

Racing News

Racecourse fund of €100m announced

Development fund will focus on work at Leopardstown and the Curragh
HRI plans to upgrade drug testing and increase prize money

BRIAN O'CONNOR Racing Correspondent

The increasing consensus that Irish racing is emerging from the worst of the economic downturn will be further boosted by confirmation from Horse Racing Ireland (HRI) of a €100 million Racecourse Capital Development Fund to cover work between 2015 and 2019.

All 26 racecourses in the country are eligible to apply for funding under the new scheme, although much of the focus is likely to be on major redevelopment projects at both Leopardstown and the Curragh, with the Minister for Agriculture Simon Coveney recently pinpointing the latter as a major priority for redevelopment. HRI, which governs racing in Ireland, will fund 40 per cent of approved projects.

Prize money The move comes on the back of increased funding commitments to racing from the Government at the last budget, something reflected in HRI's own budget plans for 2015, which will include a €5 million (10 per cent) increase in prize money next year to a projected €53.9 million. The minimum race value is being increased from €7,500 to €8,000.

The most notable negative for racing in 2014 has been the controversies over steroids and speculation on the extent of use of banned medicines within the thoroughbred industry in Ireland. Details of HRI's 2015 budget includes €7.1 million set



aside for integrity services which it says includes a "significant capital provision to allow for the purchase of laboratory equipment to enhance the drug testing capabilities of the Irish racing and breeding industry." There has been recent tension between HRI and racing's regulatory body, the Turf Club, over funding for proposed improvements to facilities at the BHP laboratory in Limerick, which tests all samples taken from racehorses here. A letter requesting arbitration on the matter was sent to HRI from the Turf Club a number of weeks ago.

However, a further €3.4 million has now been allocated for "integrity-related services" including for the purchase of new

starting stalls and enhanced levels of picture production. "The requirement to enhance our drug testing systems is a priority given the events that unfolded in Ireland and overseas this year, and we are determined to create and fund a world class system to address the needs of the industry," said Joe Keeling, chairman of HRI.

Further reductions Keeling also pointed to further reductions in administrative charges for owners and trainers in 2015, amounting to 17.5 per cent, and achieving savings of over €500,000.

HRI's chief executive Brian Kavanagh said: "The increase in funding through the Horse & Greyhound Fund allows us to

plan for the development and enhancement of Irish racing, capitalising on the uplift in the economy. Improving racecourse facilities is of the utmost importance, with the Curragh and Leopardstown obvious priorities, reflecting the international status and high standard of the races staged there.

"I am particularly pleased we have been able to increase prize money. Owners are the lifeblood of our industry and the increased race values, coupled with reductions in charges, will hopefully encourage new owners to the sport and existing owners to reinvest."

Willie Mullins's Clondaw Warrior is among four Irish-trained runners in Ascot's valuable Ladbroke Hurdle, but

the champion trainer's principal focus will undoubtedly be on Fairyhouse, where the prize money might not be as lucrative but the potential big-race hints in the future are likely to abound.

Hard to beat Mullins has a trio of young horses – Uradel, Arbre de Vie and Stone Hard – that should be hard to beat, but his main interest will be on Un de Sceaux who will be on short odds to get his chasing career back on track after a debut fall at Thurles.

"Everyone likes to see horses stand off fences and clear them by miles and that was what he was doing until he made a mistake," Mullins said. "Hopefully it might have taught him some-

thing. Horses need to be able to go in short and pop one too." Val de Ferbet is the Clouton representative in the three-mile Beginners Chase, but a step up in trip looks to be just what Noble Emperor requires to build on his obvious promise. Tony Martin's charge has ground to make up on Thunders And Roses from his track debut over fences, but should strip a lot sharper for that experience.

L'Ami Serge ridden by Barry Geraghty laid down a marker for the Supreme Novices' Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival with an impressive victory at Ascot yesterday. PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID DAVIES/PA WIRE

Briefs

Equestrian

Allen secures victory in Christmas Speed Stakes

Irish showjumping sensation Bertram Allen lit up the London International Horse Show at Olympia by claiming a thrilling victory in the Christmas Speed Stakes. Last to go among a 31-strong field, 19-year-old Allen had it all to do after Belgian Constant van Paesschen clocked 59.92 seconds in the one-round class on Ralph Utopia de Ransbeck.

And Allen did not disappoint, as he claimed the £4,700 winner's purse on Wild Thing L, jumping clear in 58.16 seconds.

Allen, who finished seventh individually at the World Equestrian Games

earlier this year and was runner-up in the King George V Gold Cup, is among the sport's hot properties.

"It definitely wasn't effortless," Allen said. "Constant had set a really fast time, so we had to give a lot to beat him."

Germany's Daniel Deusser won the opening international class on Friday after staving off Swiss rider Martin Fuchs and a strong British challenge. Deusser clocked a winning time of 32.71 seconds on Soory de l'Hallali to land The Levy Restaurants Snowman Stakes, with Fuchs 1.2 seconds behind aboard Uzo van het Hobos Z.

Cricket

Morgan to captain England at World Cup after Cook axed

Former Ireland batsman Eoin Morgan will lead England at next year's World Cup after Alastair Cook was relieved of the position and replaced by his vice-captain. It brings to an end a tough year for opening batsman Cook, who has scored just a single half-century in his last 22 innings.



