

# Straight from the Stable

## Baker's gamble as a trainer is definitely paying dividends



George Baker with George Baker and rider George Baker!

WARWICKSHIRE handler George Baker has just celebrated the second anniversary of his first winner and has added 75 more successes since, such is the impact he has had in that time.

But racing's latest rising star is quick to point out the "invaluable help" he gets from wife Candida as well as assistant trainer Patrick Murphy and his wife Valerie. "They are just fantastic horse people and I honestly couldn't contemplate this job without their incredible talent and support."

Baker has also enjoyed great support from former trainer David

Loder, who "has been great at giving me bollockings when I make mistakes. He told me right from the off that I had to win races and winning races with bad horses would lead to better horses."

Baker has quickly assembled a list of high-profile owners that many of his peers would envy, including Sir Alex Ferguson, Paul Roy, Paul Beck, Harry Findlay and other sporting celebrities.

But one thing that has endeared the former journalist to the public is his love of a gamble. He observes: "It always amazes me when you hear of trainers frowning at people having a bet. Why

do 95 per cent go racing? To have a bet. We make no bones about the fact we like to pull off a gamble as it is all part of the game. Sir Mark Prescott is a great hero of mine and if I go halfway to understanding the programme book as he does I'd be thrilled."

With 65 in training Baker is hoping to beat his 2009 tally of 40 winners and is well on the way. He believes that those capable of making the headlines are Excellerator, Kummell Excess and possibly Tyson, while Sinbad The Sailor and Sworn Tigress are on an upward curve.

### OLDER HORSES

#### Boho Chic

4 b f *Kyllachy* – *Summer Lightning*

She is a half-sister to Maddy, who was a dual winner for us over 1m2f. This filly is all speed and just about gets 6f. She was given a very canny ride by Chris Catlin earlier this year at Kempton to win over the trip and followed up with another excellent run at Wolverhampton last week to be second from a poor draw. She will definitely win races through the summer when the ground dries out a bit.

#### Bugsy's Boy

6 b g *Double Trigger* – *Bugsy's Sister*

He won two hurdles for us at Plumpton. He will have a dual-purpose campaign and has already had three runs on the all-weather this year. He is owned by my in-laws so it is important that I win with him. He is improving and we will be looking for long-distance handicaps at tracks like Pontefract. He doesn't have a turn of foot, but can gallop endlessly and he is on a mark off which he can definitely win. We will mix and match a bit and he'll go for a beginners' chase when there is some reasonable ground.

#### Court Princess

7 b m *Mtoto* – *Fairfields Cone*

She's a half-sister to Court Shareef and Kaluana Court, who were multiple winners, and belongs to the Holders, who have had this family for ever. Court Princess won her first race in December and she was so well that day I could have won on her. It is fantastic to see her turn her form inside-out and now she is back from her winter break I am sure she can win staying handicaps as she is on a fair mark.

#### Excellerator

4 ch f *Exceed And Excel* – *Amsicora*

A very smart filly who did well as a two-year-old, earning some black type when third in the Group 3 Princess Margaret Stakes at Ascot. However, the three-year-old season for sprint fillies is limited and she never managed to win in four runs despite running well. We threw her in the Nunthorpe as options were limited and she was only ten lengths behind the winner. She has strengthened again over the winter and I am eyeing the Sandy Lane Stakes at the end of next month. This is her seminal year and hopefully she can go on from there and take us to all the right places as she is very smart.

#### Fairmile

8 b g *Spectrum* – *Juno Marlowe*

He's been all over from Godolphin to Walter Swinburn and then Ian Williams before we

claimed him at York. He had three runs for us last backend and we have since given him a breather as he had been the go for a while. He's back in steady work and we will look to 1m4f handicaps as well as the novice hurdle option. I am happy enough with his handicap mark and we will have a lot of fun with him this summer. He's only won once in the last three years, but I hope we can rectify that this season.

#### Hurakan

4 gr g *Daylami* – *Gothic Dream*

Did well for David Evans and we claimed him for the Holders after he finished second at Lingfield earlier this month. He is having a breather now but we should some fun with him at around 1m4f.

