

GREYHOUND RACING Dundalk Stadium

Swift Crown breaks duck with fastest run of the night

By Joe Carroll

WHAT a way for Swift Crown to break his duck, winning by five lengths and recording a night's fastest 28.81 for the 525 at Dundalk Stadium last Saturday night.

David Jamison's Co Down-based runner had gone fourteen races without a win, the reason, no doubt, why he was pitched in an A4. He'd shown some promise on his February 11 outing, beaten by the minimum in a Drumbo Park 550, and had a 29.44 for a 525 trial over the same track back in August.

This was a second Dowdallshill run for the son of Kinloch Brae and Malta Magic, and the layers – or punters – didn't think a whole lot of his chances,

making him a 7/2 chance, with local hope, Colm Farrelly's Knockagh Mal, the 2/1 jolly.

The market, however, was no guide to Swift Crown's chances. The well-made black bounced out of the gate, gaining a valuable early lead. That lead was never seriously challenged.

Opening up impressively in the back straight, the Jamison runner lengthened his advantage with every stride. At the finish he was well clear of De Blue Bolt, recording a time that will guarantee him a big jump in grade.

Other highlights on a night when racegoers showed greater interest in the pictures coming through from Shelbourne were few and far

between. Okay, Francie Murray came up with a double, and Tom Dillon scored yet another victory with that wonderful servant of his, Agadir Ted – but this night was mostly about the Tote Gold Cup runners, in particular superstar Milldean Panther, who, given he'll be running under the Boylesports banner, might just be directed towards Dowdallshill come the International meeting on July 12 (See Inside Track.)

Each of the 12-race card's first five winners were scoring an initial success, Samara King figuring among them.

David Dunne's Dromiskin-based runner went from six, and after making a slow start had the pace to get up alongside Killeavy Star turning

into the back. The pair vied for the lead all the way to the line, Samara King making it home with less than a length to spare.

Agadir Ted's finest characteristic is, he just never gives up. Even in the races he's been beaten in in his 61-race career, Tom Dillon's Drumconrath runner gave his best. He has now fourteen wins to his credit, and on eighteen other occasions finished runner-up.

The evens favourite, Cora The Legend, was on Agadir Ted's shoulder throughout, but couldn't quite make it to the front. A neck divided them at the wire, the clock stopping at 29.29.

HORSE RACING Dundalk Stadium

Dream start for Carmody

IN a dream start to his new association with Johnny Murtagh and big English owner, Andrew Tinkler, Thomas Carmody's successful daughter of Consolidator, Miss Mediator got the better of the front-running Translator in the final hundred yards, going on to score by three parts of a length in the bookings@dundalkstadium.com Fillies Maiden.

Fleeting Moment is on the go a long time now (began as a two-year-old in October 2007) and he gained the first victory of his flat career to add to a Tramore maiden hurdle win, when he landed the 'Group Discounts At Dundalk Handicap' under Andrew Thornton.

Atticus Finch gained reward for his consistency when landing the 'www.dundalkstadium.com Claiming Maiden' under Wayne Lordan.

Second here on his last three outings, the Kodiak colt made all to justify odds-on favouritism, keeping on well from over a furlong out to comfortably eclipse Rasputin (bidding to give the Carmody/Tinkler/Murtagh alliance a double following on from Miss Mediator) by three and a quarter lengths.

Rockys Pride has done Garvan Donnelly proud the last couple of weeks at Dundalk and with that one getting a rest, it was the turn of Samollie to step up to the plate for the Garristown, County Dublin trainer, landing the 'Rambo By Horseware Ireland Handicap' from three pounds out of the handicap under Gary Phillips.

Their Prince Of Milan disappointed as market leader at Clonmel on Thursday February 16 but in a week that saw former inmate Quel Esprit sample grade one glory, the Meadowview Stables of Andy Slattery were in the news again when An Saighdiur landed the 'www.dundalkstadium.com Handicap' under Declan McDonogh.

