurdle and Steeplechase days will be enthusiastically supported by the clubs and I don't think too much will have been lost by the change – in fact I think it will be a positive move for all concerned.

Other than that, all will seem very much in line with last year.

Lets jump in and enjoy it.

ANDRE KLEIN



Hypnotize leads Proposition over the water jump

Tommy Hazlett looks ahead *By Dennis Ryan*

As the days shorten and the jumping season looms, Tommy Hazlett has every intention of carrying on where he left off last spring.

On the score of feature race success and overall wins, Hazlett has been our standout jumps jockey of recent years. His current season tally of 10 wins is a three-win buffer over his nearest rivals, Isaac Lupton and Jo Rathbone.

In 2007-08 he headed the jumps jockey premiership with 13 wins, while a year earlier he dead-heated with Rathbone on 14 wins then added the Mercedes Jumps Jockey of the Year trophy.

On the final card of the 2008 year, National Jumps Day at Matamata in September, Hazlett dominated proceedings with four wins, including a three-quarter-length steeplechase victory on Myths And Legends after an epic battle with the Craig Durden-ridden Sticky Fingers.

The man at the centre of the National Jumps Day action still enjoys talking about that race months later, not necessarily for the sake of his win, more for the fierce rivalry involved.

"Often enough when I look over my shoulder it's someone like Jonathan (Riddell) having a crack at me," says Hazlett. "This time it was Durds – and he wouldn't go away. Whichever way it went it was good fun, that's what we really enjoy.

"As a whole the gang of jumps jockeys get on well together and we all get a turn. There is a bond given the job we do and we don't begrudge anyone their successes."

As a just turned 39-year-old, Hazlett is one of the senior members of jumps jockey ranks, but the good news is that his focus remains on what's round the corner in the months ahead.

"I don't feel my age when I'm out there competing," he says. "Giving up riding isn't something that's necessarily on my mind, but whenever I'm asked I say that I'll jump before I get pushed. That's for later though."

There's no chance of Hazlett's fitness levels dropping off outside the jumping season. As the partner of Ashburton trainer Pam Gerard complete with the shared responsibilities of a young family, he's on the go 24/7.

Hazlett is keen on renewing his association with Awapuni trainer Mark Oulaghan, who last year provided him with the means to Waikato and Sydneyham Hurdle wins on Yourtheman and a Koral Steeplechase on The Jolly Dancer.

"Mark's one of those trainers who when you get on one of his horses, you know it will be fit and ready. We've had a marvellous partnership and he's become a good friend too.



Caption?

"If you keep your ears open and mouth shut around him, you never miss learning something new."

Unfulfilled ambitions exist, some attainable and some more wistful.

"If I had my time again I might have gone about things differently, like go to America and try my luck there," he confides. "I had hoped for a ride sometime in the Nakayama, but my last chance was probably Yourtheman, who missed out this year to a couple of Aussie horses.

"The Great Northern Steeple is about the only major I haven't won here, but it's one of those races that I have trouble even getting a ride in let alone winning it.

"In the five years or so since I came back from Australia I think I've had only the one ride in it. If that changes I'd be only too happy to grab the chance."

Ballantine's Jumps Star is Back

It is great news to announce that the Ballantine's Jump Star of the Season is back again this season.

All divisions provided excellent competition in 2008 and it will come as a surprise if we don't have some interesting races to the line in 2009.

The rules remain unchanged.

All starters in all New Zealand jump races will score points. The higher the grade of event, the more points on offer.

There will be four divisions for the competition:

- Steeplechaser
- Hurdler
- Trainer
- Jockey

STAR OF THE SEASON

Race	POSITION					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Unplaced
PJR 1	150	90	38	23	15	6
PJR 2	100	60	25	15	10	5
PJR 3	80	48	20	12	8	4
Open	40	24	10	6	4	3
RST Open	30	18	8	5	3	2
Maiden	15	9	4	2	2	1

PRIZES

The prizes are applicable for all four divisions:

- Return flights for 2 from anywhere in New Zealand to Queenstown
- Two nights accommodation including breakfast in a Queenstown luxury lodge
- \$1,000 spending money

The prize is for the winner only. Each prize is valued at \$4,500. There will be no cash alternative offered this year. The top five in each division will receive a bottle of Ballantine's Whisky.

Points updates will be displayed on www.nzracing.co.nz

Giant Jump Racing wall charts

Need to cover a bit of space on your wall? What is better than a giant calendar/wall chart containing the jump racing dates and some outstanding jump racing photographs from last season. Copies will be sent to all Jumps Inc members and jump racing clubs. **If you want to get one sent to you directly please email Andre Klein at ceo@gallopsouth.co.nz**

Amateur Riders – get the go ahead again

There is no question that the Amateur Rider Series that commenced last season was a great success. Its back again in 2009 but in need of a sponsor! If you are eager to promote your business by providing a trophy to the winners of each of the ten events in the Amateur Riders Series race then please get in touch with Simon Cooper at NZTR. It will be one of the best value for money, nationally spread sponsorship opportunities in racing this year.

For more information on obtaining an Amateur riders license please contact Matthew Barnsley.

Horses to watch

With the jumping season just around the corner we thought it pertinent to contact some of our leading jumping trainers to see what jumping horses they have in work and what horses will be targeting the early jumping features.

ANN BROWNE

Arrastra/General Mac/Ima Heroine/Mount Sinai/Waikiki Prince:

All horses have been in work since early January. Depending on the nature of the tracks, all horses will be looking at options early in the season.

