

'We spent £300,000, now they're worth £2m'

The Bloodstock Big Read

Tom Peacock finds out from Nick Bradley how to make a success of syndicates



NICK BRADLEY didn't have long to worry about his handful of new purchases from the last couple of breeze-ups. On both occasions, all shares in them had been snapped up within 24 hours of him being back at home.

It's because of the results, he explains, rather than the hard sell.

"I produced some data from the breeze-ups last year," he says. "We spent £300,000 and the current valuation is something between £1.5 million and £2 million on the horses we bought. So when you produce data like that, you don't need to persuade many people, it kind of persuades them itself."

Prospective members of Bradley's syndicates also have to look only at the 2022 spend to find a name they would recognise. Marshman, last year's Gimcrack runner-up, warmed up for a potential challenge for the Commonwealth Cup with a recent victory in the Group 3 Prix Sigy, having been bought for £38,000 at Doncaster.

Twelve months earlier Bradley found Fast Response, a filly for whom he has the highest hopes this year, for 13,000gns at the Guineas Sale. Before that was 22,000gns Tattersalls gamble Mystery Angel, who finished second in the Oaks and was sold on for 500,000gns.

The last-named example is one that epitomises the

Moneyball theory that Bradley has often referenced, the story of how Billy Beane brought baseball glory to the Oakland A's by identifying overlooked and undervalued players based on his statistical analysis. Mystery Angel was found by one of the vets to have a slight heart murmur, but he decided that this was not an issue that should affect her racing performance.

A singular individual who never uses bloodstock agents, Bradley has a detailed system.

"Say last week at Doncaster, I watched every horse breeze on the track, watched every video back, and we obviously use the timing equipment," he says. "Then I break it down using various different methods – that I'm not going to share! – and I try to come up with a reason why a horse could be the next Marshman."

Regarding Marshman himself, perhaps one important factor which Bradley disregarded was his sire, Harry Angel, who hadn't arrived with his first crop being especially feted by the industry.

"It's a bit crazy, the fashion of the stallions, because whatever is heavily in fashion, the way I see it, it's only got one way to go, and what's heavily out of fashion, likewise, has got only one way to go," he says.

"People looked at his stock, they thought they were maybe a bit long in the back, tried to find faults with them. Quirky, I think it would be fair to

describe him as that, but he was an exceptional racehorse who showed plenty of speed and that's what the market wants at the moment."

Bradley thought that the colt offered by Innishannon Valley Stud had breezed well and had potential, despite looking a little on the raw side.

"Last week the market had got even stronger than this time last year," he says. "I can't go out and buy the ones that tick every box, but what I can do is buy the ones that could be superstars rather than the ones that already look like they are."

"They don't all come off. I bought three there last year: one [Trabajo Detecho] looks like it will win plenty of races this year, one was a very moderate filly, and Marshman is obviously very good. It's a bit of a lottery but we came up smiling there."

Marshman is likely to be seen somewhere this month before Ascot comes on his agenda.

"His acceleration is key," says Bradley. "He can go away from horses like they're standing still. He did it again in France but just got a bit tired in the last 100 yards, which we expected on his first run back."

"My aim is to try to make him a stallion prospect and to do that he's got to win the right races, so I'm still kind of researching it. I'd love to go to York and win the Duke of York, that would be a bit of a dream come true – the owners would love that."



Finding the fillies

The Moneyball concept has slipped into more common parlance as a description of a more sophisticated, data-rich method of analysis that has people thinking smarter than their rivals. It is often ascribed to the running of both Brighton and Brentford FC, owned respectively by gambling tycoons Tony Bloom and his former accomplice, Matthew Benham.

Bradley, a former primary school maths teacher, has a comparable background and modus operandi, forever searching for an edge or an opportunity. He almost exclusively buys fillies at the yearling auctions for their resale value, looking at every single one offered in Britain, Ireland and France.

He ventures into colts only at the breeze-ups as "you've got more clues, you're further down the line", as well as because there are far fewer fillies on offer in that sector – and he gets restless at the sales without having something to occupy him.

Bradley explains: "I was originally a professional gambler and look at it as the odds of working out our chances of getting our money back. As a rule, whatever I spend, when I come to sell them it generally at least doubles; obviously you've got training costs and prize-money between all the other

costs, but over the last five or six years, we've been able to do that."

Oscula, found for £40,000 and sold for €1,000,000 at Arqana last year after multiple European Pattern wins, has been the highest-profile example so far.

"You get more and more confident in what you're doing and the fillies' market for those who go on and win the Group races," says Bradley. "The trade for them at the end of last year was immense. It's a great business model, when they come on the market."

"It's all about the odds. People love to dream and I try to do it so they can invest their money, achieve their dreams and then can roll the dice again. I hate it when people leave the industry because they've had a bad experience. That's what I try to avoid at all costs."