Shake The Bucket, a home-bred son of



Andrew Tinkler (owner), Johnny Murtagh (jockey), Thomas Carmody (trainer) triumphant after Miss Mediator claims the opener at Dundalk Stadium last Friday.

Ashkalani got Megan Carberry off the mark as a jockey in the 'Winter Racing At Dundalk Apprentice Handicap' at 8.55pm. Megan Carberry is 18 and she is a cousin of Paul, Nina and Philip. She was previously a leading light on the pony racing circuit.

The four runner finale, the 'Horseware Ireland On Facebook Race at Dundalk' may

have been expected to chiefly concern Flavia Tatiana and Solo Performer but they were upstaged by the other pair as Whipless beat Hairstyle by a length and a quarter with Ronan Whelan up.

Horse racing returns on Friday February 24 featuring the Ladbrokes.com Race Night from 5.55pm.

EQUESTRIAN Ravensdale Lodge

Ravensdale Lodge Equestrian Centre results

Horse training Thursday February 16

70cm Class, divided between: Mary Cosgrove's Rio M. Cosgrove & Felicity Douglas' J D Douglas.

80cm Class: Judy Murphy's Java's K.C. B. Griffin.

90 cm Class, divided between: Yvonne Mullins' Huggles A. Mullins, Shauna Lee's Angel S. Lee, Johnny O'Connell's Harry J. O'Connell, Lynn Patterson's Ben L. Patterson, Noel Johnson's Spring N. Johnson, Patricia Steward's Bono P. Steward, Jessica Finnegan's Sunday Cruise J. Finnegan, Johnny O'Connell's Bruce J. O'Connell & Lynn Patterson's Stainsby Free Spirit. L. Patterson.

1m Class: Johnny O'Connell's Blue J. O'Connell.

1.10m Class, divided between, Tara Dunne's William T. Dunne, Laura Mc

Causland's Cheeko L. Mc Causland, Patricia Steward's Brad P. Steward & Judy Murphy's Java's Celtic Dawn B. Griffin.

1.20m Class, divided between, Johnny O'Connell's Dora M. Kinsella, Tara Dunne's Rosie T. Dunne, Ryan O'Neil's Amigo R. O'Neil & Mary Mc Shane's Creevagh M. Mc Shane.

1.30m Class, divided between: Tara Dunne's Rosie T. Dunne, Johnny O'Connell's Dora M. Kinsella & Mary Mc Shane's Dougie M. Mc Shane.

Horseware Ireland horse and pony training league Friday February 17

Cross poles, divided between: Ravensdale Lodge's Jack A. Cosgrove (Horseware Ireland voucher), Ravensdale Lodge's Darcy K.A O'Hare, Ravensdale Lodge's Lyric G. Martin, Ravensdale Lodge's Seaspray E. Dawson, Sean Taffee's Clyde S. Taffee, Conall Mc Grath's Apache C. Mc Grath, Emily Mc Court's Bluewater Crystal A. Harvey, Catelyn King's Misty C. King, Ravensdale Lodge's Snowdrop A. Dunne, Stephen Morgan's Starlight's China Rose S. Morgan & Ravensdale Lodge's Lyric C. Hoey.

60cm Class, divided between: Ravensdale Lodge's Dougal V. Price

(Horseware Ireland voucher), Ravensdale Lodge's Lyric A. Murphy, Emily Mc Court's Bluewater Crystal E. Mc Court & Ravensdale Lodge's Womble C. Carron.

70cm Class, divided between: Mary Curtis' Ben M. Curtis (Horseware Ireland voucher), Ravensdale Lodge's O' Gara M. Keane, Trevor Cardwell's Cassy T. Cardwell, Ravensdale Lodge's O' Gara B. Griffin, Anna Mai Mullen's Fleur A. M Mullen & Emily Mc Court's Bluewater Crystal E. Mc Court.

