

The sport's essential weekly news round-up

THE RACING GRAPEVINE

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Newmarket media training workshop a hit with jockeys

BEING a professional jockey is not just about riding a horse, in the same way that being a modern footballer is not just about kicking a ball.

Opportunities out of the saddle are numerous, which is what drew 11 Flat jockeys to Newmarket to develop new skills and learn how to enhance their profile, engage with the media and maximise commercial openings.

Rishi Persad, Adele Mulrennan, TalkSport's Faye Carruthers and journalist Eleanor Kelly ran a media training workshop at the two-day Jockey Ambassador Programme, held in partnership with the



Professional Jockeys Association and Great British Racing, while other contributors included Olympic sprinter Asha Philip, who advised on how athletes can take their career to the next level. Among those lapping up the advice was

Faye McManoman (pictured), who said: "It's been a fantastic couple of days. Everyone has been extremely welcoming and very helpful, and I feel we've learned a lot and taken away new skills."

"It was eyeopening to see the various ways we can get help to promote ourselves as jockeys."

Sean Korrane added: "The media session in particular

was a good insight into what journalists and presenters are looking for, and it was great to get feedback on my interviews."

Jockeys Education & Training Scheme manager Lisa Delany said: "We were delighted to receive such positive feedback from the jockeys, who were all willing to engage, ask questions and learn new skills and

information that will help them, no matter what stage they're at in their careers."

"We're grateful to Nigel Payne and the Peter O'Sullivan Trust for their generous support of this programme, and hope this focused type of training will also benefit the wider sport of racing as the industry seeks to attract new and diverse audiences and participants."

Horton back with a bang at new base with Lincoln hope

TRAINER James Horton is planning to make a high-profile return to the racing ranks this weekend, when one of his first runners out of his new base in Newmarket is set to be a fancied contender for the Lincoln.

The former assistant to Sir Michael Stoute is hoping to put a troubled 18-month episode as private trainer to John Dance behind him, when he saddles the ex-Irish-trained Navagio at Doncaster on Saturday.

Horton has not had a runner since September, when he parted ways with Dance after the owner's horses were prevented from running in the wake of a Financial Conduct Authority investigation into his business activities.

But now Horton is raring to start a new chapter of his training career at a location he knows all about given his seven years as understudy to Stoute.

After his stint in Middleham came to a premature end, Horton moved quickly to



James Horton with his Lincoln contender Navagio

secure the lease on his new base at Park Lodge, which he is renting from the now-retired James Eustace. The premises became free when James's son Harry moved on to rent Highfield Stables on Bury Road from Godolphin.

The 37-year-old, who has the assistance of his girlfriend Maria Ryan in his new venture, told the Grapevine: "It's a new chapter, a new beginning, but we're coming back to somewhere we know."

"Newmarket Heath is very much as it was when I left. It makes a big difference when you know how the gallops work and which gallops are

open and when. Obviously in Yorkshire it was a brand new experience for us, and most of our riders as well."

Horton, who has picked up a yard sponsor in horsebox specialists Overlander, said: "We moved back to Newmarket in November and into Park Lodge on December 11."

"We were lucky to get it and the Eustaces have been fantastic landlords. We've capacity for 39 and have 25 in at the moment, with a few more to come, and we'll be working at the breeze-ups to get a few more heads over doors."

The team hope to get the new venture going at the weekend, calling on a jockey with a Stoute connection.

Horton said: "We have Grandlad, who might run in a maiden at Newcastle on Friday, and then all being well Navagio will head to Doncaster for the Lincoln on Saturday, when we have Richard Kingscote booked to ride."

The five-year-old, who was

last seen winning at Gowran Park in July, was a 47,000gns sale purchase and is around 16-1 for the Lincoln.

Horton, whose career highlight came when winning a Listed race at Newmarket in 2022 with Sam Maximus, said: "Navagio is an interesting horse. We're still learning about him and don't know a huge amount, but we know from his form in Ireland he stays a mile very well and he has plenty of form on soft ground."

