



Newsletter

Michael O'Callaghan Racing

Rapid Applause started our April on a winning note with an easy victory in a handicap at Naas under Leigh Roche. Having been rated 110 at the end of his two-year-old career, Rapid Applause has had his problems, and it's been a long road back. He got eleven pounds from the handicapper for the win, but went on to run with great credit at Navan recently, where he finished fourth in a valuable handicap. He got lit-up on the way to the start at Navan, when another horse ran by him, and Shane Kelly felt he had run his race before he entered the stalls. I still think there is a big day in him, maybe a premier handicap up The Curragh over the summer.



Blue De Vega – our Group winner who was also placed in the Irish 2,000 Guineas last year – had his first run of the season at Naas, finishing third in a Group 3 over seven furlongs. He needed the run but Pat Smullen was very impressed with the way he travelled and quickened. The plan was always to drop him back to six this year, so we'll go for a conditions race over six furlongs at Haydock, before a tilt at the Group 2 Greenland Stakes at the Curragh on the 27th May. He'll be jumping in at the deep end there, but with his natural speed I have no doubt that he can be competitive, and ultimately make into a top class sprinter.

I ran Crown Leah and Summerseat Mist in a two-year-old fillies maiden at Navan last weekend. They finished second and third, respectively, to Johnny Murtagh's Royal Ascot-bound filly Too Familiar. Summerseat Mist had run very well first time out when she was third at Dundalk and Pat Smullen was keen to keep the ride. Again, she ran well, but just bumped into two smart fillies, one of which was our own Crown Leah, who was having her first start.

Crown Leah is a lovely big filly by the first season sire, Swiss Spirit, and will do nothing but improve from the run. She has a lot of natural speed, should win her

maiden, and could be stakes-class. It's great for the Sapphire Bravo Syndicate owners – several of whom were involved in last year's syndicate – to have a really exciting two-year-old.

De Boss Man and Mirdif also ran at Navan, in a very competitive Listed race over six furlongs. De Boss Man is just learning about the sprinting game, and he came home really well to finish fifth. He's improving all the time, and should win races for his owner, John Kehoe, over the summer. The ground was too quick for Mirdif on the day, as he really needs to get his toe in. Wayne Lordan was very happy with him, however, and Mirdif can win again once we get a bit of rain.

I ran a nice colt by Dandy Man called Point Zero in a colts maiden at the same venue (see p.3), while Night Of Glory and Act Of Valour were both placed at Navan in the three-year-old maiden over ten furlongs. Act Of Valour is a fine big horse who is still maturing. He had a setback last year which meant he had just the one introductory run as a two-year-old. He can be lazy at home, so we put blinkers on him to sharpen him up. Missing the break might have cost him the race, but he travelled well, and finished well, and we'll aim him at a maiden in Roscommon.

Night Of Glory ran a brilliant race. As it was his first run, I told Sean (Davis) to take him back early and have him coming home up the hill. He was last turning in, but once Sean gave him a squeeze he picked up and I was impressed with the way he came home. For a horse who was only eighty-percent wound-up he did very well to pip Act Of Valour for second place, and he was in front not long after the line. He's by Sea The Stars, out of a Saddlers Wells mare so he's beautifully bred and should get a little bit further. He's a really exciting horse for the Amethyst Syndicate to look forward to this year, and adds to the Syndicate's previous success with Sebastian Bach, who won his maiden at Dundalk in February.

Michael O'Callaghan.

Meeting The Team

Yard-man John Booth tells us about moving from the racing world to the armed forces and back again.

I was born and raised in Newbridge. My first job after I left school was working in the post office. One day I delivered a telegram to the trainer Aubrey Brabazon on The Curragh. I saw the horses coming out the gate and I thought, 'That would be a nice job'. I started working there the following week, as an apprentice jockey.

A few years later, the trainer Brud Fetherstonhaugh was looking for a light jockey for his yearlings, so I moved to his yard, which was right across from the racecourse. In total, over those seven years, and between the two trainers, I had around eighty rides. I had no winners, but I placed a few times and was unlucky not to win on my first ride on a horse called Napoleon III.

