

Kiely delight as Carlingford Lough wins Hennessy



Pic1: Tony Mc Coy and the John Kiely trained Carlingford Lough are saluted by the Leopardstown crowd following their victory in the Hennessy Gold Cup on Sunday. Photo: Patrick Mc Cann.

Last Saturday, the legendary AP McCoy partnered his 200th winner of the campaign aboard the Paul Nicholls-trained Mr Mole at Newbury and moments later live on Channel 4, he announced he would be retiring at the end of this season.

Now 40, McCoy is already virtually assured of an unprecedented 20th consecutive jumps title in Britain. On Sunday, Co Antrim native McCoy travelled to Leopardstown and he added the Grade 1 Hennessy Gold Cup to his CV by combining with Dungarvan-based handler John Kiely to win the coveted three-mile contest with Carlingford Lough.

Owned by JP McManus, the 2013 Galway Plate winner Carlingford Lough stepped up from his creditable fifth-placed return effort behind Road To Riches in the Grade 1 Lexus Chase at this same venue over Christmas. Whilst blundering two out at by which stage last season's Cheltenham Gold Cup winner Lord Windermere had taken up the running, Carlingford Lough readily fought back under a determined partner to edge past Foxrock as the line approached to thwart Adrian Heskin's mount by three parts of a length. Lord Windermere meanwhile faded to return a further eight lengths adrift in third spot.

Carlingford Lough, bought by Kilmacthomas-based agent John O'Byrne on McManus' behalf as a foal in 2006, is now right in the Cheltenham Gold Cup mix. Stamina is clearly his strong suit and in an open year, he should have a major say in jump racing's biggest prize of them all on Friday March 13th.

McCoy was earlier on the mark at Leopardstown for he teamed up with Eddie Harty to collect the Paddy Power "Number 1 For Live Streaming" Handicap Hurdle with Sort It Out.

Likewise owned by JP McManus, the Milan-sired Sort It Out made smooth headway to lead before the last and he surged clear in the closing stages, justifying strong market support in the process from 6/1 into 4/1, to beat Fort Smith by six and a half lengths.

There was a second local winner at the Foxrock venue for Slieverue-based handler Eoin Griffin sent out the Gigginstown House Stud-owned Archive to triumph in the closing Leopardstown Club Membership (Pro/Am) INH Flat Race.

The five-year-old Archive, an excellent third behind Identity Chief on his track debut in a hot Fairyhouse bumper in November, always took the eye in running under talented seven lb claimer David Mullins and the winning French-bred took up the running over one furlong out. It was all plain sailing from there as Archive duly fought off odds-on shot Potters Point by one and three quarter lengths. Archive seems to be progressing the whole time and he should be followed with interest wherever he goes between now and the end of the season.

Potters Point's handler Willie Mullins still captured two out of the four Grade 1 contests, the Closutton handler opening his account courtesy of the filly Petite Parisienne in the opening Gala Retail Spring Juvenile Hurdle.

One of just two fillies in the eight-runner field, the Gigginstown House Stud-owned Petite Parisienne stylishly took up the running with Bryan Cooper before the final flight to beat stable companion Kalkir by one and three quarter lengths. Petite Parisienne is now bound for the Grade 1 Triumph Hurdle at the Cheltenham festival next month.

Kalkir's jockey Ruby Walsh then combined with Mullins to take the Grade 1 Deloitte Novice Hurdle with Nichols Canyon.

Sent off a quietly-supported 9/2 shot, Nichols Canyon made all the running sustaining a strong tempo throughout to contain Windsor Park by three and a half lengths. Victorious in the Grade 1 Royal Bond Novice Hurdle at Fairyhouse in late-November, Nichols Canyon now has a choice of engagements in two Grade 1 novice hurdles at Cheltenham next month.

Mullins went onto complete a three-timer as his Prince De Beauchene justified 5/4 favouritism under his son Patrick in the Raymond Smith Memorial Hunters Chase.

Prince De Beauchene, a former top-class chaser, supplemented his success in a Thurles hunters chase last month by leading approaching the final fence to defeat main market-rival On The Fringe by three parts of a length. Prince De Beauchene is not qualified for this season's hunter chases in Britain, instead the 12-year-old will stay at home to contest the Joseph O'Reilly Memorial hunters chase at Fairyhouse over Easter.