WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Passing on experience to fresh talent

WHEN you’re trying to make your way in the world you want a teacher who knows how to make the most of what you’ve got, how to overcome the inevitable pitfalls and grind it out. No wonder the toughly pragmatic footballer Jack Charlton proved rather more successful in management than his similarly gifted brother Bobby. Which suggests that former jockey Aaron Bateman is the ideal man for his new role as an instructor for the British Racing School in Newmarket – few are better placed to teach a teenager how to make a living in racing, in or out of the saddle.

“It is an extremely hard industry to get into,” he says. “We tell them that being a jockey is not the be-all and end-all, there are plenty of other opportunities. Hopefully I’ve got a bit of empathy with them. I know how hard it is. I’ve been very lucky but I’ve had to work very hard along the way.”

Catching the bug as he went racing

When he was 13, Bateman rode for Richard Johnson when he was riding out for Jackie Du Plessis. “‘Richard Johnson has been a tremendous help to me’”

Bateman worked for Evan Wiliams, who won a Grade 2 handicap chase at Plumpton, but admitted: “Financially it was very tough working long hours at Evans and we needed to look to the future. “I was out of the game for a few months, then with the help of Lisa Delany at Jets [Jockeys Employment & Training Scheme] looked at opportunities for the future.

“We sent a lot of CVs out, I contacted the Racing School,” said Bateman. “I got the job and I’ve been here a year.”

Helping to forge the next generation of jockeys

“Then came half a dozen years,” he continued. “I was an amateur so I never got the percentage money!”

“The first of Jungle Bay’s victories came over 7f at Chester in July 2011 when both Brewster and Chapple-Hyan had other commitments at Newmarket. He says: “We met up with Jane and she said he’s got to have a change today. He won and it was just fantastic.”

Further wins at Plumpton followed and, despite Brewster having never witnessed the horse winning in the flesh, he was confident the 11-year-old had the ability to make a living.

“Steve is a tremendously hard worker and has the ability to ride really fast. “I’ve been very lucky. Some people own horses for years and never have a winner and here I am with a horse who always tries and has given us immense pleasure.”

I GOTTA HORSE

Simon Brewster speaks to Lewis Porteous about his pride and joy Jungle Bay

Bargain buy giving plenty of pleasure

NAME Aaron Bateman Age 34

When at large 1998-2003

Best moment “My first winners on Saxon Duke in the Warwick National. It rained all day and somebody said to me he would hate the ground and we had no chance. Only four finished and I won by more than 20 lengths. But I was an amateur so I never got the percentage money”

with his father, learning the ropes at a riding school before a couple of years in the point-to-point yard of Tim Long – now clerk of the course at Poole Las.

Then came half a dozen years with Philip Hobbs, first as an amateur then a conditional jockey.

“He was excellent to work for,” Bateman recalls. “He was a gentleman and very good to me. I learned a lot from him and it was a fantastic time, the time of my life.”

The best ride I had was Booster Booser in the Tote Gold Trophy – I got it beat off a good handicap mark but to ride a horse like that was memorable.”

Bateman gave up riding to fulfil an ambition to train and had success with point-to-pointers and then under a full licence but admits: “Financially it was the biggest and the sensible thing was to stop.”

Which led to two and a half enjoyable years working as head lad to Evan Williams before circumstances intervened again.

“My wife was expecting twins,” Bateman remembers. “It was very tough working long hours at Evans and so it needed to look to the future.

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James Best: skills advertised on dual Plumpton winner Dushy Valley

F I R EKEEPING your feet firmly on the ground is a template for success then conditional rider James Best is going to make the grade as a jump jockey as the down-to-earth 22-year-old has already laid good foundations for the future. It is not only Philip Hobbs who has spotted Best’s finesse combined with strength in the saddle as other trainers such as Alan Jones, Jackie Du Plessis and Paul Henderson are also on the case.

Anyone who witnessed Best pushing and cajoling Henderson’s Dushy Valley to victory in a couple of 3m2f handicap chases at Plumpton will not be doubting the rider’s persistence when push comes to shove.

From the outset on both occasions Dushy Valley needed to be firmly driven and something that appeared particularly hard work from the stands was made to look all part of a day’s work out on the course.

Best recalls: “He’s not the easiest horse in the world as you have to keep at him but fair play – the more you ask the more he keeps picking up. But I must admit it probably looked much harder than it actually was.”

Although he’s lying fourth in the conditional jockeys’ table with 14 winners on the board, going for the title is not a priority for Best, who has ridden a career total of 37 successes. He says: “It’s nice to be sitting there in the table but it is not in the forefront of what I want to achieve right now as I consider it more important to keep improving and progressing as you never stop learning in this game.

“I have no intention of resting on my laurels as such and I’m very wise to the fact that when I lose my claim it will be a whole new ball game as I will have to mix it with the big boys on level terms.”

Q&A Richard Johnson has been a tremendous help to me

How did you get into the sport? I grew up in Cornwall doing a lot of hunting and shooting and always wanted to try to hand at racing. I started riding out for Jackie Du Plessis when I was 13 and it has grown from there.

What are your ambitions for the jumps season? Obviously to stay in one piece and keep riding as many winners as possible. Getting back home from the races injury free is always a result.

What do you need to work on? Everything. You cannot take anything for granted in this game and you just have to keep your head down and keep improving.

What are your strengths? I like to try to ride as positively as possible and I’m not worried about giving a horse a squeeze going into a fence.

Which of your colleagues do you admire the most? Richard Johnson has been a tremendous help to me and all us young riders look up to the likes of AP McCoy and Ruby Walsh.