I had grown a lot and I was getting a bit heavy for the game, so I started working for The Curragh Bloodstock Agency in my early twenties, travelling horses all over the world. Because it was just contract work, I couldn't get a mortgage to buy a house with my missus, Anne, so I decide to join the army instead.

In the army, I was mostly driving for the Cavalry Corps, and I also did a lot of running as part of the army athletics team. I volunteered for one trip to Lebanon. It was hairy enough as we were getting shot at most days, but I still put it down as a brilliant experience. You're doing what you're being paid to do, like in any job, and you just get on with it.

Here in Ireland, we were mainly doing cash and prison escorts. There'd be seven of us, all armed. We often escorted John Gilligan to court, and we brought the President in from the airport a few times as well.

What I enjoyed most about the army was the running, and competing in army events like the marathon and the half-marathon. Over the years I ran in twenty-nine marathons, including New York, London and Israel, and won a few cross-country and half-marathon events. I have the medals at home to prove it. I also enjoyed doing the army parachute course, which was fifteen jumps from a Cessna. You had to hold onto the strut of the plane and then let go, but some lads wouldn't let go, so you had to push them off when it was your turn! It was good craic.

I left the army after twenty-one years, took my pension, and started working for a chain of pubs. Then the recession happened, the receiver took them over, and I was made redundant. That got me thinking about trying the racing game again, so, after Googling Curragh

trainers, I rang Michael one night, out of the blue, and I asked him if he was looking for anybody.

I still love being around horses and I actually like coming in in the mornings. There's a brilliant atmosphere in the yard. You get the piss taken out of you, but you take the piss back. I'm mainly interested in National Hunt racing, but I always follow the horses from the yard, and I really like Blue De Vega. He ran

a great race first time out this year. He's one of the flagship horses in the yard and we'd all love to see him do well this season.

I'm sixty now and forty years married to Anne. We have two daughters and two grandchildren and still live in the same house that we bought when I joined the army.

You get the piss taken out of you, but you take the piss back.



For the Notebook

Michael O'Callaghan discusses *The Great Wall*, an unraced three-year-old and *Point Zero* who recently made his recourse debut



The Great Wall is hosed down by Kevin Coleman after returning from the Old Vic.



Shane Kelly untacking Point Zero after a work morning.



Anybody interested in becoming an owner in the yard, or becoming involved in future syndicates, please don't hesitate to contact Geraldine at: **045 456 502**.

The Great Wall (B c Bernardini – Music Room)

The Great Wall is a lovely, very well-bred three-year-old colt by Bernardini. He is a big horse and was bought at the breeze-ups in France by Tom Whitehead. We gave him a break in early spring due to sore shins, but he should be ready to start off over six or seven furlongs in the next few weeks.

Point Zero (B c Dandy Man – Alchimie)

Point Zero is a smashing big Dandy Man colt who cost €100,000 at the breeze-ups, and is owned by John Kehoe, John Fleming and ourselves. He had his first outing in a maiden at Navan last Monday, finishing sixth after running a little bit green. Shane (Kelly) looked after him and gave him a nice introductory ride. It was a lovely run and he should be far more competitive next time. He is by a stallion I really like, and hopefully he can win his maiden before going on to bigger and better things.

He should be far more competitive next time.



If you wish to have a copy of our newsletter emailed, or have a printed copy sent to you, please drop Geraldine a line at: **info@michaelocallaghan.ie**

Crotanstown News

My fiancé, Siobhain O'Sullivan, rode Pegi Browne in the charity race at Punchestown on Saturday and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It's something she has always wanted to do and Punchestown is her local track, where she also worked when she was younger.

Siobhain rides out Pegi Browne all the time at home, and has been getting coaching lessons from Gordon Power at R.A.C.E. We all cheered her home, and it was a great day out.

MOC



Naas winner Rapid Applause hacks home from the Old Vic gallops.