

# HOLDING COURT WITH KING CHARLES

GEORGE HAINE meets international bloodstock agent Charles Gordon-Watson, the man who bought 2003 Derby winner Kris Kin

**T**HE end of spring and the advent of the first Saturday of June can mean only one thing in the racing world – Derby time again.

Bloodstock agent Charles Gordon-Watson has experienced the Epsom highs, having purchased the 2003 winner Kris Kin for owner Saeed Suhail.

Yet it has also provided him with a very contrasting experience.

"The Derby remains the ultimate test as it is the race that everyone wants to win. I am always striving to find my next blue riband winner," says Gordon-Watson. "Kris Kin's victory would have to rate as my

most exciting day's racing; with the announcement that 2,000 Guineas winner King's Best was to be scratched from the 2000 event as one of my worst, along with his subsequent injury in the Irish Derby. What makes it so hard, when you are trying to buy a future Derby winner, is the fact that you are competing against the home-breds."

Being a season-ticket holder at Chelsea's Stamford Bridge home, his views on the Wednesday/Saturday debate, regarding which day it should be run, are interesting. "I am a firm believer that the race should be run on the first Wednesday in June, just like the Melbourne Cup is always on the first Tuesday in November. It should be run as a stand-alone event, avoiding clashes with other sporting events. Besides, people love to have an excuse to take a day off work."

Gordon-Watson's path to becoming a leading player in the bloodstock world was almost inevitable, having grown up around horses all his life. His parents breed horses from their Dorset base, his cousin was Newmarket trainer David Morley and his sister is the Olympic Gold medallist and three-day Eventing World Champion Mary Gordon-Watson, who is now a Jockey Club member.

Training, however, was his first aim in life and spells with Fulke Johnson Houghton and Captain Ryan Price were his first ports of call after leaving school. He also recorded winners as a jockey in the point-to-point field and under Rules, with the highlight being a Hunter Chase victory at Cheltenham.

A year-long stint working for Robert Sangster prompted



Buying a Derby winner: Charles Gordon-Watson has passed the 'ultimate test'

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his move into the bloodstock sphere. "Whilst there, I found that trading was something that appealed to my nature and besides, I get more time to do other things now than I would if I was a trainer. I am the sort of person who has to be active and I enjoy experiencing new things," he adds.

Gordon-Watson's time in the winter is spent as a Master of the Cottesmore Hunt and in the last four years he has taken up polo. "I really enjoy it, as it keeps me fit and my mind sharp," he says.

At the tender age of 25, he

took the plunge and became a bloodstock agent in his own right after a brief spell in *Pacemaker's* advertising department, which gave him an insight into commercial breeding. His record in picking future champions when they are at their yearling stage speaks for itself. He is responsible for selecting eight Classic winners, 24 individual Group 1 winners of 37 Group 1 races and, since 1994, he has recorded 18 Royal Ascot winners with his purchases.

*Pacemaker's* loss is racing's gain, obviously. *Pacemaker*