Eoin Morgan will lead England at the World Cup

Dubliners Morgan, 28, will now lead a 15-man squad into January's tri-series involving Australia and India, which precedes the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand in February and March.

Morgan played in the 2007 World Cup in the Caribbean during his 63-cap career with

Ireland, and was called up for the latter stages of England's 2011 World Cup campaign after recovering from a broken finger.

Left-hander Morgan has also struggled with his form of late with just one half-century in his last 19 innings.

Cricket

Vernon brings South Africa close to victory

Vernon Philander took five wickets as South Africa closed in on victory having reduced West Indies to 76 for two in their follow-on innings at the close of play on day three of the opening Test yesterday.

West Indies require 275 runs to make South Africa bat again and with the weather set fair for the next two days, the rampant Proteas will be confident of completing the win.

Philander grabbed four wickets as West Indies were bowled out for 201 in their first innings, before he removed left-handed opener Devon Smith after home skipper Hashim Amla asked the visitors to follow on.

Marlon Samuels (13) and Leon Johnson (31) will resume today.

Cricket

Smith and Johnson drive Australia on

Skipper Steve Smith scored 133 and Mitchell Johnson a game-changing 88 as Australia took a first innings lead of 95 after reaching tea on 503 for nine on the third day of the second test against India in Brisbane on Friday.

Australia had looked to be facing a sizeable deficit when they lost two early wickets to slip to 247-6 but Smith and Johnson combined for a Gabba record seventh-wicket partnership of 148 runs from 160 balls.

Both fell victim to pace-mentor Ishant Sharma (3-117) in the same over an hour after lunch but Mitchell Starc continued the resistance with his fourth test half century and partnerships of 56 with Nathan Lyon (23) and an unbroken stand of 49 with Josh Hazlewood.

Gaelic Games News

Tyrone defender Donnelly still has full confidence in Harte

EOAMON DONOGHUE

Despite four barren years as Tyrone senior football manager, Mickey Harte certainly hasn't lost the faith of his dressing room as he prepares for an 11th season at the helm.

Harte may have led the county to a National League, four Ulster titles, and the county's three All-Ireland titles, but the pressure has nonetheless mounted upon him as the success has noticeably dried up in

recent years. "I would say that with the results the whole set-up was being questioned but I remember saying before that as long as I've been playing for Tyrone I can't imagine playing under anyone but Mickey Harte and that is still the same and it's never wavered, so Mickey still has the dressing room," says 2013 All Star nominee and Tyrone utility man Mattie Donnelly.

"We never really got too bothered this year about the specula-

tion and the pressure that the set-up was coming under because we had full confidence that the set up that's there is sufficient."

Knocked out Last summer Tyrone overcame Down after a replay in the preliminary round of the Ulster championship, only to be knocked by Monaghan at the quarter final stage. Any possible resurgence through the qualifier rounds, a route Harte

had down the years perfected, was then tamed ended by rivals Armagh in Omagh.

"There was a lot of negativity surrounding the early exit. Tyrone expect to be playing football later in the summer than we were this year. Certainly it led to a lot of reviews and soul-searching....

"There's no hiding like in other provinces, the top teams in other provinces have an easier route to the quarter-final in Croke Park."

The Tyrone panel have lost 12 of the 19 players who featured in that 2010 Ulster final success over Monaghan, while Stephen O'Neill who was injured for that encounter is another stalwart of past successes to have since hung up his boots.

Both he and Martin Penrose announced their retirements during the summer.

"The players that have been there and breaking into the team are going to find themselves shouldering more re-

sponsibility next year with Stephen O'Neill gone, Martin Penrose gone," said Donnelly who featured in this year's International Rules series for Ireland. "They would have been two players that would have been on our starting 15 most days so that frees up two slots for whoever's willing to take them."

Meanwhile the latest inter-county player to have announced their retirement, after nine years in the Laois defence, is 29-year-old Peter O'Leary.

Thurles (tomorrow)

Racing schedule for Thurles on December 21st, 2014, listing various races like Ballyadegan Approach, It's The Ice I Like, and Handicap Chase.

Racing schedule for Thurles on December 21st, 2014, listing various races like Witness of Fashion, Ivy Glen, and Mardals in Flight.

Racing schedule for Thurles on December 21st, 2014, listing various races like Kilmurry Bridge, Mrs Mac Veale, and Asitsihoppens.

Racing schedule for Thurles on December 21st, 2014, listing various races like Clonene Dream, Havnt Time, and Maevie Delight.

Racing schedule for Thurles on December 21st, 2014, listing various races like Kauto Grand Mogol, Marden Hurdle, and Wraith of Titans.

Racing schedule for Thurles on December 21st, 2014, listing various races like Sunhyme, River Boat Queen, and Selective Heaving.

Results round-up

Sports results for American football (NFL), Basketball (NBA), and Cricket (Second Test).

Sports results for Equestrian sport (Show Jumping), American football (NFL), and Basketball (NBA).

Sports results for Ice Hockey (NHL) and Tennis (ATP/WTA Futures).

Sports results for Squash (Women's World Championship) and Tennis (ITF Men's Futures).

Sports results for Saturday (Basketball, Tennis, Rugby) and Sunday (Basketball, Rugby).

Sports results for Sunday (Basketball, Rugby) and Hockey (Men's Leinster Division).

What's on this weekend