

In a new fortnightly series, bloodstock agents talk about their best and worst buys — and the one that got away.

Charlie Gordon-Watson, 46, bought Classic winners Kris Kin, King's Best and Snurge. He is joint-master of the Cottesmore, and plays polo

NEW
SERIES

HORSE & HOUND

3rd FEBRUARY 2006

What was your best buy?

King's Best cost around £220,000 and won close to that in prize-money. A Guineas winner only just recouping his purchase price in prize-money does not sound all that great, but he was sold for several million and, with a stud fee of around £20,000, generates millions each year. He is proving successful at stud; we bought six yearlings by him last year.

And your worst?

Anything that I have to end up paying for myself — and there have been a few. It is the risk of the business — it's not all easy percentages — and in my 20 years as an agent I have had £600,000 of bad debts. That's an average of £30,000 per annum.

What do you consider the shrewdest purchase by another agent?

Motivator, who was bought by my good friend John Warren for 75,000gns, won £1.2m in prize-money and was syndicated for £6m. Whatever John made out of it was richly deserved and, yes, I am magnanimous!

Is there one that got away?

Simon Marsh and I, wearing our Watership Down Stud hat, were underbidders (at the 1996 Keeneland November Sale) to John Magnier for Mariah's Storm, who was carrying Giant's Causeway at the time. We would never have had the riches of Giant's Causeway's racing and stud career because he would have been sold as a yearling — and John Magnier would have bought him anyway — but we would have had

There is no such thing as a weak sale — they are all relative to the economic climate at the time, the standard of horses and supply and demand.

Why was the bloodstock market so strong in 2005? Will it remain

— you can sell horses in the dark, but can't look at them in the dark. At Tattersalls, I would like to see a considerably better-lit outside ring. They seem to have got this right at Goffs.

Is the current sales calendar easily workable?

Selfishly, it is ideal for me at the moment because it does not interfere too much with my recreations.

What I am looking forward to is cutting out the Keeneland September Sale; there are fewer and fewer suitable horses for Europe and the American market is in a different stratosphere to ours. I am not mad about Kentucky and could do without it — it's a nice time to be in England. But, as long as I have the good clients who want to buy there, I will continue to go and it is only two weeks at most. Now I am closer to 50 than 40, I have adopted a "work to live" policy rather than "live to work".

■ As told to Ed Prosser

Send your bloodstock news to *Horse & Hound* (fax: 020 7261 5429 or e-mail catherine_austen@ipcmedia.com)



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the mare's progeny to sell.

Which sale do you enjoy most?

The one where you have luck in running, by which I mean everything falls into place and you are able to buy the horses you really want. I least enjoy the opposite. I am not good at frustration.

What are the strongest and weakest sales you've been to?

Tattersalls October Part One last year was the strongest, but we were fortunate enough to buy 38 yearlings for around £6m, with grateful thanks to my clients.

strong in 2006?

Because everyone spent more than ever before. Seriously, the so-called Darley-Coolmore "boycott" encouraged other owners, who saw an opportunity to buy the progeny of Coolmore stallions.

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Is there anything you would change in the way sales are run?

Give those looking at horses more daylight to actually look at them