80cm Class, divided between: Alo Callan's Ola A. Callan (Horseware Ireland voucher), Michael Morgan's Rocky Man M. Morgan, Sophie Kinghan's Rocky S. Kinghan, Lucinda Kinghan's Lady L. Kinghan, Shauna Mc Ginn's Sandy S. Mc Ginn, Linda Mackin's Holly L. Mackin, Rachel Conn's Kilmore Diamond Lass R. Conn, James Griffin's Billy the Kid J. Griffin & Anna Mai Mullen's Fleur A. M Mullen.

90cm Class, divided between: Sean Bird's Whisper S. Bird (Horseware Ireland voucher), Adam Morgan's Bill Bailey A. Morgan & Chloe Cumming's Miss Suspicion C. Cumming.

Registered horse show Saturday February 18

1m Class: # 1 Eleanor Cunningham's Holly Balloo A. O'Hare 27.92 seconds, # 2 D. Gibson's Ballyeapple Alto S. Gibson 32.20 seconds, # 3 R. Downey's The Carrowkells Knight S. Downey 38.77 seconds, # 4 N. Hanley's Covers Chip S. Hanley 38.95 seconds, # 5 Rachel Moran's Paramount Rudy J. Floody 40.23 seconds, # 6 Siobhan Hanratty's Wonella S. Hanratty 40.59 seconds.

1.10m Class: # 1 N. Hanley's Utha S. Hanley 32.84 seconds, # 2 Carol Armstrong's Cornascribe Cava Diamond C. Armstrong 37.91 seconds, # 3 T. Treanor's Flight Connection S. Loughran 40.32 seconds, # 4 Siobhan Dunne's Java's Keltic Mist T. Dunne 40.53 seconds, # 5 Judy Murphy's Java's Keltic Dawn B. Griffin 43.07 seconds, # 6 P. Brady's Yukon Cherry S. Coyle 44.98 seconds.

1.20m Class: # 1 Kieran King's King's Best J. Floody 36.27 seconds, # 2 Michael Mc Aleese's The Sweeper M. Mc Aleese 37.98 seconds, # 3 N. Hadley's Vigo V S. Hadley 39.82 seconds, # 4 D. Good's Carnaval Kannan A. Good 41.05 seconds, # 5 Tara Dunne's Titania B.T. Dunne 41.64 seconds, # 6 M. Steward's Rehab P. Steward 44.04 seconds.

The Chequered F1ag



A Formula One blog by Stephen English
www.stephenenglish.ie

The changing face of a pay driver

THE struggle of Formula 1 teams to raise sponsorship in recent years has seen an increase in the number of "pay drivers" on the grid. In the recent past when the sport was awash with factory teams the driver development programmes were the most common route for a youngster onto the grid.

The combined effect of factories leaving the sport and the state of the world wide economy meant that drivers are looked at in terms of more than just their talents behind the wheel. The budget that they could bring would now be of much greater importance. This was perfectly illustrated last year at Williams.

The team was forced into hiring Pastor Maldonado in place of the promising Nico Hulkenberg. Maldonado came with a large suitcase filled with Venezuelan petro-dollars and with Williams sliding further and further down the grid they felt no option but to take the money and hire Maldonado.

The team went to great lengths last year to enthuse about the merits of their driver. Indeed Maldonado was the reigning champion of GP2, the Formula 1 feeder series, but it had taken him four years to win the crown as opposed to "the Hulk" who won it as a series rookie.

For much of last year Williams refused to acknowledge Maldonado as a "pay driver." Clearly the team felt ashamed to have been forced to such lengths to raise their budget. There should be no shame for his sponsorship to have been integral in their hiring of Maldonado. He is a decent driver who showed some moments of promise last year.

This year Bruno Senna partner him. He has shown moments of promise during the course of his career, particularly last year at the Belgium Grand Prix. The nephew of triple world champion Ayrton Senna brings with him a healthy wedge of Brazilian cash to replace his fellow countryman, Rubens Barrichello.

