

Newsletter

Michael O'Callaghan Racing

I've just come back from Keeneland where Now Or Never ran in the First Lady Stakes last weekend. I've been to Keeneland several times for the sales, but never for racing. We were very well looked after, the facilities are brilliant, and the weather was great. Unfortunately, Now Or Never didn't run up to expectations but we discovered after the race that she had a bad sinus infection, which could have been picked up on the flight.

The filly has done us proud this year, winning a Group Three at Leopardstown, as well as being placed in a Classic and two Group Ones. Fingers crossed that she recovers quickly, as the plan is to go for the Grade three Pin Oak Stakes (a mile and one sixteenth on turf) back in Keeneland in a few weeks' time.

It was my first experience of shipping horses to America, but once you do it you realise how accessible international racing is, and that there are races to be won all the over the world. I'll definitely be travelling horses more in the future.

With the yearling sales at Goffs and Tattersalls, the past month has been a busy time. I bought twenty yearlings, almost all of which were bought on spec. Several have already been snapped up by clients, already including a belter of a Dancy Man colt which Steve Parkin has taken, an owner I am delighted to have in the yard.

I also bought several sharp-looking fillies on spec, including a Dutch Art filly for €70,000 and a very nice Red Jazz filly, who cost €30,000. Red Jazz is a first season sire by Johannesburg - the sire of the brilliant stallion Scat Daddy, and this filly will more than likely be syndicated. Colts were

harder to buy, but I did acquire some nice ones which will be available for private purchase or syndication.

Racing-wise it has been a quiet month, as quite a few of my horses have been under the weather, but the signs are that the string is beginning to fire again. De Boss Man ran a great race to finish fourth in the Rockingham Stakes at

York recently and his jockey Graham Gibbons said he is developing enough speed to be dropped back to five furlongs at stakes level. He was very complimentary and said the horse should develop into a top class sprinter in time.

The Sapphire Syndicate members, who have tasted success this season with their first runner, Randall Stevens, will be out in force again this weekend when the horse runs in the €100,000 Auction Race at Naas next Sunday. 'Randall' is in great form and I'm looking forward to another enjoyable day out with the

syndicate's enthusiastic owners.

Between saddling our late-season runners, the Horses in Training Sales, and my return visit to Keeneland next week, it's shaping up to be a very busy October.

Regards,

Michael O'Callaghan.



Maiden winner and Group placed De Boss Man will be sold at the Horses in Training Sales this autumn. Photo: David Betts.

Meeting The Team

Shane Kelly, freelance jockey and work-rider at Crotanstown Stables, tells us about the ups and downs of his racing life

I grew up in Kildare. My neighbour had a few hunters and I used to spend a lot of time there, mucking out. As I got older he taught me how to ride and that led to me riding out in a local trainer, Christy Donohue's racing yard, when I was about thirteen. I loved riding racehorses, and I wanted to go further, so I went to RACE to develop my riding skills before being sent to Eddie Harty's stable on The Curragh to work as an apprentice.

In 2009 I moved to England as the opportunities in Ireland were limited. I spent two enjoyable years with John Quinn riding several winners, both for him and for outside trainers, before moving on to Richard Fahey's yard for a spell. In total I rode over 40 winners in England, until the birth of my first daughter in 2011 brought me back to Ireland.

Coming back was like starting from scratch again, but I rode a few winners for Willy McCreery, including winning a premier handicap at The Curragh on Fiesolina over the Guineas weekend, plus a few winners on the all-weather for Michael Halford.

Two years ago it became obvious to me that Michael O'Callaghan was an up-and-coming trainer, so I approached him for a job and he agreed to take me on. I rode five winners for Michael in our first season working together.

It's not easy to talk about what happened next, except to say that some personal problems were getting on top of

me, and I started going out more and drinking more. When you're in that world, cocaine is never far away, and I ended up getting fond of it. Before I knew it, I was on a slippery slope. Looking back on it now, the day I tested positive on the racecourse was a blessing in disguise. It was a big wake-up call.

Looking back on it now, the day I tested positive on the racecourse was a blessing in disguise. It was a big wake-up call.

I told Michael what had happened and asked him if he wanted me to leave, but he said no. His support encouraged me to get my act together and to do all I could to get back.

Me and my girlfriend, Carol, have three daughters now so getting banned was tough, financially as well as personally. On top of that the ban was in the newspapers, and even people who knew nothing about racing seemed to know my story.

Michael backed me up in my appeal to the Turf Club, and they eventually allowed me to return to racing in June, having served ten months of my initial two-year ban.

I Will Excel was my first winner for Michael since I came back and it meant a lot to me. And I had a nice winner at Dundalk recently for the trainer, Lee Smyth. Ruaidhrí Tierney does a good job as my agent, and there are some very nice horses here in the yard, so I'm really looking forward to

next year and I'm ready to make the best of any opportunities that Michael or any other trainers send my way.



Shane Kelly & Kieren Fallon

Now Or Never

David Donohue tells us about the Michael O'Callaghan-trained three-year-old who has proven a great bargain and an even better racehorse

Whenever Michael O'Callaghan writes his biography, bargain-buy Now Or Never will be assured an honourable mention. Bought by Michael at the Doncaster Breeze Up Sales in 2015, she caught her buyer's eye more than any other two-year-old he had inspected at the sale. She was a large, powerful filly with a brilliant walk, and a 'page' to match her physical attributes.

'The female side of the pedigree stood out,' says Michael, 'but the physical is what is most important to me. Pedigree doesn't necessarily make them go faster, it just makes them more expensive.'

