

Moving Forward

David Pipe

Last year as his first season as a licensed racehorse trainer, David Pipe finished third in the jumps trainers' championship. This included 134 winners, a win at the Cheltenham Festival with novice hurdler Gaspara and a total of over £1.5 million in prize money. So where does the son of the legendary jumps trainer Martin Pipe CBE go from here?

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"WINNING AT THE CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WAS FANTASTIC AND EXCEEDING 100 WINNERS LAST YEAR WAS A SENSATIONAL START AND VERY REWARDING FOR THE TEAM AT POND HOUSE".

"The main objective was to keep the horses fit, healthy and happy and to get each of them racing with confidence, whether they were running in Graded races on a weekend, or a mid week selling race, we aimed to get the best from them. Like every professional sportsman knows, winning is addictive and whether you are a trainer, jockey or owner, the more winners you get the more you want. I am certainly aiming to chalk up over 130 winners again and we are currently on target in the early stages of this season," David explains.

David took over the reins from his father, Martin Pipe CBE, at Pond House in Somerset last May. Exceeding all records he was crowned Champion Jumps Trainer a staggering fifteen times. On eight occasions, he trained over 200 winners in one jumps season, with a record of 243 in 1999-2000 and, an amazing lifetime tally, of 4,183 European winners. He saddled a total of 32 winners at the Cheltenham Festival, including two Champion

Hurdles with **Granville Again** in 1993 and **Make A Stand** in 1997. He also won the Grand National in 1994 with **Minnehoma** for owner Freddie Starr; and his success was not confined to jumps racing, with 256 victories on the Flat including six at Royal Ascot.

David acknowledges his privileged position having learned the art of training from his father, a fiercely competitive and genius mentor, although he is far from resting on his laurels as he looks to the future. "I believe to become Champion Trainer I must continue to move the business forward, aiming for more horses, more owners and ultimately, more winners. Similar to a football manager we are continually scouting for new talent and often buy young horses out of France, which is a proven hunting ground for us, as well as other leading jumps trainers."

French bred **Gaspara** firmly stamped David's arrival in the training ranks earlier this year by winning the Novice Hurdle at the Cheltenham

Festival - the Mecca of jumps racing. "Every trainers' dream is to win at the festival and I will never forget Gaspara as she gave me my first success there. She didn't come expensive either but she was a star last year and she is very gutsy. The key to a horse winning at the Cheltenham Festival is they must jump well, have a good engine and a big heart. They don't have to look pretty though, it's not a beauty contest". David won the race for his father who remains involved with the stable as Assistant Trainer. "I would have preferred to have won it for another owner in the yard rather than Dad, but seeing he doesn't charge me any rent, I can't complain!" David quips.

Gaspara was bought out of a race in France together with her stable mate **Laustra Bad**, who won the particular race in question, then subsequently finished third behind her at the Festival. "As well as the two main British racing channels, we also have the French racing channel at home and we constantly ear mark horses

running on the flat in France that potentially will perform over fences. We work with an agent there, who flags up horses to us and if they tick all the boxes, we then attempt to buy them privately or out of selling races. Buying horses has become very competitive in any country now, although the French like to sell their horses, but they don't come cheap," comments David.

David has also recently secured a new yard sponsorship deal, which allows his owners to reclaim VAT on their horses training and racing expenses. The Pipeline sponsored the yard previously for seven years and, with the new beginnings at Pond House, south west based Bathwick Tyres are now supporting the Pond House team, with the proprietor of the business also owning horses in the yard.

The first training milestone for David came when he produced **Our Vic** to win the Grade 2 Charlie Hall Chase last October at Wetherby for prolific racehorse owner David Johnson. Over the years, numerous horses met with race glory under the formidable Martin Pipe/David Johnson banner, but this was the first major success for the newly formed partnership of the two David's and shortly after this success Pipe also saddled **Acambo**, a prolific performer, to win the listed Ladbroke Hurdle at Ascot for Johnson.

The foundation of the first class training facility at Pond House was built by David's grandfather. Being a man of innovation it was built for a fraction of the price it should have cost and he even managed to salvage the filter from the pool used on the film set of the Jaws movies, which now serves as the filter for the equine swimming pool on the yard! The inmates of Pond House receive daily attention from the equivalent of the backroom staff of a football team. As well as the equine swimming pool where horses take regular dips to aid physical and mental fitness, the facilities include a solarium, an in-house equine physio, horse-walkers, treadmill, indoor school and jumps schooling ground. On site there is also a laboratory for monitoring health and the horses feed is also made from cereals grown on the Pipe's farm.

The six-furlong woodchip gallop at Pond House has produced numerous heroes of the turf over a range of race distances and under both codes, from the stamina sapping Grand National, to a five-furlong sprint at Royal Ascot on the flat. David comments, "We do things the old fashioned way when it comes to fitness. When a horse comes in to training from grass we build up their strength slowly and allow three to four months to achieve a level where a horse can then begin some serious gallop work at home. Obviously each horse is an individual and some take more work to get fit than others, but in general they will go up the gallop two to three times in a work session".

With the responsibility of training and race planning for 120 horses, David is supported by an experienced and dedicated staffing team. There are two main yards overseen by Head Lads Eddie Buckley and Warwick Smith. Craig Wylie, Bob Hodge and Gill Ellis drive and travel the horses to the races. Full time schooling jockey is Jonathan Lower, who was champion conditional jockey but was forced to retire from the saddle when diagnosed as diabetic. Pre-jumps season he will regularly spend mornings on the schooling grounds educating the youngsters over fences and give the old hands a refresher course before their seasonal debuts. Gail Harrison in the office ensures race entries and declarations are made.

"Everyone puts 110% in on the yard and it's so rewarding when it pays off. Last season when **Well Chief** won in the style he did at Newbury in the Grade 1 Game Spirit Chase after such a long absence, it was a fantastic achievement and a great team effort, it came a close second to Gaspara's win at the Festival of last year's highlights".

David is fully aware that in order to meet his future target of one day being champion trainer, it's vital that he brings through new talent that can perform on jumps racing's big stage. Stable stars such as **Our Vic** and **Well Chief**, as good as they are, will not be around forever and it will be the emergence and success of the younger inmates from Pond House that will put him on course to meet with his objective.



Well Chief romps to victory under Timmy Murphy in the Gr 2 Game Spirit Chase at Newbury last February



Our Vic wins the Gr 2 Charlie Hall Chase at Weatherby, October 2006



Gaspara and jockey Andrew Glassonbury celebrate with owner Martin Pipe (left) and trainer David Pipe (right) in the winners' enclosure after claiming victory in the Fred Winter Juvenile Novices' Handicap Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival in March this year

POND HOUSE HORSES TO WATCH FOR 2007/2008 JUMPS SEASON

Trainer's pick - **Dom D'Orgeval**, not seen the best of him over fences yet, will be aimed at good staying handicaps
 Assistant Trainer's pick - **The Package**, a lovely long term prospect and will be seen over hurdles this term
 Head Lad's pick - **Paullac**, a promising novice chaser
 Further information: www.davidpipe.com