



The Human Element

“Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble.” Job 14:1

The labour situation in British racing is already quite serious and is deteriorating steadily. There are now very few lads left who went through the old apprenticeship system which, for all its disadvantages, did at least produce staff who had some idea of the plot. There is such a shortage of labour nowadays that a lad may be given four horses to look after before he is capable of doing one reasonably well, which is hardly a recipe for successful staff training.

This problem is common to all stables and we will need to work within the framework currently available to produce our horses in the best shape possible. Hopefully we can at the same time instruct our lads in a sound appreciation of what the job should involve, although in an industry with no qualification-based system for advancement this may prove difficult. When the labour pool is so inadequate that even very poor staff may be paid the maximum wage for the job there is obviously little incentive for self-improvement and there is also considerable resentment amongst those older lads who have served their apprenticeship.

The roots of the staff problem trace directly to those old-time trainers, particularly those who trained for the racing Establishment, who for many years shamelessly exploited waifs from the inner cities as apprentice jockeys. In many instances, there was no intention of these boys being anything other than cheap labour in the stableyard during the 5, or even 7, years for which they were inescapably bound to their master. Although the indenture system did produce competent stablemen, most of these

apprentices were denied the chance to be jockeys. Unfortunately, the system failed to pay them a living wage when they did come out of their time, because there was always a stream of new apprentices coming in from big families in the slums who were only too pleased to get their offspring off the feed bill. As soon as there were jobs available in factories, the better lads began to leave racing in search of a decent wage; consequently, those apprentices who were still coming in were advanced more quickly and with less instruction into boardwagemen. As there are no longer, thank goodness, virtual starvation conditions in the big cities, the school leavers are now physically bigger and less inclined to seek employment in racing.

The Jockey Club never monitored the abuse of the apprenticeship system by trainers, to ensure that boys indentured as jockeys were either given rides or given early release from their long indentures. Had they done so then the system might have survived. The eventual half-cocked solution of a one-year apprenticeship is impractical because an apprentice can now leave after some time has been wasted on him and go elsewhere, often on full wages. This ridiculous scenario is discouraging both to any trainer genuinely prepared to teach an apprentice and to those older lads who have a lifetime's experience. A proper apprenticeship should imply an agreement in which both parties have clearly defined responsibilities and there are mutual benefits. If a trainer takes the trouble to teach an apprentice then he should expect to have a useful staff

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member for at least the second half of the apprenticeship term, whilst on the other hand the graduate pupil should expect to be able to earn a decent wage based on the fact he has completed a lengthy course of practical study.

It is only fair to relate that not all the old trainers were so derelict in their duties and that some, though very autocratic by modern standards, did fulfil their side of the bargain. Possibly the greatest producer of both competent jockeys and top class stablemen was the late Fred Armstrong, father of Robert, the present Newmarket trainer, who is remembered with grudging affection by his many graduates as 'Sammy'. His young riders at one time virtually circled the globe as jockeys and the stablemen he produced were the best boardwagemen in the country.

The old racing lad did take a certain pride in his calling even to the extent that he would be outraged at the idea of using a four-pronged fork, which was considered a labourer's tool; a racing lad only used a pitchfork! One such was Don Tilbury, a well-known character in Newmarket and a relic of an even earlier era, as he would have been apprenticed before the Great War. He would only do two horses (in fact, the traditional term to denote a racing lad is 'doing his two'), but he was so meticulous that he even scrubbed the handles of his fork and broom. Don wore a clean stable rubber around his waist as an apron and he always came to work in a suit. Like many of his profession he was inclined to consume all his wages in liquid form and when it was gone he would be obliged to tap his workmates for drinking money before setting out for the bar in the White Hart: "Give us two bob for a Guinness. I only want an entry fee, I'll be all right once I get in!" This was about 1963, with two bob being 10p in new money.

The relationship between a horse and his lad can be pivotal to the success, or otherwise, of his racing career, even if this is not widely appreciated. Although this mainly involves the amount of patience required to deal with a

nervous or irritable animal, there are occasions when almost the reverse may be true. We sometimes see the situation, normally with a very quiet lad, in which the horse gradually takes the upper hand in the relationship and becomes increasingly aggressive and dominant towards his groom. The horse is probably just declaring himself as leader of their two-member herd, but the partnership should be split up before any real problems arise. This tricky situation will need very tactful handling, particularly if they are both highly valued team members. The original lad will not want to give up a useful horse and his successor must not be allowed to make a big thing of the affair, either with the horse or to the other staff. This type of horse should be given to a lad who will be very firm with him but who will otherwise virtually ignore him. If the problem is promptly addressed it should disappear very quickly, but once the horse starts to warm to his theme we may have a real problem. A ticklish horse should never be aggravated by being overgroomed; he can easily be kept looking well by use of one of the showshine-type products. In the old days, many horses became savage due to excessive strapping, and that is one aspect of the old system we are well rid of. It must always be understood that any lad knocking his horses about will be dismissed. Anyone whose horses seem afraid of him in the box is likely to be guilty of spiteful behaviour towards them, and must be kept under close observation. This type of lad can be extremely plausible and so often remains undiscovered. Even though the lad might manage to become quite a teacher's pet, his horses' demeanour is not contrived and will accurately predict his handler's true character. It is noticeable that a lad who might have corrected one of his charges quite severely in the proper circumstances will not obtain the same cowering reaction from his horse whenever he approaches it. Lads will tend never to report even serious misdemeanours by their contemporaries, and we should never assume

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Timeless Times (USA), summer 1990 - about the time of his record-equalling sixteenth win. The ideal type of the 'cheap-and-cheerful' runner. Sixteen seems to be a hard number to surpass - both Citation and Cigar also founded upon it! For some reason, his devoted lad Alan Houston is not in the picture. (Photo courtesy of Laurie Morton)

that we would be informed of transgressions which the staff as a whole know perfectly well are not acceptable in the best interests of the stable. We should take care to remember Darvill's advice that "Lads are tricky".

