



No doubts...

...for leading sales consignor **Ted Voute**, who voices his opinion on all things bloodstock and sales-related

London was a huge success

HATS OFF TO GOFFS for holding such an elegant inaugural London Sale on the eve of Royal Ascot. The perfect setting on the edge of Hyde Park, Kensington Palace had a Royal touch with 3,000 guests, including the ruling family of Qatar as well as owners from Hong Kong, Australia, US, as well as, of course, a swath of British and Irish bloodstock agents.

Some horses sold in absentia and others appeared in the flesh much to the amazement of the passing tourists in Hyde Park, who listened to Henry Beeby sell at record vocal speeds.

As we had all hoped for, prices broke the £1,000,000 barrier, and the BBC News crew had

a feature to include in the 10pm news. In media terms alone the Goff's team moved everything to a new level with journalists present from Radio 5 live, *The Times* and even BBC 1.

Media coverage of this stature is mega; the cost to buy the same column space as advertising is unaffordable and editorial coverage is better remembered. This put the horse business into the real world – capital stuff.

We were all in awe of Goff's who took an embryonic idea and created a living sale right there in the centre of London, and not in Dublin which would have been much easier for the Irish-based firm.

The business needs to be sold to the "people", and in such a way that vast amounts of money don't appear obscene – the "Frankel package" sorted that out, and the disappointment if Crystal Gaze and foal were not worth £1,000,000 would have been a talking point.

The breeze-up session was the warm-up act, but what the agents really wanted were the form horses, many who were holding Royal Ascot entries the next day and later in the week. The sale topper, Cappella Sansevero, a Showcasing colt

was bought by the vendor of the Frankel package so everybody was happy.

The value at the sale was the lifetime breeding rights to Invinible Spirit, which fetched £160,000. He is a 2003 model and will be a 12-year-old next year and currently stands at €70,000. There is plenty of time to recoup the outlay; I just wish I had a spare few quid!

The very next day Cappella Sansevero went on to finish second in the Coventry and later in the week the Aussies took some third-place prize-money with Café Scoiety so helping pay for the airfare home later in the week.

All Goffs need now is a little more luck on the racecourse: maybe a Melbourne Cup winner might do the trick or at the very least a Group 1 winner! That would be some achievement from an inaugural sale.

Henry Beeby and his energetic team at Goffs have something to be proud of and to mould over the next few years.

They have a success story and they have shown the world what the company can do outside of their comfort zone.

Top and bottom this was not only about a sale, it was about Goffs, QIPCO and the various partners who saw a bigger picture and weren't frightened to build and change the sale as they went along.

Not all of it worked and it was not for everybody, but it catapulted our business into prime time TV and world-wide interest. Well done Goffs, well done Henry and well done Ireland. You showed London a thing or too! ■

First-season sire Group race fest: The Wow Signal (Starspangledbanner) beats Cappella Sansevero (Showcasing), in the Group 2 Coventry Stakes



was topped by Mocklershill's Distorted Humor sold to Stephen Hillen for £600,000.

Some tweaks are required – the breeze-up section felt too long and should not have started the sale, it would have been nice to have seen a racing promo on the big screen, the showing of stallions was unnecessary, while the Great British Racing-sponsored drinks party – held indoors so with obvious pluses and with the wider goal of generally promoting racing – is unfortunately no longer.

And, while the sale is obviously for those with certain-sized wallets, it not only felt off-putting having the general public in Kensington Park staring through railings in a “them” and “us” scenario, it did not achieve one of the goals that a racehorse sale should always set out to achieve – that it should be accessible to all.

The Orangery is restrictive on numbers, but anyone should be able to walk in and enjoy the atmosphere of a sale. Importing a horse sale to London gives an unrivalled opportunity to touch

the lives of those who may never have been in the vicinity of a thoroughbred auction.

A horse sale without horses showing themselves off in front of the buying audience, under the lights of the auditorium and with the buyers sat focused in a building purposely designed to maximise sales, is a negative. It was easy to lose concentration, and apart from a few interested agents, by the end, few of the high-worth individuals were paying attention (possibly no different from usual).

Future success of any sale depends on the consignors – it is not probably unrealistic to say that every racehorse trainer in Britain or Ireland will be hoping that he or she has a horse in training good enough to consign next year and it has given a visible outlet to the lucrative and popular, but until now private, top end mid-season horse-in-training market.

Equally, any breeze-up vendor may be less keen – it is late to be selling breeze-ups and, as most came from Ireland, it must have been a long weekend at Kempton.

Edward Lynam, who had two Group 1 winners and a Group 2 from four runners, a wonderful strike rate.

Gosden had two Group 1 winners in The Fugue and Kingman and won the Chesham for the new mayor of Newmarket, Rachel Hood, who also happens to be his wife.

It was disappointing the mayoral chains did not get a showing in the winner's enclosure. Hood named the horse Richard Pankhurst after the barrister also known as the “Red Doctor”, but perhaps best known as husband to Emmeline, the famous suffragette.

Retiring Ascot CEO Charles Barnett has done a good job in making Royal Ascot less daunting than when the new stand first opened and my Australian guests thoroughly enjoyed their race days and stayed for the community singing on Gold Cup day.

We made base on a table between the saddling boxes and paddock. It was obviously a prime spot as we had Mick de Kock's group at the next table.

From the spot we were able to see the pre-parade ring, the Royal Procession, the horses as they left the paddock and the races on the big screen.

The only thing Ascot still has not got right is the unsaddling area for the unplaced horses – the space is too small and it is an accident in waiting.

My week ended with an interesting

morning at Kingsclere with Australian vet, Andrew Marty.

He was over for the International Conference on Equine Exercise Physiology held at Chester.

For the last few years he has been in Abu Dhabi looking after a camel stable, having previously been based in a racetrack practice at Caulfield.

He now looks after 350 camels under a trainer and assistant trainer who only speak Arabic. There are two camels to each groom, just like stables used to be in Britain through the early 20th century. The cheapest camel in the stable is worth £100,000, with the most expensive around £4,000,000.

About 70 per cent of the adult male population are involved in camel racing in some form. And as long as the sport continues in Abu Dhabi, Marty believes there will never be a threat of social unrest.

For the last seven years the camels have been “ridden” by robotic jockeys complete with mannequin faces, sunglasses, hats, racing silks and aftershave/cologne, replacing the very young riders who used to have to be velcroed on.

The trainers/ owners then control the robots from their four wheel drives. There are probably a few horse trainers everywhere who would like to deal with robotic jockeys after a bad race-ride. ■



Above, MV Magnier with Crystal Gaze and her Frankel foal, below, Joey from the stagshow War Horse ridden by former jockey Johnny Murtagh