However clever you might be at finding a bargain, it becomes ever harder to stick to a budget when prices rise inexorably higher. With the breeze-up market remaining strong, even Bradley has been sent into more extravagant territory.

"I had my hand in the air at 180-odd thousand in Newmarket," he says. "I was pretty confident in the horse I was bidding on but as a rule I'm a 50-grand-and-down kind of guy."

"It's a lot more competitive.

I'm finding the breeze-up market is very selective and everybody is kind of on the same horses, so you have to work hard. I'm open to spending more if I can see a solution down the line which makes it a worthwhile risk."

Many of his horses are sold at the end of their juvenile season, which is another of Bradley's particularly individual strategies.

"I do like to race a lot at two because I like the two-year-old programme more than the three-year-old programme," he says. "You're not going to run into the Galileos and Dubawis at the very highest level, as you would at three, and I don't have the option to buy those."

"The most important thing I'm thinking when I'm buying is, 'Will this debut in May?'"

A promising response

Bradley is undoubtedly a more ambitious, demanding client for his trainers spread around Britain and into Ireland than most as he requires autonomy in race-planning.

However, with a string which is likely to number around 70 by the end of the breeze-up swing, and as an increasingly respected figure within the sport, he is a worthwhile asset. This is something clearly recognised by Marshman's trainer Karl Burke.

"He works the sales really hard with [daughter] Kelly," says Bradley. "I've probably



@rpbloodstock
@racingpostbloodstockofficial
@rpbloodstock
bloodstock@racingpost.com

LAURA GREEN



had horses with him for ten or 12 years, so we know how each other's mind works. He listens to me, I listen to him.

"Wherever I've got horses, my aim is to have the best horses in the yard. We've been able to do that, and now everyone is sending him horses. It's great for Karl, so the challenge will be harder and harder, but I really enjoy working with him."

That connections have not cashed in their chips with Fast Response, belatedly a Listed winner at three last November, is the first indication that she has a bright future. Bradley's words only emphasise the case.

"She's an absolute weapon of a horse on heavy ground," he says. "I'm managing her towards the Abbaye at the end of the year. If I'm going to win a Group 1 this year, her and Marshman would be my leading hopes at this stage."

"We sent her to Bath instead of Newmarket the other week, but the rain never came there and it was too much of a speed test for her. We might even run her in the Chartwell Stakes at Lingfield over seven furlongs – I want to see if she can do it over a longer distance on slightly quicker ground. I'll be running her in Group 1s this year and I'd be pretty confident."

Among those flying the flag for Nick Bradley have been (from top) Marshman, Fast Response and Oscula

establish what are now two studs in North Lincolnshire, Bradley felt there was a decent margin to be had on buying fillies, covering them by fashionable stallions and re-offering them.

There were good results but still sometimes broodmares left over and the residents began to grow in number. Bradley also began to acquire breeding rights and bought a share in Lope Y Fernandez, so he has begun to produce both foals and yearlings for sale, depending on the stage at which he believes each will achieve their optimal value.

"It's north of 50 [mares] now," he says. "They're not top end but I'd like to think a level underneath."

"A New Bay filly I bred was favourite for the Italian Guineas last weekend, out of a mare called Ile Flotante [Aquila Reale, who finished third]. I've got a mare called Spain Blues, who bred Spain Burg who won the Rockfel, and a sister to Accidental Agent, the Johnson Houghton family's Group 1 winner.

"There are a lot of fillies that are sisters to good horses, or maybe raced for Nick Bradley Racing. When I send a horse to the ring, if there's ability and a decent enough page, I'll protect it to a certain price so that the owners get a good return, and I might buy it from them to join the broodmare band."

"I've been breeding horses in terms of large numbers for only the last three or four years, so it's very much in its infancy."

It all means that when he isn't combing sales for just about every denomination of horse, Bradley might be looking at mating plans or monitoring pregnant mares on the cameras. In fact, just about the only time when he isn't involved in something to do with horses is for the penance of watching his beloved Hull City.

"I've not had to muck out a box so far this year so I'm doing well," he says.

"I'm trying to get less hands-on and I've got a great team now, so I can leave them to it a bit more. But I've still got a stallion to support, a racing syndicate business, and two lovely children."

He concludes: "The Arqana sales in December is like the finishing line. Then we have a month off to recharge the batteries, go and do a bit of skiing. I used to be mad for it, now it's a bit more work than play, but I still enjoy it."

"I'm incredibly lucky to be doing what I'm doing."

Preview Tattersalls Guineas HIT & Breeze-Up Sale

By Tom Peacock

A HEARTY breakfast is advised for all those invested in the action at Park Paddocks today, with the bell ringing at 9.30am for the first of what will be around 100 going under the hammer as part of the Tattersalls Guineas Horses in Training Sale.