An old horse may appear to be very sore, particularly in his slower paces, but still race well. It is recommended that the same lad ride him all the time so as to be able to judge whether he is any worse than usual. Although these horses are never part of our master plan, they do occur from time to time and, as we can't sell them, we must do what we can with them.

Some of the old sprinters can be extremely stiff, and may well not appreciate trotting to loosen up, but with care and patience they may still race very effectively. Listed-race winners Gypsy Dancer and Camisite were cripples when they first came out in the morning, but their riders understood their varying degrees of lameness and the rate at which they warmed up, and these horses had long and fruitful careers. Horses carrying chronic unsoundnesses are better ridden by the lad who looks after them, as long as he is capable of handling them at exercise, because naturally he will have more of

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a vested interest in their welfare.

Adequan injections or an oral supplementation with chondroitin sulphate are likely to help these old horses to cope with their aches and pains, without risking the horrendous breakdowns that often follow the use of anti-inflammatory drugs. It is also well worth experimenting with isoxsuprine in these cases as it will sometimes produce dramatic results almost overnight, especially if arthritis is not their only problem. This is an extremely volatile substance and clearance times are difficult to estimate; great care must be taken when this drug comes anywhere near horses running in the foreseeable future.

Both Group One performer Milk Of The Barley and Provideo were horrible horses to do in the box, and their successes might well have been less with different grooms. Group One winner Mac's Imp was also a very uncertain-tempered individual both in and out of the stable and both his lad and his exercise rider deserved great credit for their efforts. Timeless Times was a very kind horse and his excellent lad was devoted to him. Funnily enough, this lad was sometimes dominated by a horse he was too soft with in the box, although he was a good hand breaking yearlings.

Girls as a whole may care more for their charges than males do, and they therefore tend to look after them better with minimum prompting. There was at one time a feeling that girls should not be given colts to care for, but as long as they behave sensibly and professionally towards their horses we should not experience any problems.

All staff should appear as polite and helpful as possible to any visiting owner, but should be instructed to be noncommittal when discussing their horses in order to avoid raising expectations which the horse, and the trainer, might find impossible to deliver. In fact, it is quite remarkable how interested many owners are in the lad's opinion of their animals, very often attributing to them more weight than to those of

the trainer. This problem will never disappear and trainers should always keep it in mind. Sometimes we may get the distinct impression that secretive relationships may exist between one of our owners and a particular lad, or even with the stable jockey, which might not be conducive to the best interests of the stable as a whole. Should we suspect such a relationship then we must take care to keep our own counsel with regard to the prospects and programmes for the horses other than discussing them with their individual owners. In this situation no one should become aware of our opinion of any promising animal, and it should be looked after and ridden at exercise by a lad who is not involved in any such mutual admiration society. This might seem a little dramatic, but this situation definitely implies either lack of trust in the trainer or a certain deviousness and if such situations are allowed to flourish unchecked they will invariably end in unpleasantness of some description.

Whilst we cannot return to the good old bad old days, the labour situation does need some sort of a plan to ensure a decent wage is paid for a job well done, but how this can be achieved is difficult to envisage. It is unrealistic to expect the present apprentice training school to produce in a matter of weeks what used to take years, and the prognosis is presently poor on the labour front. We can only hope to attract the best of what is currently available, and to train them in a system that will stand them in good stead when they move on.

Jockeys and Raceriding

"Their strength is to sit still." Isaiah 30:7

The problem of securing a jockey to ride for us deserves careful consideration. Jockeyship is one of the least understood aspects of the whole sport, even by the younger jockeys themselves. This last fact is hardly surprising in view of the previous observations on the apprenticeship system, as even the most elementary technical foundations have never

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been laid in many cases. This need not imply any less natural ability than the riders of previous generations but merely a shortfall in knowledge of the basic, never mind the finer, points of their profession.

Unfortunately, the majority of what is currently printed on race-riding is so lacking in even the most elementary understanding as to be embarrassing, and we should review a few indisputable facts before considering how best to achieve our aims in this vital area. Many sportsmen share certain fundamental difficulties and, in most sports, addressing these shortcomings has become a growth industry, with household names regularly attending clinics and consulting various gurus. It is not at

all necessary that these advisors be top class protagonists themselves in order to have a clear understanding of the many problems involving effective techniques, and we may explore the subject at some length on that basis. For a clear explanation of the basic techniques of jockeyship, John Hislop's works are still as good as any and should still be studied by all apprentices, and by most of the racing press.

In an ideal situation, the horse might be considered simply an extension of the jockey's legs, or the running department, and the jockey the refinement of the partnership's thinking and planning department. If we could organise things on this simple precept, life would be very easy for all concerned. In practice, little attempt



The importance of aerodynamic forces on the racehorse is generally ignored in Britain and the American style is widely criticised. Emma on Mr Yong's Goldfame, our final winner. (Photo courtesy of Proshot)

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is made to transform an uneasy coalition into a single entity, rather the reverse being true, with the two components often hampering each other's efforts. Because there are no absolute methods of defining success in a sport where every combination changes from race to race, poor techniques are very likely to become accepted if they are associated with winning performances. This obviously influences the riding of youngsters, as they always seek to imitate the generation before them, and standards of practice may tend to slip even further. The undeniable fact is that very many wins may still be achieved because of the natural ability of one partner, and despite the technically faulty input of the other.

The success in recent years of several at least partial exponents of the much tidier American style may be one positive step. Use of the stick is very contentious at the moment but if dramatic improvement does not very soon take place in this regard there must be a real prospect of the matter being taken out of the hands of the racing authorities, as has already happened in Scandinavia where the use of the whip is banned. Over 100 years ago, Admiral Rous was of the opinion that no more than six jockeys in England were fit to be entrusted with a whip, while Fred Archer, certainly in his latter years, rarely hit his mounts more than two or three times. The present out-and-out reliance on the whip is unprofessional, unnecessary and unacceptable at the threshold of the third millennium.