#### Iguacu

6 b g *Desert Prince* – *Gay Gallanta*

Fantastic pedigree being out of a Cheveley Park Stakes winner, making him a half-brother to Byron, Gay Heroine and Gallant. Sadly he isn't as good as any of them, but things are getting better. He came to us with a mark of 37 so in order to get him to a rating where we could get him in races I ran him in a five-runner conditions race at Warwick where he finished last, around 20 lengths behind the fourth horse Winker Watson. The handicapper raised him to a mark of 50 which was great as we could now get a run in races. We knew he could win and he obliged at Nottingham in July and followed up in December with a good win over 1m4f at Kempton. He is on 51 now for all-weather and turf and we also have the option of hurdles. He will definitely win again.

#### Mondego

8 b g *Big Shuffle* – *Molto In Forma*

Ah, the notorious Mondego. He is a horse we bought in good faith from Ireland who won a couple of races for us and has subsequently been given a mark of 65. I had worked him at Wolverhampton with some higher rated horses and he gave us every encouragement. He won over 1m1f at

Wolverhampton in October and followed up over 1m4f four days later. We were then going for the hat-trick when the BHA contacted us to say they thought the horse had been flapping in Ireland and I withdrew him immediately. I am 100 per cent confident that this horse has been bought on proven form and had no idea at all that he may have been involved in irregular pony racing. What is frustrating is that I have co-operated totally with the BHA and yet five months later they have not presented me with the evidence they have, so I have a horse capable of winning races and he's hanging around waiting. Surely if they have evidence that he has been flapping it shouldn't be difficult to sort out.

#### Phoenix Enforcer

4 b f *Bahamian Bounty* – *Kythia*

She did well to win twice last summer and has had a nice break over the winter. She has strengthened up well and we will be looking to both the Flat and jumps with her. She is capable of winning over both codes and with cut in the ground should be effective from 1m2f upwards. She is a very genuine filly who always gives you a chance as she tries.

#### Romantic Queen

4 b f *Medicean* – *Bandit Queen*

We bought her cheaply and she is definitely going to pay her way. She has been second in her last three runs and when we find the right race she will win. She's very tough and genuine.

#### Saddlers Bend

4 b f *Refuse To Bend* – *Sudden Interest*

She came over from Ireland with no form at all but has won twice already this year for us. Without being rude to previous connections I was surprised she had been running over further as she has so much speed. She has a mark of 58 now and is enjoying a short breather.



Former Godolphin horse Fairmile should be capable of winning for the yard

#### Shut The Bar

5 b g *Midnight Legend* – *Time For A Glass*

He had won two bumpers and a maiden hurdle before I gave him his first run at Wolverhampton this month. He is stuffy and needs plenty of work, so instead of watching him struggle to get home over hurdles on his reappearance I thought he could have a run on the Flat – and he won. It has given us a second string to our bow and we'll see what the handicapper does. He'll run over both codes during the summer.

#### Sinbad The Sailor

5 b g *Cape Cross* – *Sinead*

He is a horse I had liked from afar when trained by John Hills and I was thrilled to acquire him for Sir Alex Ferguson at the Horses In Training Sales. We gave him an easy time when he came but first time for us he won off 58 last month at Wolverhampton over 2m1f and then three weeks later won over 2m at Lingfield. He is another that fits in the fun bracket of dual purpose and he can clearly carry on and win more races. I think he could go some way over hurdles as he has looked a natural schooling at home.

#### Sworn Tigress

5 b m *Tiger Hill* – *Sweet Tern*

Another we have for Sir Alex, she came to us from Germany where she had a reasonable level of form. The penny dropped very quickly when she got here and she won three handicaps in her first three runs in a seven-day period. She started off on 46 but is now on 77, which will be harder obviously. That said, I wouldn't discount her winning again off this mark. She is a lovely filly and is one to look forward to over hurdles.

#### Tyson

10 b g *Silvino* – *Telle Belle*

He is a bit of a legend as he was known as "people's champion" in South Africa when with Mike De Kock. He was a Grade 1 winner there and also won a couple of valuable races at Nad Al Sheba. He had a couple of runs for Venetia last year and is now with us. He sustained an injury last year at Aintree and it has been a long road back, but if I can get him back to half the horse he was then we will have a great time. At the age of ten he is not going to improve, but judged on his run at Newbury last Friday then I think we may be getting there. He fell at the last hurdle on the back straight and Andrew [Tinkler] said he was still going very well. There is an option of at Haydock this Saturday in a Brush Hurdles race which I am tempted to go for.

