

# RACING POST

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## 'Lazy' Fallon pledges to go all out for the title

By Andrew King and David Carr

KIEREN FALLON last night pledged to go all out to win the jockeys' title for a seventh time, as a double at Ffos Las took his score to 75 for the season, 15 behind

championship leader Silvestre de Sousa.

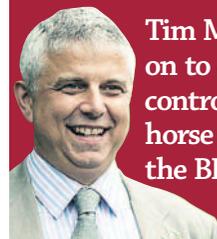
Fallon, general 6-1 third favourite behind De Sousa and Paul Hanagan, was further buoyed yesterday by a flurry of big-race bookings, notably for Betfred Ebor market leader Saptapadi.

Fallon said: "I have been lazy all year and not taken some of the rides I should have done, but that was then and this is now, and I'm going to give it a real go. I will be throwing everything at it and travelling everywhere to ride winners."

The injury suffered by Ryan Moore at Goodwood last Saturday means that Fallon is effectively in third place in the pecking order, though De Sousa added three winners to his tally yesterday and Hanagan was also on the

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## THE VOICE OF REASON



Tim Morris is the man the sport relies on to defend its corner in the face of controversies such as whip abuse and horse deaths. Julian Muscat talks to the BHA director of equine science and welfare, page 13

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INTERVIEW **TIM MORRIS**

**R**EWILDING'S demise in the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes demanded a bout of introspection. For those at Ascot 11 days ago, time froze as the stricken colt arose to canter past the grandstand on three legs.

The image arrested people in their tracks. The desire to be alone was overwhelming – as was the need to forsake conversation, to absorb the act of sudden brutality on a horse in vibrant health until that fateful false stride.

In these moments, Professor Tim Morris, the British Horseracing Authority's director of equine science and welfare, must be at his most lucid. While others withdraw into quiet reflection he must assess with indecent haste how to handle racing's latest trauma.

Truth be told, Morris has been too visually apparent in the last six months. He represented racing before the media when two horses were electrocuted at Newbury in February. He resurfaced in June when Frankie Dettori flouted the whip rules aboard Rewilding at Royal Ascot. And he was on hand for the King George tragedy involving the same horse.

Most prominently, however, it was Morris who handled the Grand National debacle that saw two horses killed, numerous others in a state of post-race exhaustion and the winner, Ballabriggs, struck repeatedly with the whip before a televised audience of nine and a half million.

The role could only belong to a racing devotee and Morris, with his open features and ready smile, fits that description. One of the most important parts of his remit, he believes, is to advance equine issues in a way that allows laymen to understand them.

Morris's faith in the way racing conducts itself is so unshakeable that he is convinced people will reconcile the series of provocative images with what he describes as the reality behind equine welfare. If the assumption is considerable, it emphasises Morris's belief that racing has nothing to hide.

"It isn't about being a spin doctor," he maintains, "it's about being very straightforward and honest. My role is to explain the equine aspects of racing. And because we are very open – for example, in the way we publish all whip offences – we sometimes have to take things on the chin."

Morris more than most. However, venture that it must be a thankless task and he won't hear of it. "Not at all," he says. "You have to be thoroughly realistic. Racing is on mainstream television; it is often in the news and you have to take what comes with that. You can't have the perfect storyline all the time."

He cites the Queen's Derby runner, Hayley Turner's inaugural Group 1 triumph aboard Dream Ahead and Tony McCoy's gong as BBC Sports Personality of the Year as evidence that racing generates positive media stories. Indeed it does; the rub is that Morris is not summoned in those circumstances.

"Most of the time I am picking up the pieces," he concedes. "Things can unfold very quickly. For example, I was in the stands at Aintree watching the horses being washed down after the Grand National and thinking 'great job' without realising that on television they were focusing on what looked like an unfolding crisis."

"Sometimes it can be difficult, but the only way to get our message across is to keep reiterating that we really do try to do the right thing. We haven't explained some things well enough, though."



EDWARD WHITAKER (RACINGPOST.COM/PHOTOS)

*Tim Morris: "My role is to explain the equine aspects of racing and sometimes we have to take things on the chin"*

# Racing's firefighter who is left to douse the flames

**Julian Muscat** meets Professor Tim Morris, the man who is wheeled out to defend the sport's image when whip abuse or equine deaths occur on the racecourse



"That's why [in the wake of the Grand National] I took a whip on to the BBC's Nine O'Clock News. In racing we have controlled use of a designer whip in very specific situations, which is not the same as walking into a stable and hitting a horse with a stick.

"People say: 'Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?' My answer is that it's easy to have a simple line but hard to get across a complex truth. To explain it in a five-second soundbite for television news is quite tough."

The strength of Morris's convictions befits one who was brought up around horses. Yet while he acknowledges how alien equine issues are to those with no knowledge of them, he may not fully appreciate the extent of it.

His unilateral view is that any child of appropriate age will understand why the whip is used in racing so long as it is explained thoroughly. Some children will beg to differ. To the unversed – and they are growing in number – the sight of a jockey raising a whip on a horse is simply too

abhorrent to be mitigated.

Nevertheless, Morris is convinced racing has the reach, the means and the intelligence to change that perception. Yet if that makes him sound like a diehard cheerleader for the status quo, he is quick to surprise.

He spent King George day in the company of an academic philosopher who is no passing acquaintance but the head of an ethics committee

**'Sometimes it can be difficult, but the only way to get our message across is to keep reiterating that we really do try to do the right thing'**

instigated by Morris himself. "I chose him because he is down to earth and practical, which you don't always get with philosophers," Morris says.

And if that isn't enough to raise the hackles of true racing diehards, Morris's starting point for the much-awaited whip review was to commission an opinion research company to find out exactly what people thought about the whip.

"Some say the whip is a perception issue while others say we should respond to the public, but no-one has actually gone out and asked what people really think," he says. This is proper opinion research, not a vox-pop or a poll.

"I have seen some of the findings and I'm not too surprised by them," he continues. "From previous experience I know that it's not usually black and white. We are finding a high degree of conditional acceptance, but at the end of it we've got to put that research into plain language to explain to the racing community what we are trying to do, and why."

**T**HAT sentiment perfectly amplifies Morris's role as a buffer. On one hand he must explain to insular racing insiders what the outside world is thinking; on the other he must explain to the outside world racing's myriad complex ways.

Ne'er the twain shall meet? Not

if Morris has his way.

In between time he returns to the job's daily demands, one of which he maintains has an equal resonance for racing as welfare. "People worry about how the levy will affect racing, but a major sudden risk is disease," he says.

"We commissioned an economic impact study which told us that an uncontrolled disease outbreak in Britain would halve the value of the horse sector in 18 months. That would amount to losses of £3.5 billion." Vigilance on that front is therefore paramount.

For all his firefighting, much of Morris's work goes undocumented. He gave lengthy evidence at the BHA's disciplinary hearing into fellow vet James Main in February – and again at the subsequent hearing at the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Then there's the ongoing Howard Johnson inquiry, which detained him for two days a fortnight ago – not to mention regular racecourse visits and constant assessment of the daily requirement for vets to fulfil the fixture list's escalating demands.

Overall, it's hard to gauge whether Morris prefers such anonymity to his high-profile role as racing's apostle in times of crisis. What is not in doubt is his wholehearted commitment to both causes. Racing should be appreciative of his old-school values dressed in 21st century clothing.