With a view to determining the actual class of riders currently available in Britain, it seems reasonable to expect any top class rider with regular high class mounts to far outstrip his peers in winning percentage. Although this is true of the various local leaders in America, who may boast win-to-race percentage results in the high twenties, it is not currently true in Britain, where the leaders' figures currently tend towards the high teens or possibly 20%. Fred Archer rode 34% winners in his lifetime, and Lester Piggott

regularly achieved between 25 and 28% when in his prime. This is an extremely crude method of evaluation, but it may confirm the impression that we have little to fear should we decide to appoint a stable jockey and refine their skills as we go, given that the opposition contrive, at best, to get it wrong 80 times out of every 100 attempts on the choicest mounts!

One of the most glaring misapprehensions shared by the racing press and the man in the betting office (the natural successor to that paragon of intelligence, the man on the Clapham omnibus) is that vigour in the saddle has some direct connection to skill in the saddle. It does not. Racing cannot conceivably be the only sport where a skilful performer makes his task appear difficult. In any other discipline involving aerodynamics in any way, the absolute reverse is true. The ultimate objective in every speed-related sport is complete smoothness of action. This is not a matter of opinion, it is a matter of fact. No rider can hope to achieve his maximum potential until he accepts this truth and tries to improve himself aerodynamically, although he may obviously ride very many winners without doing so.

Every horse must have a maximum speed, and by definition he cannot ever exceed that speed. Without doubt, any resistance or additional hindrance he encounters must reduce it. It must follow that a theoretical horse, which had been trained to run to the limit of his speed, would gallop faster with a motionless dead weight than if that weight were moving about. However strong or vigorous the rider might appear, no horse will ever be able to run faster than his true capability in any given situation. The task of the jockey should be seen as trying to engineer that set of circumstances most favourable to his mount's best effort. Some confusion may arise because any animal may well run better for a perceived strong rider, but the horse must still be, by definition, within his physical capabilities. Our aim should be to have our horse run as near as necessary to his ultimate

capability with the minimum of abuse so as to prolong his enthusiasm, and hence his career, for as long as possible. It should be apparent by this point that practical common sense is the foundation of this whole training method, and that we cannot ever afford to accept illogical thought processes, however widely accepted.

Whether most horses can ever attain their optimum speed under a punishing ride is difficult to ascertain, although logic would appear to suggest that more efficient, and therefore faster, stride patterns could be expected under different circumstances. There seems no good reason to suppose that a tiring horse can possibly be other than hampered when his cargo shifts violently in the closing stages of his race, although fortunately for him the opposition are sure to be in similar distress. We can very often see horses floundering at the end of a race like drowning men; their need at this point is for encouragement and stability in aid of their extreme effort. Unfortunately, what they very often get instead is 120lbs of struggling burden! Of course, we must realise that any jockey would require considerable sang froid to sit still and attempt to nurse a staggering horse home before the present ill-informed audience, and that the situation is unlikely to improve until there is a better understanding of this subject by all watchers of the sport.

In his interesting video on race-riding, Pat Day, an American rider very much in the mould of the legendary Bill Shoemaker, suggests a simple test for those who doubt these precepts. He suggests that anyone experimenting with a small child riding on their shoulders will immediately become aware of the difference between carrying a motionless passenger and an animated one. Whether providing the small child with a whip can regain the momentum lost by the additional drag can obviously be evaluated on an individual basis. If in fact this experiment were to prove the case for vigorous whip riding, then all rowing teams might usefully include a strong cox with a stick rather

than the present unobtrusive figure purely encouraging and directing the rowers. However well our horses may have been taught to carry and balance themselves, they cannot be expected to keep the jockey balanced as well.

A good jockey may be observed to alter the course of his mount when it is tending to hang one way or the other by the use of his own bodyweight, and will be rightly praised for his action. There seems no reason to suppose that the shifting weight of many riders in their desperate and vigorous finishing efforts do not similarly influence their mounts' direction. Even the most cursory examination of head-on films will demonstrate the erratic course many jockeys follow, even when they are racing in the clear rather than weaving their way through the field. Few people seem to realise that this demonstrates defective riding and that the horse is unbalanced. It follows that less than optimum performance is the inevitable result. If our horses and our jockey can proceed from point A to point B without wandering or becoming unbalanced we must have a slight but indisputable advantage.

There are very definite advantages to the policy of retaining a stable jockey. Most victories are won at home to a great extent, due to careful preparation in the stable and on the gallops. Most defeats are also engineered at home by ineffective training or inefficient identification of suitable opportunities. Consistent and often unobtrusive riding by a committed team member should always win more races, or at least lose fewer, than dramatic moves and 'Garrison finishes' by riders unfamiliar with our horses. Those riders who do demonstrate sporadic brilliant efforts invariably produce at least equal numbers of horrifyingly incompetent ones. They seem rather like Longfellow's little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead: "When she was good, she was very, very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid!"

The simple continuity that a retainer allows is a tremendous advantage, and it often means

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Superlative, Tony Ives, just defeats Keen, Lester Piggott, in a desperate struggle at Kempton - the third horse was beaten 25 lengths, and the result of the photo took several minutes to come!
(Photo courtesy of Mel Fordham)

that the horses in the team may survive a longer, more productive season due to the more considerate handling. The contract rider obviously has a vested interest in the season as a whole, whereas a rider with no guarantee of keeping the mount is apt to subscribe to the 'bird in the hand' theory, with no thought of the future prospects of the horse. This can be particularly galling when our horse gets narrowly beaten after he has been subjected to a gruelling race to overcome a bad initial position caused by pilot error. A good retained rider in the same position should remember that two wrongs don't make a right and should accept the situation. We are obliged to keep faith

with the retained rider in these circumstances if we expect him to protect our investment in this way. Most trainers, unfortunately, are not prepared to do this nowadays and will automatically blame the rider for any disaster as this gets them off the hook themselves. Although happy to accept all the credit for winners, regardless of the jockey, most trainers are very quick to blame the rider for beaten horses. They seem to deny, even to themselves, their own responsibility for the many races that may be lost due to pre-race factors quite beyond the control of the rider.

