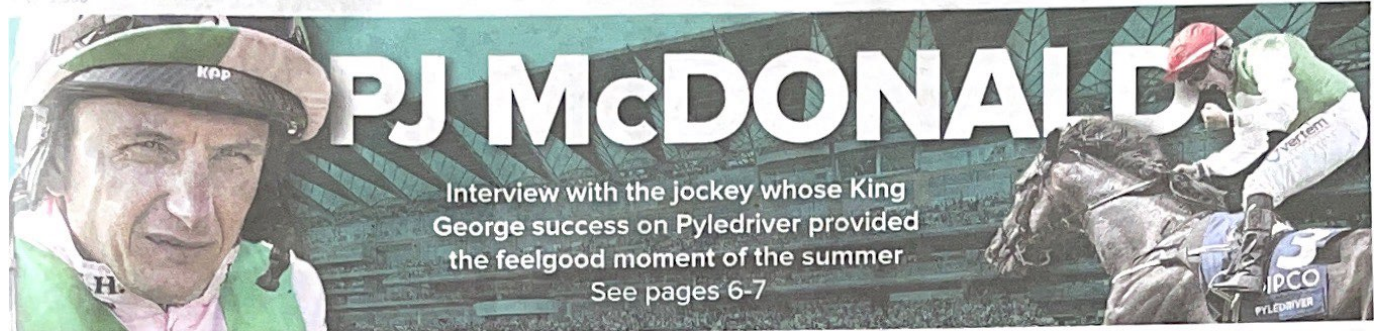


RACING POST

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PJ McDONALD

Interview with the jockey whose King George success on Pyledriver provided the feelgood moment of the summer
See pages 6-7

Crackdown agreed on appalling Cheltenham Festival behaviour

By James Stevens

POLICE have warned that escalating drug use, anti-social behaviour and violence towards women during Cheltenham Festival week are major problems that need to be tackled before next year's spring meeting. Gloucestershire's Police and Crime Commissioner Chris Jones chaired a meeting at the racecourse earlier this summer in the local council, MPs Alex Clark and Laurence Robertson of the Jockey Club, at which a strategy plan was formed to address problems in the town during its biggest four days. Anti-social behaviour, with alcohol a contributing factor, is the most prominent issue raised by residents, with drinking in gardens and parks being "distress" for some. A restriction of public bar opening hours to combat drunken behaviour was discussed but is not understood to be a main focus of the strategy. **Continues page 3**

FRANKIE SCORES ON LEAGUE DEBUT



Frankie Dettori celebrates after making his first ride in this season's Racing League a winning one at Lingfield last night. See page 13

Trainers call for action as more yards struggle to stay afloat

By Jonathan Harding

BRITAIN'S trainers face a growing struggle and urgent action is required to avoid more yards buckling under financial pressure, the head of the National Trainers Federation warned yesterday.

Chief executive Paul Johnson pointed to a "frustrating lack of urgency" to tackle rising costs, staffing, falling attendances and dwindling field sizes.

Johnson was responding to the views of trainer Ed Walker, who claimed this week in his Racing Post Weekender column that "years of neglect by those who control the sport" had contributed to Joe Tuite and Harry Dunlop quitting training.

Dunlop said his decision was influenced by the economic

climate making it increasingly difficult to cover costs, while Tuite cited the financial difficulties brought on by having fewer horses in the yard.

Mick Quinn, who said he "didn't have much choice" financially when he quit in January, and Caroline Bailey, who cited staffing issues when stopping last month, are other trainers to have shut their yards this year.

"The [Walker] article was excellent and we would echo the concerns Ed has raised," said Johnson. "We've lost well-established trainers in Joe and Harry, as well as others this year within the sport as there will be plenty of others who are struggling and will be bracing themselves for rising costs." **Continues page 3**

Today's cards: **F** Newbury 1.25 45 **F** Nottingham 1.30 20 **W** Wolverhampton 1.35 28 **F** Newmarket 5.10 34 **F** Thirsk 5.37 38 **F** Cork 5.00 54 **J** Tramore 4.50 62

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Trainers in fear about future with costs rising

From front page

costs in the coming months." Walker argued the only way to bring about change was for owners to take action and said this would have more impact than trainers boycotting races, as they did over prize-money levels at Newbury last month.

