

David Mach's *The Great British Drama*, commissioned by Ascot Racecourse, encapsulates the excitement of Royal Ascot



THE SPORT OF KINGS

There's nowhere quite like Royal Ascot
and no sport quite like horse racing

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FLAT RACING'S MOST NOTABLE OWNERS

HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum



Sheikh Mohammed and the Maktoum family of Dubai dominate the world of thoroughbred breeding and racing. His stud Darley is the biggest breeding operation in the world, while Godolphin (the two operations named after the founding sires of modern thoroughbreds) has bases in the UAE, the US, Australia and the UK. Their success means they have been British flat racing champion owners and breeders nine times in 17 years, and since 1992 they have won more than 2,000 races worldwide.



John Magnier



There is one man whose influence over thoroughbred racing matches that of HH Sheikh Mohammed: the Irish owner and breeder John Magnier. His Coolmore Stud, which has homes in the US, Australia and Ireland, is worth more than \$5.5 billion, and he owns arguably the best sire ever bred, Sadlers Wells. In fact, 12 of the last 16 winners of the Epsom Derby have come from Coolmore Stud stallions. In conjunction with his top owner, Michael Tabor, he has won just about every major Group 1 race.



HM Queen Elizabeth II



A highly experienced horsewoman, racing gives The Queen her greatest pleasure. As her grandson Peter Phillips remarked, 'This is her passion and her life.' Her horses have won more than 1,600 races, including English Classics 1,000 and 2,000 Guineas, The Oaks and St. Leger, plus last year's Ascot Gold Cup with her filly Estimate. The Queen is fascinated by the intricacies of breeding (she also breeds fell ponies and Shetlands) and has her own Royal Stud at Sandringham.



Since 1711 the combination of wealth, royalty, high fashion and superb racehorses have made the world-famous Royal Ascot race meeting a social hotspot. The five days of racing (17-21 June) is always attended by members of the British Royal Family, and is one of the few occasions where Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II can be expected to attend in person. To add to the sense of occasion there's a daily horse-drawn procession from Windsor Castle to Ascot Racecourse.

While the racing is fantastic, most of the 300,000 people who flock to the event are there to soak up the glamour and tradition – and dress up. Hats are the focus of Ascot's fashion and Ladies Day on the Thursday offers the most outrageous headwear money can buy – couture milliners like Philip Treacy and Stephen Jones do brisk business in June.

Tickets for Royal Ascot are strictly policed – Silver Ring tickets offer basic entry with no formal dress code, and it's a great way to catch all the racing action

on a budget while enjoying a picnic. Grandstand tickets give you access to excellent facilities and entertainment, including military bands. Access to the Royal Enclosure is restricted to those who have been sponsored for membership, though overseas visitors may apply to their embassy or high commission for badges. The dress code for the Royal Enclosure has barely changed in 50 years: formal day dress with a hat, and no miniskirts, spaghetti straps or too much fake tan. Gentlemen must wear either black or grey morning dress, including waistcoat, with a top hat.

But no-one would dismiss Royal Ascot as merely a fashion parade. The meeting features seven Group 1 races (the highest level, only for the best horses) and

Declaration of War wins the Queen Anne Stakes at Royal Ascot in 2013

in 2013 the prize money exceeded \$8 million. Along with the Dubai World Cup, Australia's Melbourne Cup, Longchamp in France and the American Breeders Cup, the prestige that comes with races like the Ascot Gold Cup means the best horses and owners make sure they have their day in the sun. The Queen herself won the Gold Cup in 2013 with her horse Estimate, netting just over \$327,000.

However, these winnings are only a drop in the ocean compared to the value of the foals Estimate will go on to have – breeding is where the real money lies.

The odds of your expensive yearling going lame and never racing again are far higher than it winning a Group 1 race – but if they do make it, the post-racing rewards for owners of top horses mean flat racing is big business.


Two of 2013's most successful sires, Dubawi and Oasis Dream, owned by Goldolphin and Prince Abdullah respectively, stand at stud for \$140,000 and \$165,000 per live foal. Their offspring sell as yearlings for upwards of \$1 million (with a record price of €

For all its glamour and excitement, flat racing is big business. The legendary Frankel is worth \$165m



\$2 million). Frankel, probably the best racehorse of all time, has just started at stud for \$207,000 per foal, while his value is estimated at \$165 million. These are the kind of prices the top owners will pay for the possibility of standing in the winner's enclosure at Ascot, Dubai, Longchamp or Melbourne.

Due to the cost of owning and running a racehorse, many are purchased by syndicates (multiple owners), but there are still single owners who have both the passion and the purse to pursue their chosen sport – see the side panel for some of the sports' most prominent owners.

While most of us can only dream of owning a racehorse, visiting a meeting like Royal Ascot is fabulous fun, offering a great atmosphere and high adrenaline rush as you cheer your favoured horse home first past the post. 

 **HM Queen Elizabeth II arrives by carriage from Windsor Castle, an annual tradition since 1711**

Prince Khalid bin Abdullah Al Saud



Prince Khalid started buying European racehorses in 1977, and entered the racing public's consciousness with a bang when Known Fact won the 2,000 Guineas in 1979 – the first (but certainly not the last) time an Arab owner won an English Classic race. His Juddmonte Farm stud has gone from strength to strength – his homebred horses have won all the English and French Classics and most of the American major races, plus he is the owner of the legendary Frankel, worth approximately \$165 million.



HRH Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Jordan, Sheikha of Dubai



Like Britain's Queen Elizabeth, horses are Princess Haya's life blood. She represented Jordan in the 2000 Summer Olympics and 2002 FEI World Equestrian Games in showjumping, and since 2006 has been the President of the FEI. In 2008 her horses won The Epsom Derby and the \$5 million Breeders' Cup Classic, and she is an annual presence at Royal Ascot with her husband, HH Sheikh Mohammed.



Aga Khan IV



Despite his British citizenship, Prince Karim Al Hussaini's main operations are in France, where he is the record winner of the Prix de Diane. The Imam of Nizari Ismailism has won the 'Derby double' – the Irish and Epsom Derbies – four times. He was also the joint owner of Shergar, who was at the centre of a global sensation when he was kidnapped by the IRA in 1983.

Ascot facts



More than **300,000** people will attend over the five days of racing. They will be looked after by **6,000** staff

In 2009, **1,500** lobsters were consumed, along with **8,000** spears of asparagus and **11,500** punnets of strawberries

Britain's Queen Elizabeth II has attended every year since **1945**

Prize money for last year's meeting exceeded £5 million for the first time. It is the most valuable race meeting in Europe with the Diamond Jubilee Stakes being worth **£500,000** to the winner

The new Grandstand, which opened in 2006, cost **£200m** to build