The two chief assets of any race rider are judgement of pace and traffic sense, both of

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which are far more honoured in the breach rather than in the observance. Judgement of pace is often understood, particularly by racing scribes, only in its most basic sense, which involves a horse in the lead. In this instance it does not require genius to slow the early fractions as far as possible and then to try to steal a march on the opposition for a dash home. Making strong running in a race is much more complicated in that a jockey must set a pace testing enough to expose any nonstayers amongst his opponents without completely exhausting his own mount. Our stable jockey Tony Ives was an able exponent of this method, and was extremely good at keeping a fading horse balanced at the end. True judgement of pace is when the jockey evaluates the pace of the race when he is back in the field and uses his own horse accordingly, and this skill is often unobtrusive rather than dramatic to watch. An early appreciation of the pace of any race and the ability to predict the likely effect on the final result as far as his own mount is concerned enables the opportunist rider to win races he should have lost.

The knack of consistently finding clear sailing through the field is a rare gift in a jockey. Luck in running is always to be hoped for but, although hope springs eternal in the racing world, common sense also plays a major part and many disastrous hold-ups can be easily anticipated simply through awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the other runners and riders. Both Alan Munro and Emma O’Gorman showed great natural ability in these two areas of their profession at an early age. Actually there might be said to be a third vital attribute a rider should have, which is the ability to instinctively abandon a preconceived plan should circumstances change. A front-runner cannot be expected to lead if he misses the break, nor can any horse that does not settle be subjected to a wrestling match with any great expectation of winning the race. When things do go wrong our jockey must be able to assume that

we will support any improvisations he may have to make; on the other hand, should departures from the plot become commonplace then they are unlikely to prove constructive and we might be thought to have a communication problem.

Any rider who is not making the running should be alert to the leader attempting to slow things down, and should then either move up to force the pace or should at least be prepared, with his mount already in gear and running, to anticipate the moment when the leader does decide to set sail for home. In a slowly run race he cannot expect to wait until after the leader has moved before calling on his own mount and still expect to succeed, unless of course he is on by far the best horse. In that case he may well prevail, but only after giving his horse an unnecessarily hard race, for which, ironically, the pundits may well congratulate him. If another runner can be induced to challenge the leader and force him to quicken the pace so much the better; but if no one challenges an easy lead the chances are that the leader will hold on and win the race.

If the stable should decide to provide a pacemaker for one of its runners it is essential that intelligent use is made of this aid. There is no sense sitting far back and ignoring the leader; rather, the two riders should have decided before they start just how far and how fast the pacemaker will or can go and the fancied horse should keep fairly close to him.

In a very fast run race, the reverse tactic is indicated and it is correct procedure never to get involved in speed duels if they are avoidable, as even when the first battle is won there is grave danger of defeat by a relatively fresh opponent from the rear. The faster the early fractions, the farther back it is safe to be. As long as he knows that his own mount is sailing along at a good pace, a jockey need not worry if he is even 15 lengths behind. After extremely brisk early fractions the speed in front will usually collapse by more than three seconds over the final three furlongs and the trailing horse will run the

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leaders down by merely maintaining his gallop, although he may appear to the uninitiated to be flying at the finish. This is one occasion when doing the right thing actually does look exciting. The main danger when attempting to make up ground is the great risk of being impeded by already-beaten horses as they drop away. Any horse that does have a lot of ground to gain can ill afford to get stopped in his run, and it is normally safer to go to the outside and to make one long run at the leaders. Although not so exciting to the onlooker, this smooth progress is far less tiring for the horse. When obliged to lay out of his ground and give his opponents too much start due to events beyond his control, a jockey is usually far safer to lose a couple of extra lengths in order to guarantee one clear run, than to hope to fight his way through the field. Horses making up considerable ground should always be ridden to lead near the line and not a furlong from home as this wastes energy and very often leads to needless defeat.

Many experienced race-watchers fail to weigh up accurately the pros and cons of racing wide or of going the shortest way on the inside rail. Although a smooth run on the inside would obviously be the preferred choice, it is unrealistic to expect to achieve this on a regular basis and many times a far better result would be obtained by concentrating on getting a clear run rather than on saving ground. It is relatively easy to quantify the amount of extra ground covered by racing wide around a turn. The number of horse widths out from the rail, around a 180° turn, will be roughly equal to the number of extra lengths added to the trip. If we take a horse as being one yard wide and roughly three times as long, and calculate the difference in diameter of two half-circles (which represent the two tracks of the inside and the outside horses around one 180° turn) as being 3.14 multiplied by the difference in the two radii, we see that in a six furlong race around one turn the disadvantage of racing four wide is about twelve yards, or about 1% of the distance of the

race. This handicap is considerable but it is quantifiable and acceptable. In the unlikely event of a horse remaining hung up four wide for a complete circuit the extra distance would be doubled, although of course a race around two turns would certainly be considerably longer than six furlongs, unless it took place at a bullring in America, and so the disadvantage might be similar in percentage terms. It is highly likely, though not so easy to quantify, that the energy cost of stopping and starting whilst racing in the bunch on the rail will be considerably more than that small percentage. Racing moderately wide effectively eliminates the considerable risk of not being able to move at a critical stage due to traffic problems, which in itself must be more energy efficient. The widely available difference in fuel performance figures for all cars between urban and motorway driving give a clue as to the true cost in energy of acceleration and deceleration as opposed to constant speed. That difference will be seen to be rather more than 1 or 2%.

The only way to be sure of a clear passage whilst taking the shortest route is to make the running, but that plan in itself is fraught with various dangers. The degree of disadvantage due to wind resistance suffered by the leader, which all wheeled sports take very seriously, must be considered. Another serious problem may result from the rider sending a horse away from the gate at high speed in order to gain the lead, and then finding that his mount is always doing too much and wasting energy because he cannot get him to relax again. A horse that has good racing manners will obviously be more likely to execute this strategy successfully, as his rider can dash to the front and then slow the pace down at will, and will thus be able to control the running of the race.

