

## YESTERDAY AT NEWBURY

# First the nerves then the relief and still we dream



**Lee Mottershead** says Frankel wasn't calm and nor were his fans, but all turned out well in the end

**E**VEN now, six decades into a career beyond compare, he continues to feel it. The sixties were still swinging when his first Group 1 winner was trained, but the passage of time has made it no easier for Henry Cecil to handle the anxiety and tension that go with days like this. Yesterday, on an afternoon whose significance was lost on no-one, Cecil felt the nerves. So did we.

He knew, and we knew, there was much more to be lost than gained. If Frankel's season develops as many hope it will, the Greenham Stakes will become no more than a small paragraph in his story. But on the day itself, it was an Everest that had to be climbed. Sent off at 1-4 he might have been, but Frankel went into Newbury's starting stalls with many of his most ardent fans strangely fearing the worst. You couldn't put a finger on why, but there was a tangible sense that the bubble could be burst. Thankfully it wasn't.

"If you don't get nervous you might as well pack up," said Cecil in the Newbury winner's enclosure after the job had been done. The relief on his face was as tangible as the worry had been just a few minutes earlier. To have experienced it before



Now for the Guineas: Henry Cecil (left) talks to Khalid Abdullah (right) and Teddy Grimthorpe after Frankel's success

makes it no easier to feel it again.

But Cecil does not deal with these days on his own. Devoted wife Jane is forever at his side, as she was when the training legend first entered Newbury's weighing room just after 1pm. Ever observant, she noticed her husband had a clump of hair sticking up at the back of his head. As a mother would to a young child, she licked three fingers and attempted to flatten the troublesome follicles. Cecil stood there patiently, well behaved and docile, just the opposite of Frankel through the first half of the Greenham. Yet for that Frankel could be excused. And if not as wildly impressive as some had wanted, he could be excused that as well.

For all the talk of passenger trains being outpaced on the Newmarket gallops, Cecil had been at pains to point out that Frankel was appearing at Newbury for a reason. The horse was not fully fit, a run

was badly needed. Yet again Cecil was proved right.

Through the first two furlongs of the Group 3 test, Picture Editor, Frankel's Derby-entered pacemaker, could not go quickly enough for his more illustrious stablemate. Tom Queally had to plead with Ian Mongan to accelerate up front, but Picture Editor's fastest was not fast enough for Frankel, who expelled valuable energy by fighting for his head.

Once Queally was allowed control of that head, Frankel loomed large alongside Excelebration two furlongs out and, although there was most definitely a moment when all seemed not to be well, he eventually strode out in thoroughly convincing fashion, assisted by the first whip flicks he has experienced. Sensational it was not, but satisfactory it was, and that was what Cecil had both hoped for and anticipated.

"He's still not quite there

yet," he said more than once. "I knew he wasn't, but I hoped he would have the class," added Cecil, pointing to a quality Frankel has in abundance. You sensed he was more than pleased with what he had just seen. You sensed Queally felt the same. "He is an animal not a machine, though he's been compared to one," said the rider. "People compare him to planes and trains but he only has to beat horses. He doesn't need to win grands prix. The Guineas will do."

**T**O WIN that Guineas he is as short as 4-9 with Victor Chandler and 1-2 with Ladbrokes. Yet not everyone was completely convinced, not least Native Khan's trainer Ed Dunlop, who described himself as now "more tempted to go for the Guineas" with his Craven winner. "It's just a feeling," he said, adding: "I'm often wrong."

Dunlop will not be offended to know many racing fans will wish him to be wrong. To see Cecil win the Guineas with a truly great horse would delight the trainer's vast legion of supporters. Those same supporters can also now dream of him winning the Investec Derby, although surely not with Frankel but the much-touted World Domination, who produced the perfect debut performance to win an often informative maiden. Take Frankel out of the equation and World Domination is now favourite for the Derby. Perhaps a worthy favourite as well.

But the Derby can wait. In just 13 days' time, all eyes will be on Newmarket to see a Guineas that revolves around one horse, a horse who could still be everything we want him to be. For Cecil, and for the rest of us, it will be a nerve-racking fortnight. The reward, however, should be worth it.

## Cecil hotshot could be 2-5 for Guineas if opposition is scared off

By Tom Boyle

FRANKEL could go off as short as 2-5 in the Qipco 2,000 Guineas if the raw power of his Greenham Stakes win scares off too many of his rivals in the first Classic of the season.

Before yesterday's demolition job the son of Galileo was a best-priced 5-6 for Guineas glory, but after his impressive four-length win Victor Chandler cut Henry Cecil's unbeaten star to as short as 4-9 to win at Newmarket on April 30.

Ladbrokes went 1-2 from 5-6 about Frankel and spokesman David Williams said: "I hope it's not the case, but it's not beyond the realms of possibilities that we could have single figures running in the Guineas.

"Frankel won impressively. Before today some might have thought 'we'll shoot for the moon'. Now many trainers, owners and connections might think 'let's go to Paris, let's go to the Curragh'.

"Based on a small field Frankel could go off as short as 2-5. We

are happy to lay Frankel for the Derby but we want to be with him for the Guineas."

Victor Chandler's Charlie McCann said: "We've gone 4-9 because we want to stay on the right side of him. We are that price because we've taken a £550,000 bet at 10-11. I cannot see him going off much bigger than 4-7."

Kate Miller of William Hill, who go 4-7 (from 4-5), said: "It all depends how the field cuts up, there could be quite a few

that come out. If that happens he could go off 4-9.

"He's a loser on the book but it wouldn't be a body blow. He came to the fore quite rapidly and has never really been a working man's price."

George Primarolo of Totesport said: "In recent memory Frankel is the most impressive Guineas favourite bar none.

"If the front five remain I'd expect him to go off about what he is today. I'm sure Coolmore would like to lower his colours."

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