

NEWSLETTER

Sapphire Racing Syndicate

No. 6 July/August 2016

We did it! So, for this Sapphire Newsletter my mug-shot gets replaced with a photo of Randall Steven's brilliant victory, and rightly so!

What a great evening it was. Our celebrations at Roscommon were, I believe, at least matched by the celebrations in Pearl River, New York, where Randall's win apparently outshone the traditional fireworks!

Even though the story so far has a dreamlike quality to it, we have the photos to prove that it was real. And what about the ride Pat Smullen gave Randall? Sometimes low-key jockeys like Pat get a lot less praise than they deserve, but hopefully we helped to make up for that with all the praise we lavished on him on the night, not to mention the no-holds-barred slaps-on-the-back which must surely have left bruises on the poor man's back, back-protector or no back protector!

So, we're off to Galway on Saturday, in the hope of adding to what Randall has achieved already. Initially I thought his rating of 87 rating was a bit high, but as one of the syndicate members pointed out on WhatsApp, the ratings at this time of the year are all relative. Horses that should be rated in the high seventies have ratings in the low eighties, so technically our high eighties rating should be in the low eighties. The handicapper does this every year, just to allow him to figure out where the 2yo's stand.

That said, the form of our maidens has been well franked by Firey Speech, Intricately, Dancing Waves and Brutal and it's beginning to look like the handicapper may not be too far off the mark.



I'm really looking forward to running Randall in the An Pucan Nursery Handicap although it's going to be ultra-competitive. Horses will have been laid out for the race, whereas we have been trying every time. That's why we're a maiden winner, but it could also make things tougher for us at Galway.

I still see Randall as being very progressive, and despite my reservations I believe we're going there with a right chance. At the moment I'm thinking that I might claim off him with David Simmonson, just to counteract his rating. David is one of the most experienced apprentices in the yard, and when he rode Randall at Gowran he rode to exact instructions. What we learnt from Gowran helped us to win next time out, and David would have learnt, too. I think he would be a good choice if we do choose to claim off Randall. See you all at the Galway races. I'll say it again – see you all the GALWAY RACES!

Michael O'Callaghan



The Sapphire update

It's just coming into that time of the year when the Asian market starts getting interested in 2yo's. They can't race them out there until they are 3yo's, and they like to have a chance to see the 2yo form solidify.

Randall is a lovely horse, but he was a twenty grand yearling because, at around 15.2, he lacks a little bit of height. He's rated 87, and he took four runs to win his maiden, so he's not a 'high end' order for the likes of Hong Kong, but I'm confident there is a market for him.

At the start, I told everybody that I would treat all the syndicate horses as if they were my own, and although I want the Sapphire Syndicate to have winners, and to have fun, I also want us to make a profit. That would be the ideal result and it would also make it more likely for the members to consider investing in the 2017 syndicate. That's also the name of the game.

With regards to pricing Randall, you can't price him too high as you'll scare prospective buyers off. By the same token, if you push too hard to sell him at this stage you may have to take substantially less than what you have valued the horse at, and the syndicate loses out in terms of winning races and the experience of going racing as owners.



Randall Stevens stands for a 'viewing' at Crotanstown.

There have been a few people looking at him for the Asian market but, as yet, there have been no offers. If an offer does come in I will discuss it with the syndicate, get everybody's opinion on it, give mine

also, and we can take it from there.

From the above perspective, let's hope that Randall continues his upward curve at Galway this weekend.

Mary Cockerill is doing great.

Physically, she has turned inside out. She's a different filly now and the 'time out' has stood to her well. She was x-rayed again recently and has just finished her

first full-month on the walker. When we trotted her up recently she was still a fraction 'off' behind, and we obviously need her to be 100% sound before we move forward with her. If she is sound the next time the vet comes to see her she'll start cantering, and we'll push forward from there.

Moral Fibre has done another piece of serious work since my last report. As he is a big, raw horse we can't put pieces of work like that too close together or the wheels can tend to fall off, but he's taking everything well and getting closer to his date with a racetrack all the time.





It's only fair that in this month's newsletter my photo also gets replaced by our 'pin-up' of the month!

I recently had a chat with Michael Collins, owner of Lisieux Stud on the Curragh. Michael, whose recent successes include breeding Painted Cliffs and Lightening Moon, also manages broodmares for Randall's breeder, Jody Mc Grath, alongside preparing Jody's stock for the sales. As both a foal and a yearling, Michael remembers Randall as being like a lot like his mother, Sweet Surprise. 'He was very spirited and a bit quirky.'

'Sweet Surprise showed ability on the track but was a bit unlucky,' says Michael. 'She was about to win at Dundalk one day when she clipped heels and was brought down.' Placed once, Sweet Surprise ran twice as a 2yo and twelve times as a 4yo, achieving a peak-rating of 66.

Sweet Surprise also bred Inka Surprise who won as a 2yo for Ralph Beckett (highest rating 81), and Yorkshire Nanny, who ran twice. She has a yearling by Zoffany who was sold as a foal by Lisieux Stud for €40,000, and a filly foal by Dylan Thomas whom Michael says will most likely be sold as a yearling.

No doubt Michael O'Callaghan will be keeping a watchful eye on them both!

Finally, a big welcome to Tommy Healy, one of our Pearl River Sapphire Syndicate members, and his wife Tara, who are currently on holidays in Westport. They are both very much looking forward to meeting you all at Galway on Sunday.

See you there.

David Donohue

PROFILES:

Rory Healy. Sapphire owner.



Rory Healy is a Police Officer based in New York's Rockland County, and also a member of Rockland County's tactical SWAT team. Second generation Irish, Rory lives in Pearl River, New York, and has roots in Kerry, Cork and Roscommon. A keen interest in racing, incorporating regular trips to Saratoga, Belmont and Aqueduct, grew into a desire to, one day, be member of a racing syndicate.

Introduced to the Sapphire concept by his close friend, John Lowry, it seemed the perfect fit. 'Sapphire looked like a great opportunity,' says Rory, 'and that's what it has turned out to be for me, and for my father, Tommy, who got roped into it as well!'

While Randall's win was the obvious highlight so far, ("a dream come true"), Rory also feels that the WhatsApp chatter and the regular flow of information adds hugely to the fun and interest.

With his strong Irish roots, Rory has one more dream to fulfil. 'I've decided that once our new baby, who is due soon, is born I'm going make a weekend trip to Ireland. It's been a great experience so far, but to catch one of ours racing at Roscommon or Leopardstown would be the icing on the cake.'

Brian Collins. Sapphire owner.



Brian is a qualified accountant who, in 1994, took over his local betting shop in Askeaton, Co. Limerick, where he once worked as a student. He has had shares in NH horses since the late 90's, with some success, most of which were trained by Eric Mc Namara, father of jockey, Emmet Mc Namara who rode ten winners for Michael O'Callaghan in 2016. This connection, plus the fact that Brian's neighbour is related to Michael through marriage led him to follow the progress of Michael's career, and eventually to buy a share in a horse trained by him. 'I'm involved in a Zoffany filly called Pyrenean Queen, who should run soon.'

Through visiting the yard to see his filly, Brian became aware of the Sapphire Syndicate. 'The fact that you know the limit of your outlay was a very important factor in me getting involved.'

Although a bookmaker first and foremost, Brian does enjoy a bet. 'I have about ten bets a year. I backed Randall in Gowran and last time out in Roscommon, because there was each way value to be had both times.'

Like all of us, Brian is looking forward to Galway. 'It's great to have a horse good enough to run at this type of meeting, to be competitive in a decent race. It's very exciting.'