The task of any jockey is made simpler if the horses are properly schooled to race, and a rider who is able to assist in their education is a great asset. This precept is increasingly well understood in the many jump racing yards that

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now adopt schooling techniques borrowed from other disciplines. It seems less popular in flat stables where jockeys tend to ride fast work on those horses that have identified themselves as being ready to race, but contribute nothing else. If we can find a rider who is prepared to absorb our philosophy towards the business and to become involved on a daily basis, it should be a considerable help. We must aim to produce racehorses that have been trained to race in every sense of those words if we are to enjoy better than average success.

As previously stated, we cannot expect our rider to respect our best interests unless he receives some consideration in return in the form of loyalty. The childish practice of blaming jockeys regardless of what actually happens in a race is not conducive to a lasting relationship. As there is a finite number of riders available, even the most rabid critics are obliged to use the sacked rider again eventually. They should bear in mind that the rider always has the last word on how any horse actually performs and that a jockey may well choose an inconvenient occasion to repay a grievance! The trainer should always decide riding arrangements and riding instructions, and should naturally then accept the responsibility for the performance of the horses. If he is not capable of doing so then he can hardly be capable of making the many other decisions involved in the training process. In 1870, when Mat Dawson heard that Lord Falmouth had given Tom French additional instructions as to riding Wheatear before winning at Newmarket, he requested that his Lordship remove the whole string forthwith "as the confidence which ought to exist between them was evidently gone". Fortunately, matters were resolved, and the partnership was subsequently successful in 12 Classic races.

Whilst on the subject of loyalty, we might wonder how Mr Dawson would have reacted to the all too common scenario of some owners checking on the progress of their (and, very often, other people's!) horses in evening telephone

conversations with lads in the yard. As this can hardly be regarded as other than a similar lack of confidence, and as it is sure to lead to trouble, one or both parties should probably be removed from the stable at the earliest convenient opportunity.

There is little fundamental difference between a racehorse and a racing car as far as the actual race is concerned. If all else is equal, the victor will be either the best mounted or whichever one makes most efficient use of the energy available. The one that makes most efficient use of energy is the one whose driver or rider squanders the least energy in acceleration, deceleration and general manoeuvring. In both sports the supply of energy is finite, and once it's gone, it really has gone. Dramatic moves during a race are always expensive in terms of energy expenditure and should be avoided, unless they are made explicitly to take advantage of some difficulty a rival has experienced, and to thereby poach an unassailable lead before he can recover himself sufficiently to mount an effective counterchallenge.

The other reason for avoiding dramatic acceleration is difficult to explain but may involve the collapse of the rhythm that must always be associated with physical effort for best results. Anyone who has ridden a bicycle with the chain slightly loose will recognise that any sudden and violent increase in pedalling will bring the chain off, whereas the pace can certainly be gradually and carefully increased. A brick can be carefully pushed across a shiny surface using only a drinking straw, as long as we don't suddenly increase the pressure, but if we do the straw immediately crumples and everything stops. An angler with a big fish on a light line is in the same position, and must be careful not to overplay his hand. Situations that threaten to disrupt to some degree the smooth tempo of a horse's running arise in most races. The loss of momentum, when these minor crises are clumsily handled, is often dramatic and irreversible.

The importance of maintaining rhythm for

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the efficient use of energy is demonstrated when any horse that is apparently travelling well folds up in two or three strides simply because his rider has failed to build some momentum gradually before demanding extra effort, or has failed to allow his mount an opportunity to recover his composure following some sudden disruption to their progress. In these cases the horse is often labelled dishonest because he found nothing when asked to quicken. Although the jockey may well be at fault, he will probably avoid censure because to most people it looks as if he is trying hard. The fact that he is trying hard to do the wrong thing is not generally appreciated! In shorter races, particularly juvenile events, it is very common to see horses being completely busted off their legs and running deplorably. In many cases, losing another two or three lengths in the early stages would allow them to hit their best stride and therefore to run much better. It will always prove difficult to convict a competent rider of deliberately stopping a horse by utilising this plan simply because to all intents and purposes he appears to have ridden an aggressive race. A variation on this situation often occurs with a horse that runs much too freely in the early stages of his race, only apparently to stop to nothing because his jockey wrongly expects that power to remain instantly at his disposal – despite the fact that he has spent sometimes several furlongs trying to reduce it. In cases where the horse may still have some energy reserves it seems only reasonable to inform him of the change of plan before hitting the panic button. An automobile is unable to accelerate quickly without being informed of the driver's intentions by means of a gear-change, and, in this respect at least, a horse is not dissimilar. The jockey must always be sure he has his mount 'in his hands', ready for the instruction to accelerate, before calling on him for that acceleration. He cannot expect to change instantly from pulling to pushing. However, as remarked by Eddie Delahoussaye below, it is

unreasonable to expect the younger jockeys to learn the finer points of their craft never having been instructed on those points.

Many horses will run extremely impressively if the race goes fast and they are allowed to drop out of early contention in the race and settle into their own rhythm in the early stages. These horses are further examples of the above delicate balance between success and absolute disaster, and they are often quite incapable of making their own pace in a slower run race. Fortunately, they are often best served by the furious pace of big fields in valuable handicaps, but they are always extremely vulnerable against even lesser opposition in a small field, and we should always appreciate the problem that they present for the rider. This lack of tactical speed will always be a serious drawback and these horses should be sold if, as often happens after a valuable handicap, a good price can be obtained. Mac's Fighter was a prime example of this. Although not as good in smaller fields with a more moderate pace, he did win the Wokingham Handicap at Royal Ascot with 9st 12lbs on his back, and he was beaten a nose by Steinlen in the Laurel Dash, because in both of those races the pace was very strong. Unfortunately, he was subsequently faced with impossible tasks by the handicapper, we kept him too long, and he was eventually sold for a tiny fraction of his one-time value.