By early afternoon, another 150 or so two-year-olds will begin selling for the Guineas Breeze-Up. Year-on-year stats continue to show that this is not as high-rolling an event as last month's Craven Sale, but racing's movers and shakers will be in Newmarket ahead of a three-day Classic meeting and the catalogue also offers a bit more breathing space for some of the smaller consignors to showcase their wares. Here are a few to look out for during the lengthy session.

Lot 154

2yo f Sea The Stars x Pinkster (Vicarage Farm)

The saga of last year's non-payer, named by the Racing Post as Saleh Al Homaizi, of more than £20 million-worth of yearlings is almost over, with the companies left holding the babies having mostly found private purchasers or conducted various closed-house sales for them.

This filly, the most interesting inclusion of the horses-in-training section, had shown herself up well among the Newsells Park Stud draft at Book 1, making some 600,000gns. Her dam is an unraced half-sister to the Lancashire Oaks winner Pongee as well as to Plutonic, who has produced the dynasty of Chicquita and Magic Wand through her daughter Prudenzia. Pinkster's first foal, Paz, had been unbeaten at time of purchase and ran as if something was amiss on her return in the Prix de la Grotte. Even if it seems difficult to imagine she's going to reach the same price seven months further along, this is a filly of considerable value on pedigree alone.

Lot 216

2yo f Ardad x Totally Lost (Houghton Bloodstock)

There are very few Ardad juveniles around this year, with only 19 currently registered, and his yearlings sold for an average of more than £70,000 on the impressive results from two crops on the ground and a flagbearer in Perfect Power. The Overbury resident will have far higher numbers in the seasons to come but the two consignors bringing a filly by him to this sale have a bit of rarity value in hand. Lot 216, from a family that has produced the Prix Maurice de

Timely updates and a red-hot sire provide interest as focus falls on Guineas week

Gheest winner Marianafout, was one of the better-value Ardad yearling purchases at 58,000gns, but has a Harry Angel half-sister in Tiger Bay who looked a nice prospect for Henry Candy in winning at Lingfield recently. George Peckham's Ardad filly (lot 258) also has a young winning sibling.

Lot 252

2yo f Inns Of Court x Best Steps (Tally-Ho Stud)

Tally-Ho consigned last year's 160,000gns top lot, the Beresford Stakes winner Crypto Force, as well as 57,000gns The Platinum Queen, who was a rare two-year-old Prix de l'Abbaye winner and changed hands for seven figures – for all that this is hardly the only evidence to suggest that each of the operation's representatives need the closest of looks. A timely first winner aids the profile of Tally-Ho freshman Inns Of Court and owners the O'Callaghan family bought this filly for €32,000 as a yearling. Half-sister Ti Amo Siempre was brought through by the shrewd Robson Aguilar and could not quite fulfil her early promise on the track, but there is out-and-out speed on the page tracing down to Titus Livius and someone will no doubt take a view that another good one can appear from it.

Lot 277

2yo f Ten Sovereigns x Eclairante (Charlie Clover)

A couple of pretty fantastic updates have come the way of this filly (above), who last went through the ring for 17,500gns at Book 3. They have arrived through her Sioux Nation half-sister Estrosa, who was useful at two in Italy but last month achieved a Listed victory over a mile in Milan and on Monday chased home the

impressive Shavasana for second in the Italian 1,000 Guineas.

Eclairante, a High Chaparral mare who did not reach the track, is from a Juddmonte family and has a number of siblings who showed early promise for Andre Fabre in France.

Lot 342

2yo c Blue Point x Moon Shaddow (Knockanglass Stables)

There was a feeding frenzy over the Blue Point progeny here last month, highlighted by a 625,000gns top lot and the Darley new boy ending up

leading sire on both

average and

aggregate.

With even more winners since then, perhaps some will be kicking themselves that there's just the one on offer at this sale. From a large consignment by

Thomond O'Mara's Knockanglass, he's the first foal of a young unraced mare by Galileo who is a half-sister to Group 3 Bengough Stakes winner-turned-sire Lightning Moon and to two-year-old Listed winner Song Of My Heart.

Lot 357

2yo c Ten Sovereigns x Leala (Diego Dias Bloodstock)

Switched from the Craven Sale to here as a late wildcard, this colt is a half-brother to Obviously, who began his career in low profile in Ireland but became a triple Grade 1 winner in the United States and rounded off a fine spell by landing the 2016 Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint. He boasts a very international pedigree which includes Japan's Stay Foolish, a winner of staying prizes in Dubai and Saudi Arabia last year, while his older half-brother Relevant Range has recently discovered the winning habit in Ireland.

First-season sires with runners today in GB & Ireland

Sire Advertise
Progeny Matters Most.....Salisbury 1.40