"He ticks a few boxes for a race like the Lincoln, but he's also a good-moving horse so may not be just a mudlark. He's owned by the Ontoawinner syndicate, which is run by Niall O'Brien, who was straight on the phone to us shortly after we bought the horse at the horses-in-training sale."

On the bigger picture, Horton added: "The main goal for this year is to get back on an even keel and train as many winners as we can, without forcing the issue unnecessarily."

Brown swaps silks for green uniform of ambulance service

SEVEN years after his riding career was ended by injury, former top apprentice jockey Thomas Brown may be helping people with similar issues after taking the first steps to retraining as a paramedic.

Brown, 31, was originally apprenticed to Andrew Balding and rode 110 domestic winners plus 13 more abroad, achieving a career-best 51 winners in 2013, when he gave Jason Hart a run for his money for the apprentice jockeys' title.

Brown, whose career highlight came when landing the John Smith's Cup at York in 2016 on the Ismail Mohammed-trained Educate, was forced to quit the weighing room the following year. An additional injury playing football two years ago left him unable to ride horses for three months.

Thankfully, Brown is now on track with the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST)

after gaining experience of their raceday cover at Newmarket last year and consulting with an adviser at the Jockeys Education & Training Scheme (JETS).

He successfully applied to become an emergency care assistant, working in the Bury St Edmunds area, and was on the road in an ambulance working alongside a qualified paramedic after just six weeks of intensive training.

A year on, Brown (below) says he looks forward to every shift and his ambition is to become an emergency medical technician and then a paramedic. He said: "Jets has given me so much help in supporting me into a career that I love, so it's important I give something back to them by sharing my experience and what I've learned from it."

"I feel incredibly proud to wear the green uniform and work for the ambulance service. I had some great days as a jockey, but it feels like I've found my second calling at EEAST and I'm loving every minute of it."

Brown, who speaks to young apprentice jockeys at seminars, discussing the skills he was able to transfer from racing, added: "To see the difference you make to patients is incredible. Becoming a paramedic is the goal, but I'm taking things one step at a time and enjoying learning new skills from supportive colleagues who want you to do well."

REPORTING BY DAVID MILNES AND DAVID CARR



General excitement at Ed Dunlop Racing Club morning

ED DUNLOP hosted a morning on the gallops to launch the second year of his racing club on Saturday, members of whom are getting excited about the prospect of seeing one of their two horses appear on All-Weather Championships finals day at Newcastle on Good Friday.

The throng came from as far away as Towcester to catch sight of their two money-spinning handicappers Society Lion and Citizen General on Newmarket's Waterhall gallop,

with anticipation growing about the latter, who was partnered by former jockey Tom McLaughlin.

Citizen General has already won three times for the club, at Lingfield and Pontefract in 2023 before scoring again at Kempton in February, when he picked up a handsome winning prize of £12,000-plus.

Members could be hitting the A1 north to Newcastle on March 29, when their hero could be aimed at the £150,000 Marathon.

Recently, members who paid £650 to join the club when it was launched in January 2023 had the bonus of receiving more than £300 back at the end of the year, such was the prize-money that had accrued over the 12 months. That cashback helped existing members find the lion's share of the £700 required to stay in this time around, which most did.

The club recovered from two early setbacks, when horses originally in the syndicate were

injured, but thanks to the generosity of Dunlop's owner Paul Turner, the pair were replaced.

Nick Brett, from Saffron Walden, told the Grapevine: "This is the best racing club bar none I've been in, and I've never had a penny back at the end of the year in the other clubs I joined."

Chatting to the Grapevine, jockeys' agent Paul Clarke said: "I never expected to get any money back when I joined so

it was a no-brainer to join again this year. If Citizen General can win at Newcastle it would be incredible, but I expect there will be a big demand for tickets."

On that score, the Dunlops may have an ace up their sleeve. The trainer's wife Becky said: "Believe it or not, one of our members is Arena Racing Company chief executive Martin Cruddace, so hopefully he might be able to accommodate everyone on Good Friday."