Varying styles of jockeyship can be equally effective, subject to certain basic rules, and the only method of comparing one rider with another objectively may be by computer comparison between the speed figures allotted to all horses after all races. The London School of Economics, which presumably has some experience of data collation, seemed to view this exercise (by Computerform) as the only realistic method of comparison. Many of the racing press were outraged at the variations with their own perceptions of relative riding skills, but the premise seems to be sound and might well be used as a starting point in our search for a stable

jockey. This method of rating jockeys might be regarded as similar to using the Comparative Earnings Index for more accurate evaluation of stallions. It will afford a more reliable guide to the actual contribution that can be anticipated from the jockey in any horse/rider combination than will the simpler percentage of winning rides. The winning percentage figure can be compared to the Average Earnings Index because it is similarly distorted by the contribution made by the racehorse, in the case of jockeys, and by the mare in the case of stallions. If this theory has a weakness it is that, possibly, unfashionable riders might tend to persevere more with beaten horses than do those more in demand. This fact might distort up or down the value of figures earned by those beaten horses and so account for some of the apparent anomalies. The definitive comparison might be one involving the ratings of only horses that finish in the money.

Once a stable jockey has been appointed and is riding work daily, we should ensure that they play their part in educating our young horses. This does not mean purely in their fast work because when they are cantering, and even whilst they are walking, their earlier lessons can always be practiced and reinforced. Making our horses handier and more responsive to the signals they will receive in a race must, at the very least, make them more tactically efficient in that race. We should ideally like to achieve a situation where some horses could sense where to go next purely by following the body language of their rider and so always remain ahead of the game. This may sound far-fetched, but something like this does happen for example with cutting horses when working cattle, with good polo ponies and with the horses ridden by huntsmen and whippers-in. This skill certainly would be an interesting tool for any jockey to develop. In fact the very best riders, when right at the top of their game, may be practising something like this unconsciously. Certainly they do at times seem

instinctively and effortlessly to extricate themselves from the field, with the horse weaving his way through just as if he were following a map.

Particularly in two-year-old races, although we never wish to give a horse an unnecessarily hard race, it is as well to guard against any idling or greenness. If our horse is leading he should be sent about his business between the three and two furlong markers so as to forestall any challengers, and to put the race beyond doubt. Failure to do this often results in a hard race between our horse, which is now getting slightly bored in front, and a rival that may have taken time to get the hang of things. The outcome very often favours the one closing, and riding to avoid this situation should always be stable policy.

There is something to be said for the rider always being alert to the possibility of stealing a march on his rivals whenever he thinks he has a good chance of lasting home. Although it seems rather drastic, this policy should always be considered on a confirmed short runner, a horse that seems to have difficulty lasting out even the minimum trip. Waiting in front in the hope of conserving their energy almost always results in these animals dying in their rider's hands and fading out of contention. Short runners that do get into the habit of waiting in front and then weakening dramatically tend to get progressively worse. This is always a potential problem with a very fast two-year-old, and we may inadvertently confirm this disastrous habit even in his work.

Brondesbury almost went round again when he won his first race, and he almost went to the top of the town after his second win at Newmarket, so presumably did not have a congenital stamina problem at a sprinting level. Once his racing career started he was so much faster off the mark than his workmates that he was soon in grave danger of becoming a confirmed short runner purely because he had settled the work very quickly and then lost interest. As he was extremely headstrong, it was

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not advisable to fire him up further in those circumstances by trying to make him work out to the end and the whole thing became very worrying. He did in fact just last home over the very stiff Ascot track, and actually broke the track record, but had he not been sent about his business by Tony Ives when he already held a clear advantage there would have been a very different result. This type of horse should be kept in regular competition if at all possible in order to avoid compounding these difficulties in his home work.

Should the situation be reversed, and the leader make an early dash for home, our jockey must never attempt to overhaul an early departed rival anywhere but in the shadow of the winning post, as too hasty a pursuit will use our horse up. It is vital not to compound the mistake of getting too far behind by trying to regain the ground too quickly. To the uneducated eye a dramatic challenge, even though faltering into defeat after regaining the lost ground too quickly, may appear to be dynamic riding, but for best results the lost ground should always be regained as gradually and unobtrusively as possible.

The easiest race for any horse is a waiting race, as he is benefiting from the horses ahead of him taking the brunt of the air resistance, and he may only actually be racing for a short distance. Unfortunately, many horses lack any meaningful natural acceleration and connections often feel forced into more aggressive and energy-depleting tactics. For some reason, not enough attention is given to the fact that very few horses can maintain their maximum speed for more than one and a half or two furlongs whether they are racing in front or behind. Many more races might be won, without the necessity of quickening, if more conservative tactics were used to ensure mounting a challenge only after the opposition had exhausted itself and was slowing down. To experiment with this form of riding a jockey requires a strong nerve but, as the strain on our

horses is obviously appreciably lessened we should encourage the practice.

There are no longer any riders in Britain like Scobie Breasley who would repeatedly get up to win on the line, with no one except himself knowing what, if anything, he had in hand. A famous story relates that a senior member of the Jockey Club congratulated Mrs Mae Breasley on a great victory during Scobie's subsequent training career. The worthy gentleman reportedly said, "Well done! I hope Scobie had a good bet?" Mrs Breasley, slightly surprised, replied, "Oh no, Scobie hasn't had a bet since he gave up riding!" (Jockeys, of course, are forbidden to bet.) Fortunately, this delicate skill is not completely a thing of the past. In a Racing Post interview, Bill Shoemaker recently said, regarding fellow Hall of Fame member Eddie Delahoussaye: "He knows how much horse he has, and he knows how not to show it. That's something you learn as you get older." In the same piece by Dan Farley, Delahoussaye remarks that little instruction, or criticism, is given to young riders nowadays, so "How can a young rider learn any respect? How can they learn to ride?"

