

July 2020

Dear Annual Badgeholder

As the month turns to July and we finally look forward to welcoming back racehorses to the Knavesmire, albeit in the slightly eerie world of sport behind closed doors, I wanted to update you on the latest news from York Racecourse.

Before doing that, we continue to send our very best to you and those important to you, hoping that all remain fit and well, as the country emerges from lockdown. Once again, I am pleased to report that everyone at the Racecourse continues to be in positive spirits with preparations and activity ramping up again so most of the team (including Debbie Shirt) returning from furlough, some on a part time basis.

As per my previous update, we are advanced in our planning for our scheduled behind closed doors racedays in July (9, 18, 19, 25 and 26). The details of the race programme are included on our website. We will be preparing a “digital racecard” which will look familiar to you with the runners and riders’ information and other details to scroll through. This will be available on our website and social media platforms and free to access. The entries for Thursday have just come in and the fields look strong for the unusual running of the Al Basti Equiworld Dubai Dante, Tattersalls Musidora and European Breeders’ Fund Marygate which are the standout races of a bumper nine race card, starting at 12.25pm.

The Group 2 Dante has attracted some exciting entries which include the unbeaten Highest Ground from the stable of Sir Michael Stoute, a man with his own tally of six Dante wins, at least one every decade since Shahrastani took the title back in 1986. Many observers have noted that champion jockey, Oisín Murphy, looks set to head north for the ride. Cormorant was an impressive Ballydoyle winner of the Group 3 Derrinstown Stud Stakes at Leopardstown so is priced by the markets as Aidan O’Brien’s leading chance. However, as Saturday proved, there is strength in depth at Ballydoyle so Royal Dornoch could eclipse his stable-mate in a high-quality looking renewal.

As I advised previously, all our July racedays are set to be covered, at least in part, by ITV Racing. In addition, we have arranged with Racing TV for all York Annual Badgeholders to have the ability to follow all the action on Racing TV, for free. To take advantage of the special complimentary day pass, simply call 0113 859 1477 (standard rate number), then confirm your York Badge details and quote the relevant code on the relevant day:

09/07/2020 – Y0907

18/07/2020 – Y1807

25/07/2020 – Y2507

19/07/2020 – Y1907

26/07/2020 – Y2607

This will enable you to have access to the channel from the time you call until midnight. For the weekend meetings, simply ask to be kept connected for both days. Don’t worry if you are not very tech-savvy, the team at Racing TV will be happy to run you through the whole set up process and suggest solutions to wrinkles such as for users of the Virgin viewing platform.

I know your biggest question is likely to be “will we be allowed into the Ebor Festival?” I am afraid the only honest answer is we just do not know at this stage. As the current legislation stands, Elite Sport (which includes horseracing alongside top-flight football, rugby, cricket etc) is by current UK law required to operate “behind closed doors” so with no paying crowds (which is defined to specifically include members, season ticket holders, or annual badgeholders). However, as

Government continues to ease lockdown restrictions in many other aspects of our lives, there remains a possibility that the situation will change before 19 August. Both wider racing and the team at York are currently engaged in discussions with Government alongside other elite sports to ensure a safe and appropriate return to spectators at live sport can happen as soon as possible. We will continue to keep you updated with information as the situation unfolds. Given that we know many of you are keen to still attend, we believe there is still a little period of grace before making a formal decision, as it remains our desire to welcome back supporters.

We have recently published on our website the Race Programme for the Welcome to Yorkshire Ebor Festival 2020. There will be eight races offering six figure prize money and a total prize fund of £2,265,500 with no race worth less than £30,000. That includes three new Class 2 handicaps that have been added to the race programme, one on each of the weekday cards to complete a seven race programme of top quality sport for all four days.

The generous support of long-term sponsors will help see the Group 1 Juddmonte International staged at £275,000 and the remaining pair of Group 1 contests, the Darley Yorkshire Oaks and Coolmore Nunthorpe are set to offer a purse of £250,000, the same prize money is being invested in the Sky Bet Ebor, that completes the feature races for each day. Leading Group 2 races, the Al Basti Equiworld Dubai Gimcrack, Weatherbys Hamilton Lonsdale Cup and Sky Bet City of York Stakes all have £100,000 purses; with a pair of Group 2 races backed by Sky Bet, the Great Voltigeur and Lowther, both offering £75,000. Unstinting support from the European Breeders' Fund sees a record five contests receiving their backing, headlined by the £35,000 Listed Sir Henry Cecil Galtres Stakes, also including two of the new contests.

Speaking about the investment of more than £1.4m above industry agreed values, York Racecourse Chairman, Lord Grimthorpe, said, *"We are delighted to be back racing at York, albeit initially behind closed doors. Despite challenging circumstances for all, we have tried to put our best foot forward with an incredibly exciting race programme and an investment in prize money well above industry agreed levels. We are hugely appreciative and grateful for the wonderful support of our sponsors, Annual Badgeholders and all who make York Racecourse so special. While we hugely look forward to the day we can welcome the return of spectators and supporters to York Racecourse, in the meantime I hope that people will follow and enjoy the sport on their televisions and mobile devices."*

Commenting on the news, Racehorse Owners Association Chief Executive, Charlie Liverton, said *"York have once again put together a fantastic and attractive programme with their customary investment in prize money. I would like to thank York and their sponsors for showing such brilliant commitment to the sport's participants in such a challenging period. York have shown what can be done when racecourses and participants work together and align interests. For owners, York will be providing an exceptional on course experience, under the guidelines, with access to the Owners' Club around the parade ring, on-course food services and specific owner debriefing areas for trainers and jockeys. The York team have worked incredibly hard to make it a programme not to miss."*

Finally, as I said last time, please could I ask for your continuing help in spreading the word about fixtures held "behind closed doors" at York Racecourse – as above, to comply with Government and Public Health England requirements these must be strictly "not for the public" events. In order to meet the Government's rules around avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining social distancing, we have been instructed that this applies to even our closest supporters. We have had to erect over 3 miles of fencing on the Knavesmire and engage security and police support to help ensure we meet this requirement. The message we are sending to the wider world, as endorsed by the North Yorkshire Police is clear - "behind closed doors" racedays are not appropriate to attend for anyone

bar those who are working, even outside the venue. As a racing supporter you might be asked by others what the situation is - please tell them that we have been required to obscure key views of the racing action, to close the car parks and we will not be providing catering, audible commentary, big screens nor toilets. As before, you are far better off staying at home to watch the excellent coverage on ITV Racing, Racing TV or on your mobile devices via your bookmaker account.

For now, thank you again for your continued support. We will endeavour to keep our website updated with any further news.

I hope you find a winner in at least one of the nine races that herald our return to the action.

James Brennan

Head of Marketing and Sponsorship