Out of a half-sister to the multiple Group 1 - winning colt, Dream Ahead, and having clocked a nifty time in her breeze, her price would almost certainly have been outside of Michael's modest spec-buy budget had she been by any sire other than the unfashionable Bushranger. Seizing the opportunity to buy a beautiful filly with a strong female line, Michael secured her for £42,000 – a bargain in retrospect.

Unsurprisingly, Michael had sold three quarter-shares in the filly before he caught the evening plane back to Dublin, astutely holding one share for his father, Michael Snr, and himself.

It took just three months for the purchase to bear fruit. A promising second-placing on her debut at Fairyhouse was followed by the sight of Now Or Never storming up the hill at the Galway festival to beat a smart field of two-year-old fillies by five-and-a-half lengths.

The value of that maiden victory was subsequently proven in the Group 2 Futurity Stakes at the Curragh, where she finished a gallant second to Herald The Dawn, before an under-par performance in the Group 1 Moyglare stakes signalled 'enough' for the 2015 season.

'Now Or Never did very well over the winter, and I always felt that she was going to improve from two to three. Our hope was that

she could be a Classic contender for 2016.'

The Leopardstown 1,000 Guineas trial was chosen as her first race of the current season. Ridden by Michael's new stable jockey, Kieren Fallon, she and the winner Jet Setting pulled well clear of the third-placed Alice Springs at the line. It set her up nicely for the Derrinstown 1,000 Guineas trial at the same venue a few weeks later, a race in which she morphed, seamlessly, from 'promising filly' to genuine Classic contender.

'She was sensational in The Derrinstown,' Michael says. 'Once Kieren pulled her out at the two-furlong pole she settled the race in a matter of strides.'

Fallon spared no plaudits after the race, suggesting his mount was on a par with the some of the very best fillies he had ever ridden.

Inevitably, the offers flowed in and Qatar Racing, already supporters of Crotanstown Stable, eventually secured the filly from the Now Or Never Syndicate for an undisclosed sum to remain in training with Michael.

Her subsequent third behind Jet Setting in the Irish 1,000 Guineas proved her to be a genuine Group 1 filly. This was subsequently backed-up by her bold fourth-placing behind Qemah in the Group 1 Coronation Stakes at Royal Ascot. Having led at the furlong pole, she was beaten by just two-and-a-half-lengths, having been outgunned only in the last 100 yards.

Now Or Never returned for the Matron Stakes at Leopardstown against old foes, Jet Setting, Qemah and Alice Springs. Having missed an intended prep

at Tipperary due to unsuitable ground, Michael was more than happy with her fourth-place-finish behind the brilliant Alice Springs.

(continued on page 4)

Once Kieren pulled her out at the two-furlong pole she settled the race in a matter of strides



Now Or Never (Colin Keane) in Qatar's colours head to the start of the Irish 1,000 Guineas at The Curragh. Photo: David Betts

Now Or Never *continued*



Now Or Never annihilates the opposition in the Derrinstown Irish 1,000 Guineas trial at Leopardstown.

Having had the benefit of a break after Royal Ascot and before Champions Weekend at Leopardstown, Michael felt that she was still fresh enough for an autumn campaign.

'There are few suitable Group 1's left in Europe at this time of the year, so we decided to take her to America.'

Keeneland in Kentucky was duly chosen as her autumn battleground and the Grade 1 First Lady Stakes was chosen as her first battle. Her run in the 'First Lady' and the subsequent discovery that she was suffering from a sinus infection is discussed by Michael on page one of the newsletter.

Now Or Never's next target is the Pin Oak Valley View Stakes at Keeneland on the 21st October. It will be her 11th start in a career that, to date, has yielded two wins, including a Group 3, and five Group placings (including three Group 1's). Her career as a broodmare is assured, as is her place in Michael O'Callaghan's heart.

'She's a real treasure and given her size and scope I feel, and hope, she will train on as a four-year-old. Our ultimate goal for her would be to win a much-deserved Group 1.'



The following horses will be offered this autumn at the Horses in Training Sales both in Goffs Ire and Tattersalls UK:

- Atlas** (R73) 3yo Bay Colt by Acclamation x Sheer Bliss
- De Boss Man** (R98) 2yo Bay Colt by Dandy Man x Dame Hester
- Delegating** (R78) 2yo Bay Filly by Delegator x Whispered Wish
- De La Vega** 2yo Ch. Filly by Lope De Vega x Rainbow Lyrics
- Elegant Approach** (R51) 3yo Gr.Filly by Elegant Approach x Mujdeya
- Giselle's Charm** (R90) 2yo Ch. Filly by Casamento x Princess Kyka
- Indian Tomahawk** (R65) 4yo Bay Gelding by Sleeping Indian x Elhida
- Intrepid Prince** (R75) 3yo Bay Gelding by Royal Applause x Intrepid Queen
- I Will Excel** (R75) 4yo Bay Gelding by Exceed And Excel x Da's Wish
- Maknificent** (R79) 4yo Bay Filly by Makfi x Sally Wood
- Mary Cockerill** 2yo Bay Filly by Bushranger x Emirates Hills
- Moral Fibre** 2yo Bay Gelding by Henrythenavigator x Das Wish
- Pegi Browne** (R58) 3yo Ch. Filly by Fast Company x Alta Petens
- Randall Stevens** (R85) 2yo Bay Colt by Tamayuz x Sweet Surprise
- Sebastian Bach** (R81) 2yo Bay Colt by Kodiak x Esedra
- Sweet Fragrance** (R68) 2yo Bay Filly by Dandy Man x Smart Starprincess
- Vener Of Charm** (R64) 2yo Bay Gelding by Fast Company x Nova Tor



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.**



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**