Havana City:

Has been in work since early January. An early target will be the Waikato Steeplechase.

Fair King/Poacher/Primo Canera:

Will not be seen until June. Their major targets will be the feature jumping races at Ellerslie in September.

CRAIG AMREIN & YVETTE KEOGHAN

Waitete Boy:

Has been in work since the first week of January. No set programme at the moment, waiting to see the nature of the tracks.

SHERYL & ROGER MCGLADE

Willandra Prince:

Has been in work for a month. No set programme at the moment, waiting to see the nature of the tracks.

DAVINA WADDELL

Just The Man:

Back in work. No set programme at the moment, waiting to see the nature of the tracks.

BOB AUTRIDGE

Captain Jingle:

Has been in work for some months. A possible early target will be the Waikato Steeplechase.

KEN RAE

Mario, Opus Dei, Joerok:

All three horses have been in work since December. A possible early target will be the Waikato Hurdles.

BEN FOOTE

Proposition:

Has been in work since December. An early target will be the Waikato Steeplechase.

Loki:

Has been in work since December. An early target will be the Waikato Steeplechase.

He's So Vain:

Has been in work since December. An early target will be the Waikato Hurdles.

RAYMOND CONNORS

Hypnotize:

Has been in work since December. An initial target will be the Wellington Hurdles.

Mikemendaad:

Has been in work since December. An early target will be the Waikato Steeplechase.

ALLAN SHARROCK

The Bighearted:

Ready to go to the races, will target early season features as he prefers better ground.

MARK OULAGHAN

Yourtheman/Counter Punch:

Both horses are working well, consideration had been given to sending them to Oakbank, but more likely to go to the Waikato Hurdles.

The Jolly Dancer:

Has been in work for sometime. Will target early Steeplechases.

JOHN WHEELER

Papa Don't Preach/Last Claim/Bennyosler:

All horses have been in work for sometime. They are all headed to Australia for the Oakbank and Warrnambool Carnivals.

Sand Sweeper:

Already in Australia and being set for the Von Doussa at Oakbank.

Yamaura:

An early target will be the Waikato Hurdles. If he performs well in that he will head to Melbourne for the Grand National Steeplechase.

In Your Dreams/High Season/Monymony:

They are all headed for the major New Zealand Steeplechase races.

KEVIN HUGHES

Guns 'N' Roses:

Has just come into work and won't be ready until later on in the season.

ROSS BECKETT

Blueonice/Dan Moran:

Both have been in work for sometime. Will target races at Riverton.

JOHN & KAREN PARSONS

Honour Victory:

Has been in work for sometime. Not far away from resuming.

NOTE:

Kevin Myers and Paul Nelson were unavailable.





JUMPING PROGRAMME APRIL 2009 – SEPTEMBER 2009

Day	Date	Regional	Club & Venue	Prestige Jump Event	PR 1		PR 2		PR 3		Open Steep	Open Hurd	RO Steepl	RO Hurdle	Maid Steep	Maid Hurd	SpC Stip	SpC Hurd	Nov- Steep	Nov- Hurd	Mares Hd	Amateur
					Steeple	Hurdle	Steeple	Hurdle	Steeple	Hurdle												
Wed	Apr-15	North	Te Aroha																			
Fri	Apr-17	South	Riverton																			
Wed	Apr-29	North	Waikato																			
Fri	May-01	South	Riverton	Great Western H&S																		
Thurs	May-07	Central	Wanganui																			
Wed	May-13	North	Paeroa																			
Thurs	May-14	South	Oamaru																			
Sat	May-16	North	Waikato	Waikato H&S																		
Thurs	May-21	Central	Hawkes Bay																			
Mon	Jun-01	North	Auckland	Macgregor Grant & Ken Browne																		
Thurs	Jun-04	South	Canterbury																			
Wed	Jun-10	North	Te Aroha																			
Sat	Jun-13	Central	Manawatu	Manawatu S & Awapuni H																		
Sun	Jun-14	South	StH Canterbury																			
Thurs	Jun-18	Central	Wanganui																			
Wed	Jun-24	South	Oamaru																			
Sat	Jun-27	Central	Hawkes Bay	Hawkes Bay H&S																		
Fri	Jul-03	North	Rotorua																			
Sat	Jul-11	Central	Wellington	Wellington H&S																		
Fri	Jul-17	South	Oamaru																			
Wed	Jul-22	North	Paeroa																			
Thurs	Jul-30	Central	Hawkes Bay																			
Sat	Aug-01	South	Canterbury																			
Wed	Aug-05	South	Canterbury	Grand National H																		
Thurs	Aug-06	North	Rotorua																			
Sat	Aug-08	South	Canterbury	Grand National S																		
Thurs	Aug-13	Central	Manawatu																			
Sat	Aug-22	North	Pakaranga Hunt	Pakaranga Hunt Cup																		
Thurs	Aug-27	Central	Foxton																			
Frid	Aug-28	South	Oamaru																			
Wed	Sep-02	North	Rotorua																			
Sat	Sep-05	North	Auckland	Great Northern H&S																		
Thurs	Sep-10	Central	Foxton																			
Sun	Sep-13	South	StH Canterbury																			
Wed	Sep-16	North	Paeroa																			
Sun	Sep-27	North	R BOB Hunt	National Jumps Day																		

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Photos courtesy: Race Images (PN) Ltd; Kenton Wright; Race Images; Jeni Bassett; Equine Attitude