

HOBBIES

Our new feature, finds out what greenkeepers get up to in their spare time.

Here's something you didn't know about me...



Name: Don Clark
Club: Orsett GC
Position: Course Manager
Age: 46
Hobby: Breeding

How would you describe your hobby?

"Breeding a thoroughbred race horse - This is the first time that my mare has been put in foal. I bought her after she retired from racing, nearly five years ago. Although she never won (only placed once from five races), she is reasonably well bred. We keep her in the same village that we live in and my wife normally rides her. Based on the foal the mare produces and whether it races will be a deciding factor, on whether the mare will go to stud again."

How and when did you get introduced to breeding thoroughbreds?

"I have had an interest in flat racing for many years - to witness a top class racehorse in full flight is an incredible sight. Latterly I have enjoyed studying bloodlines and breeding of the thoroughbred. I have found it interesting to look at the large commercial bloodstock organisations and study their breeding patterns with the aim/dream of producing perfection in the racehorse. Over recent years I have had shares in racehorses and have enjoyed their lack of success - through this ownership I have been fortunate to visit several training establishments and meet with meet with owner/breeders."

What is it about breeding thoroughbreds that appeals to you?

"Last year I decided to try and breed from my Mare - rather than employ a stud to manage the whole process (as a commercial breeder, would do), I felt that the whole experience - from researching suitable stallions to the birth of the foal - would be fulfilling.

The Mare has to be accepted as being suitably bred for the Stallion. After which, I arrange and send her for her holiday at the stud where she is to be covered.

After three months research and checking bloodlines to find the type of stallion that would produce the type of foal I was looking for from my Mare, and after visiting various stud farms, the Stallion I decided to use was a group one winner at Newmarket, in the early 90s.

The most appealing thing, is how hands on I have had to be - After the Mare came back from the stud (she was there for three months) and was confirmed to be in foal, I had to be in close contact with my local equine vet, to discuss and organise a nutrition programme for the Mare with the Stable Yard Manager, and now I have had to start making plans for the foaling and the future well being of Mare and foal. Although I am a member of the thoroughbred breeders association, I am not a commercial breeder of racehorses. This is for the fun and the hands on experience that most commercial breeders would not have - their interest is purely long-term financial gain."

Have the thoroughbreds entered any competitions and/or do you have any plans to enter them into competitions?

"The mare only raced five times, three times as a two year old and twice as a three year old. Unfortunately, she did not really grow between the ages of two and three. Therefore, a decision was made to retire her from racing (fully sound).

My aim would be to keep the foal until it nears racing age. If it is able to go into training, it will be placed with a trainer and hopefully win many races. Although it would be a great thrill if a racehorse that I have bred just makes the racetrack."

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