Asked whether the NTF would support owners in a boycott, Johnson said: "I would hope this kind of thing can be avoided as a boycott probably wouldn't help the situation that the sport faces."

"However, owners are the largest investors in the sport and we need to do all we can to make it more attractive to them, rather than just passing on ever-increasing costs. The seeming lack of urgency they will be seeing at present will be enormously frustrating, I'm sure."

"British racing, just like many industries, is trying to deal with many challenges at the moment. Costs are increasing, recruiting and retaining staff is becoming even more difficult, attendances are down, the number of horses in training and field sizes are down."

"It's hard to think of a single

KPI [key performance indicator] going in the right direction. Our view remains that in recent years the direction has been dictated by short-term gains rather than any longer-term plan for success. It's encouraging the sport is working towards a long-term strategy but it's very frustrating to see a lack of urgency to change things now."

Walker described the tripartite structure between the BHA, racecourses and the Thoroughbred Group, which comprises industry participants, as the "most ludicrous set-up of any industry" and argued it resulted in inaction.

"A tripartite agreement in itself makes sense as it means the balance of power rests between those groups," Johnson said. "However, the structure that has been in place around this with the 2015 Members' Agreement has meant the industry frequently finds itself in deadlock."

"There's a desire from all involved to reach a new agreement that can break this and see proper progress made. The fact media rights money flows into only one party of the



The parched conditions on the infield at Kempton made the track almost unrecognisable on Wednesday evening

three and that the value of these rights is not known by the other two creates an imbalance.

"The future governance structure will aim to enable representatives of the Thoroughbred Group and racecourses to work together on commercial matters, which would clearly be impossible without an agreement that sees full disclosure of the sport's income streams."

"We should not lose sight of the fact this income is only derived from the collective efforts of all of us - in circumstances such as an owners' boycott, that income stream

very quickly reduces to zero." On what his message would be to concerned NTF members, Johnson added: "We're trying to push the industry towards a longer-term

plan that can give us the confidence that the sport can sustain members' businesses into the future."

"In the meantime, we understand that things are very

difficult for many and would encourage them to come to us if they need help."

"We may not have easy solutions but are here to help where we can."

'When you get drugs as well as alcohol you get lack of control'

From front page

meeting. Instead, more attention will be aimed at tackling an increase in illegal drugs, with Nelson vowing to take action regarding the use of cannabis and cocaine during the week.

The police have identified trains as one particular way drugs are transported into the town during the four-day meeting and already run operations to combat this issue.

Nelson said: "Cheltenham has a bit of a problem; [the use of] recreational drugs such as cannabis and cocaine is sadly on the increase and I think too many people think there are no adverse consequences. It leads to all sorts of other crime."

"There's no shortage of activities we can do in order to fight drugs; definitely from my point of view I'll give that more attention. When you get drugs as well as alcohol you get lack of control. I'm keen to make

sure changes are implemented."

According to a survey in 2021 by Cheltenham borough council, 75 per cent of women feel unsafe on the town's streets at night during festival week - a three per cent rise from typical weeks - and stopping misogynistic behaviour and violence is one of the priorities for Nelson's team.

"I've spoken to a lot of women. They get touched up, there's misogynistic behaviour when someone is drunk," Nelson added.

"That's the sort of behaviour that women feel afraid of during raceweek; the borough's own survey revealed quite a high number of women feel uncomfortable. It's one of my priorities."

The action plan agreed to more temporary toilet facilities on the routes from the town to the racecourse, with additional

signage and marshals to control the area.

The prospect of a fifth day at the festival was also brought up at the meeting in the latest phase of the consultation process.

Chalk and Robertson expressed support for the prospect when asked by the Racing Post last month but from a policing perspective it would bring challenges.

"It would be an additional load on the police and a serious load," Nelson said. "What happens is other things in the force have to go on the back burner so it wouldn't be without consequences. I haven't seen a formal response for the constabulary. It works with the local community so if they, the council and business wanted it then I don't think they would say no."

This year's Cheltenham Festival attracted a record crowd of 280,627.

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