Even though both drivers bring with them a healthy budget there are differences between both drivers. Maldonado has shown promise but is clearly on the grid based on his bank balance. There is no denying that he is a competent driver who could develop into a good performer but without his budget he has done little to really stand out.

Senna on the other hand comes with a budget, a revered name and quite a lot of talent. The Brazilian has raced for the last two years for HRT and Renault and while his HRT experience was a disaster the fault lay with his team not himself. Last year he was hired as Renault's test driver and replaced Nick Heidfeld midway through the year.

At Spa, one of the great drivers' circuits, Senna was quite simply astounding. Despite not testing the car for six months he overcame a practice crash to outqualify his teammate, Vitaly Petrov, and start seventh on the grid.

That session showed the world that he was more than just the nephew of a great champion, he was actually a very good driver in his own right. For the rest of the year Senna blew hot and cold. He had some good performances and some mediocre ones but his reputation was made and he was a legitimate prospect on the drivers market.

Ultimately the decision came down to the fact that he could bring a budget to Williams and once again a talented driver will be painted as a pay driver similar to Maldonado.

It could have been very different for Bruno if things had played out differently in the winter of 2008. At the time, before Honda announced their withdrawal from the sport, Senna was competing with Barrichello for a berth alongside Jenson Button in the car that would eventually win both championships the following year.

Barrichello had struggled in the previous two years due to poor machinery and the team thought long and hard about replacing him with his younger compatriot. Senna impressed the team with his feedback and speed in a test at Barcelona. By lapping within a couple of tenths of Button he had proved his speed and shown Honda that he had the potential to succeed at the highest level.

It seemed almost inevitable that he would be offered a deal. Barrichello was 37 years old and coming off the back of two very poor seasons. Even though the car was clearly the limiting factor for him there was also little reason for Honda to retain him if they thought Senna had promise.

Ultimately the Japanese manufacturer pulled out of the sport and left Ross Brawn to pick up the pieces. As a privateer Brawn had different thoughts on his driver pairing and needed a safe pair of hands to partner Button and Barrichello was retained.

The success of Brawn in the year that followed was enough for Rubens to move to Williams having once more shown the paddock that he could race well and win at the highest level. Two years of poor machinery and budget constraints have however once again however made him dispensable and given Senna a chance to race.

If however Bruno had been afforded this opportunity in 2009 his reputation and career could have taken a very different path. Armed with a title winning car he would almost certainly have started the early season races from the front row of the grid, such was the Brawn's performance advantage, and claimed a host of podiums as a rookie. It is far from inconceivable that he would have won races in that car.

His reputation would be very different to that of a pay driver and he would have been hired by teams on the basis of his talent and speed. Such is the fine lines that form a driver's reputation and career. Given that Honda came so close to hiring him in 2009 and his performances last year Williams should feel quite pleased to have him on their books for the coming year.

Internally however the team must still regret the loss of Hulkenberg. The German's pole position in Brazil as a rookie showed that he has the potential to be a very competent Formula 1 and a partnership of him and Senna would have given Williams the potential to move back up the grid.

Hulkenberg will return to the grid this year driving for Force India in place of Adrian Sutil. Having spent a year on the sidelines as their test driver Hulkenberg will view the coming season as a chance to prove his credentials to Mercedes, Force India's engine supplier, as a future driver for their F1 squad.

With Michael Schumacher entering the final year of his three year deal the second Mercedes drive for 2013 is one of the most prized on the grid and Force India is home to two of the favourites for the drive; Paul di Resta also keen to prove his merits.

It has been rumoured that di Resta was hired by Force India at Mercedes behest so he can also be viewed as a pay driver. The Scot however has consistently distinguished himself throughout his career and can, along with likes of Senna and Sergio Perez at Sauber, rightly claim that they are drivers hired for the talent who also happen to be in the fortunate position to bolster a team's budget.