Jockeys might often bluff their way through races they should have lost if they paid more attention to this theory of disguising just how much horse they have, or with what reserve of energy their mount has to finish, instead of telegraphing their every intention to their rivals. George Fordham was the bane of the great Fred Archer's life, especially on the straight course at Newmarket, and apparently took great pleasure in outwitting his younger rival, who was the darling of the racing world, not to mention the country as a whole. Flinging his saddle to the ground after a tactical defeat by his older adversary, Archer exclaimed, "I can't beat that kidding bastard!"

The finer points of race-riding were, of course, far more appreciated in Fordham's heyday when match racing was popular. A match, from the original challenge, through the weighting of the horses, to the actual race, was

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based on disguising one's strengths and weaknesses from one's opponents, and prompting them to make mistakes. Heat racing also called for much more tactical riding, particularly as the odds would vary as the contest progressed, and decisions had to be made as to whether to try for an early victory or merely to save your distance to continue in the hope of winning in the end. The longest recorded harness race took 12 one mile heats over 2 days to resolve at Independence, Iowa, in 1891. Birchwood, a two-year-old, finished third! An accurate estimation of how much horse was left, both in your own case and amongst the opposition, must have been essential for success in those days. The winners of such long contests tended to be those, both equine and human, with the best racing technique.

It is essential that all jockeys be able to change both their hands on the reins and their whip hand without even thinking about it. Both these skills should be practised day in and day out so that their implementation needs no thought at all. A piano player, for instance, does not need to look at the keys and he could not play anything remotely difficult if he did so. On a more mundane level, a master bricklayer barely looks at each brick, yet lays great numbers with amazing precision. If, by constant practice, our rider does make his technical skills similarly automatic he becomes more effectively part of his mount, and has much more time to watch the race unfold.

There are two basic reasons for a jockey to change his hands and they should involve very different techniques. In the first case the rider may feel that he needs a slightly shorter hold of a horse that is taking a strong hold of the bridle, and in this situation he should achieve his aim as quietly as possible to avoid further exciting his mount. The reins should always be held in a double rather than a single bridge to enable him to pick up a couple of inches virtually unnoticed by the horse. In the second case he does wish to convey some urgency to his mount and he

changes his hold more aggressively as a signal to a lazy horse that he should extend himself. However, unless the horse is exceptionally idle, and he really wishes to threaten it with dire consequences unless it wakes its ideas up, he should never take his hands away from his mount's neck when changing his hands for fear of unbalancing him. The untidy practice of ostentatious hand-changing may currently be widely accepted, but except in the specific case of attempting to frighten a bone idle horse to greater efforts without resort to the whip, it is incorrect. It must tend to unbalance the animal and thus to create a further drain on energy. Most horses that have been properly schooled using the method described will usually do very nearly all that they are capable of for a rider that they respect without any resort to the whip. The problem is that many horses, particularly older or lazier ones, very soon realise that they need not respect their riders, and the jockey then is obliged to attempt to establish his authority with the whip. The horse can still only achieve a finite degree of speed whether under the whip for an incomplete rider for whom he may have little regard or voluntarily for a rider whom he respects. Frankie Durr was a great exponent of this form of hand-riding, and although a very strong jockey, he was not obliged to rely upon his whip, simply because he was enough of a horseman that his mounts believed him when he indicated to them that more effort was required.

Changing the whip from one hand to the other is also a vital accomplishment, as failure to do so can easily lead to the disqualification of the horse and to the suspension of the jockey. The whip must be immediately either put away or preferably transferred to the other hand as soon as any horse leaves a straight line. The only permissible exception to this rule is when the horse has no opponents anywhere near him on the side to which he is hanging, and he is running on strongly, with the outcome of the struggle so close as to be possibly affected by

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It was hard to think of a sensible reply when the Stewards asked whether African Chimes was suitable for an apprentice! (Photo courtesy of Leslie Sampson)

making the switch. When involved in a Steward's Enquiry, the jockey who has changed his whip as promptly as possible will normally be given the benefit of any doubt. As mentioned elsewhere, hand-riding is always to be preferred, from every point of view, whenever possible.

The ability to speak clearly when involved in an enquiry is another useful skill for a jockey. In Britain, because of the the lack of daily and practical experience on the part of many of the amateur stewards, a clever presentation of the jockey's case, especially if reinforced by just the right amount of injured innocence, can often carry the day. It is preferable that our jockey always maintains good relations with the

authorities, as we have no wish for our horses to be penalised on his account.

One very amusing incident in a Steward's Enquiry, which might give a clue as to the proficiency or otherwise to be encountered in such meetings, took place when an old horse was involved in a minor scrimmage with another unplaced animal. As is quite usual in an instance where neither stood to get the race, both riders virtually denied ever having seen each other during the contest and were eventually dismissed. After the enquiry the trainer was called back before the bench, and the following interview occurred. Chairperson of Stewards, slightly exasperated by failure to secure a

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conviction: “Mr Trainer, do you really think this horse is a suitable mount for an apprentice?” Trainer, slightly puzzled: “Well, she has ridden him to 10 wins so far, and six others have only managed one between them!” In fact, 17 different riders eventually tried unsuccessfully to win on African Chimes, including the very best, although he did eventually win 18 races for his apprentice partner.

The opinions of even the most successful jockeys are rarely of much help to us as long as we are truly aware of the abilities of our horses, and in fact can be very misleading. In all aspects of this business we must be guided by what we see with our own two eyes, both every morning and in the race. The owner of Reesh was

informed by an excellent senior rider, following his only ride on the horse, that this horse would be better suited by a mile, as he lacked speed. Reesh proceeded subsequently to win four consecutive stakes, three of them Group races, over five and six furlongs. An equally common mistake is the supposition that any horse that is run out of the money in the final furlong has failed to stay the trip; in many cases he has been defeated because he could not quicken, and he actually needs further.

