

THE HEART OF RACING

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Of racing

Position: Racehorse owner

ALTHOUGH I've been around long enough to know you can never take anything for granted in horse racing, I'm still allowing myself to dream a little at present. Isn't that part of the fun of it? The architect of my dreams is my brother Darren, who from his training base on the Curragh is yet again delivering massively on my relatively small investment with him.

Our journey in racing began when we were barely out of the pram, or maybe even sooner than that. Our dad (Arthur) was involved in horse racing, in the full spectrum of roles from groom to trainer, over a 60-year period. He was the most amazing horseman and Darren and I worked with him at every opportunity learning as much as we could. I rode as an amateur jockey in my teens, partnering four bumper winners.

However, I knew that I wasn't good enough to become a professional rider - Darren was the one to go down that route. He left school early to work with dad full-time, before going on to work with the likes of Dermot Weld, John Oxx and Jonjo O'Neill. I went to University of Limerick, where I completed a degree in Accounting and Finance. At college we set up a racing club, and enjoyed many an afternoon at the races while we should have been studying!

Many of the members had barely seen a horse previously and it was great to see them discover the thrills and entertainment that horse racing can provide. In 1991, a busload of us travelled to the Punchestown Festival to cheer on my father's runner, Local Whisper, in the Tattersalls Gold Cup. On the day the horse, who was one of only three he was training at the time, landed a massive gamble being backed down to 9/4f. The bus was only hitting the road in spots on the journey back to Limerick, the following afternoon! At graduation day, anyone who had been on that trip remembered it as the best day they had in their four years in college!

I went on from there to begin a career in financial markets, initially as a trader and subsequently advising banks on the development of systems for trading in the markets. Darren became assistant trainer to Ken Condon from the inception of his stable and it was great to follow the fantastic progress they made. It was also a time that Darren encouraged me to get into ownership.

In 2013, I returned to the saddle, for the first time in 25 years, partnering my own horse Age Of Glory to win the charity race at the Cheltenham Festival. Darren had bought him for me for only £7,000. Darren is very thorough in everything that he does, a real perfectionist, and left no stone unturned in terms of training both the horse and myself. On the day itself, all the planning paid off, as I managed to do my job as a passenger and remain on Age Of Glory as he powered up the hill!

The previous afternoon, I was interviewed on the *John Murray Show* on RTE radio - I told everyone the horse had a serious chance, as Darren was quite bullish. They invited me back on air the morning after the race, as I was getting into bed around 9am, since the phones had been hopping with listeners who had backed Age Of Glory at 100/1.

The biggest problem for my friends who came to Cheltenham, and had backed him at odds from 100/1 to 50/1, was trying not to misplace their wads of money as we partied the night away! A day we'll never forget and a memory money couldn't buy.

Another real bargain Darren bought for me was Grey Danube (£3,000) who has now won six races and tops the Irish All Weather Ratings. He's going to Dubai for the Carnival next year. We've landed some right touches with him and I think if it was possible he'd be sitting in on the couch every evening beside Darren. He's part of the family now and we'll ensure he has a great retirement after racing, though am not sure that stretches to modifying the sitting room.

The lads I work with in the financial markets (in London, Dubai, Singapore) had followed my progress as an owner and were always asking when they could get involved. So at the end of last year we formed a syndicate and sent Darren off to the sales. He bought three lovely yearlings for us, all of which are showing great promise. We recently had our first runner from the syndicate, Madame Thunder, who made a winning debut in a two-year-old maiden at Naas last month and is now heading for the Albany Stakes (Group 3) at Royal Ascot in a few weeks. Darren bought her for only €17,000. It has been a dream introduction to ownership for the lads and I have been inundated with requests to be included in our next syndicate.

LANDED MAJOR GAMBLE

Last week Darren made more headlines when he sent out Enchanteresse to land a major gamble on her racecourse debut at Fairyhouse. The three-year-old filly, who Darren bought out of a field for only €5,000 and raced in my own colours, was backed from 33/1 into 7/2 and beat a strongly fancied 1/2 favourite. Enchanteresse looks to have a very exciting future and will step up to listed level next (most likely in the Glencairn Stakes at Leopardstown).

Prior to her debut race last week, Darren was interviewed on *Attheraces* and he was adamant the filly would win. The ATR guys told us the station never had such a reaction to an interview, as the phones, twitter and email went into overdrive in the minutes following the win. While I might have felt for many years that he has amazing ability to select, train and place a horse I was both delighted and proud to hear so many people pay him so many compliments.

Racing is a tough game, especially for a small trainer starting out, so I hope that people will look at the results he's been achieving from very limited opportunities and give him some support.

Both of us view racing as an entertainment business. This weekend Darren is also launching his new website www.darrenbunyanracing.com. Hopefully people will take contact him for a chat. Darren has a range of syndicate options available and is also launching a racing club to provide a lower cost option for people to get involved. If they have even half the fun and success Darren has delivered for me, they are in for the most wonderful journey. While Darren believes in living in the pres-



Brian Bunyan with his brother Darren (left) and mother (right) after his Cheltenham charity race win on Age Of Glory

ent and not getting carried away with things, I'll still let myself dream a little more! Many thanks to all for the kind words and good wishes we've received

in recent times. Much appreciated.

Brian Bunyan was in conversation with John O'Riordan

Advance notice: Low-flying aircraft**Alert to horse and livestock owners**

As part of the Tellus project an aircraft will fly at a low level of 60m above ground level collecting geological information. The survey will start on 11th June 2015 and will continue for approximately 3 months, weather permitting. The aircraft will rise to 240m over urban areas. The sound of the plane is similar to that of a passing lorry, however it has the potential to startle horses and sensitive animals.

**Where?**

Across counties Meath, Kildare, Offaly, rural Dublin and parts of Laois and Wicklow. The plane will turn over neighbouring areas.

Why?

The work is part of the Tellus survey which is collecting geochemical and geophysical information on our rocks, soil and water. The data will be freely available to all.

Who?

The survey is being carried out by the Geological Survey of Ireland using Sander Geophysics Ltd. It is being funded by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

**Contact us**

1800 303 516
www.tellus.ie
tellus@gsi.ie

**What you need to do:**

If you have sensitive livestock, particularly horses, and you are concerned about the low-flying aircraft, please contact us now.