There are many similar cases, for jockeys very often say the first thing that comes into their heads. To be fair, there is a widespread expectation on the part of many owners and trainers of some explanation, however bizarre,



Reesh won four major sprints at three - despite a senior rider's opinion that he needed much further. Here he comfortably wins the Palace House Stakes. Taffy Thomas up. (Photo courtesy of Leslie Sampson)

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of their animal's running. Lester Piggott was the great exception among jockeys, and it was often amusing to see those hoping for a lengthy postmortem to be rewarded with a just a wry smile, although the trainer might well be given an insightful comment later in the day. Piggott was without doubt the most talented European rider of the second half of the 20th century.

An apprentice can be a useful addition to any stable, if properly trained and managed, but there will be a great deal of aggravation involved unless we are very careful. It is extremely expensive to run horses purely to instruct young riders, and any horses kept for that purpose must not only be competitive in their own class, but should also be useful in leading work at home. Old horses that are suitable can be picked up quite cheaply from claiming races or from the sales.

The technical schooling given to any apprentice should be very thorough, with particular attention paid to stylish riding, including on the way to the start as this often attracts notice by other trainers. Obviously all variations of changing hands and whip-riding should be practised until they could be done blindfolded before our embryonic jockey is loosed upon an unsuspecting public. The first few rides should be regarded as sighting missions to allow beginners to play themselves in without any pressure and without getting in anyone's way. Once they do know what they are doing they should not be booked for horses without ability as although good horses may make good jockeys, the reverse is also definitely true. We aim to mould a useful member of our team, not a defeatist resigned merely to going down and coming back.

It is extremely unusual for any apprentice regularly to achieve the same level of performance with idle horses as would a senior rider, hence the riding allowance, and deplorable runs by horses in apparently suitable races are very common even with some highly praised youngsters at the controls. If any apprentice can

already ride big sprawling horses at the start of their career then their future should be considered bright as long as they are given the right opportunities.

Weight is a problem for many riders and it is essential that our apprentice approach this aspect of their life sensibly. Excessive wasting is very debilitating to young riders and it should be avoided, with their weight being constantly maintained, by a sensible diet, at within a couple of pounds of their realistic minimum. If this plan is strictly followed, those last two pounds can be relatively easily lost when required. "The youth that trains to ride or run a race, must bear privation with unruffled face," as Byron remarked. All apprentices must also frequently bear the frustration of being jockeyed off by a senior rider with similarly unruffled face.

We may often hear heart-rending tales of riders who are obliged to spend long hours sweating to make the weight; however, common sense leads us to suspect that in most cases the same few pounds are going on and coming off daily. Tony Ives may have been the prime example of this, as he regularly reduced by 6 or 7lbs in the mornings, which often led to his being unavailable to ride work. The theory of roughly maintaining the weight of his last ride of the afternoon held few attractions for Tony! The methods of sweating and taking strong purgatives to waste used by Fred Archer have always been so widely described as to become a part of our heritage without much thought being given to this aspect of the matter. A contemporary of Archer at Heath House, lightweight rider Harry Morgan, tells us, in E. M. Humphris' *Life of Fred Archer*: "Archer wasted by taking medicine and Turkish baths. Fred did like sweet stuff. He was a one for jam and cakes. In fact, for anything sweet."

Mention of Fred Archer raises an interesting point regarding jockeys, which is their vulnerability to accusations of malpractice in the form of stopping horses. Even Archer (whose reputation stood so high that the contemporary

phrase 'Archer's up' signified that all was well with any endeavour) was accused by mischief-makers of stopping Gaillard in the 1883 Derby so that his brother might win with second-placed Highland Chief. Following her St Leger victory in 1882 there was also much ill-informed comment on Dutch Oven's previous beaten races. The fact that Gaillard was only beaten in what we would call a three-way photo finish, and that Archer had been furious at being claimed to ride Dutch Oven, as he had agreed upon a fee of a thousand pounds to ride the favourite Geheimmiss, were overlooked. This demonstrates just how easily the jockey can be accused by trouble-makers who talk through their pockets. Most horses that could have won their race are defeated through lack of peak fitness, lack of ability, bad luck in running or simple human error. Unfortunately, under the present British system, a great many horses which are not perhaps quite able to win are certainly prevented from finishing anywhere near the placed horses with a view to influencing their handicap rating.

The influence that the Turf formerly exerted on Society generally is exemplified by the number of its phrases which, like 'Archer's up!', entered the language, although their origins are no longer acknowledged. The phrases 'to put one's best foot forward' and 'to wrap in cotton wool' refer, respectively, to the change of leads by a racehorse in the closing stages of his race and to the American system of heavily bandaging racehorses to protect their delicate and valuable legs. 'To keep under wraps' and 'to catch on the hop' have also descended from racing practices. The first derives from the former (pre-rubber reins) practice of jockeys

wrapping the reins around their hands, thereby not allowing their mount to show his full speed, and the second to the ability of a trotting driver to catch his horse in its attempt to break its gait before it managed to do so. In Cockney rhyming slang to be alone is to be 'on your Tod (Sloan)'. Pool rooms were initially the places where the original form of pool betting took place, and where the Faces presumably amused themselves by playing the game which later took the name of the venue.

To retain a rider we need only be concerned with our own opinion of their riding performance as that will invariably be more accurate than that of disgruntled bettors. We should always be aware that there may be occasions even when using the best jockeys in which the easiest way to placate the irate owner will be to blame the rider for the defeat.

In many respects, the same theories apply to apprentice training as to breaking the yearlings and they are as set out in the Book of Proverbs, 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it." To this end, all apprentices should be made aware of the importance of presenting themselves as smart and polite. They must be especially aware of the necessity of keeping their own counsel as regards the horses in the stable if they do expect us to advance their career. Some owners may attempt to cultivate relationships with the work riders to obtain information regarding horses other than their own. These people would certainly not appreciate their personal string being discussed with others and this practice should be discouraged, as it invariably leads to bad feeling.