

TDN Q&A

Goffs, which will stage its Orby yearling sale Oct. 2-3, has made a number of headlines in recent weeks. In addition to unveiling two new sales for 2014, the London Sale and the Champions Sale for horses-in-training, it was announced that Goffs will handle the dispersal for Paul Makin's Paulyn Ltd. during its November Breeding Stock Sale. In Part 1 of this two-part Q&A series, the TDN's Kelsey Riley speaks with Henry Beeby, Chief Executive of Goffs, about Goffs' unparalleled hospitality, as well as what buyers can expect at the Orby Sale.

KR: With the yearling sale season well underway, buyers from around the world are making travel arrangement to sales globally. Can you tell our readers why they should come to Ireland to shop at Orby, and what hospitality options Goffs offers to assist buyers?

HB: The Orby Sale is Ireland's premier yearling sale, and as such the catalogue is very concise. It's 425 lots over two days, and includes some of the best-bred and best-looking yearlings in Ireland. Given how strong Irish-



Henry Beeby
Racing Post

breeds are, and Irish breeders are enjoying such success on the global stage, it offers a unique opportunity to buy from a concise selection of horses which have been very well supported. And to back that up, this year we've sold three Classic winners: the Irish 1000 Guineas (Just the Judge), the English 1000 Guineas (Sky Lantern) and the Irish St. Leger (Voleuse de Coeurs). So, we offer unbeatable quality and extraordinary value on a sales ground that is probably the easiest there is to work in the world,

because it's beautifully laid out and very practical. And also we make sure that the Orby Sale, as well as being a serious sale of potential champion racehorses, is an enjoyable and special occasion. We go out of our way to make it fun for people. We hold an eve-of-sale party at the K Club, which is one of the nicest hotels in Ireland in a beautiful setting. We try to make it a little bit different. We're not being very clever, it's just making it an enjoyable occasion, so we go out of our way to look after people really well.

If they're going to take the trouble to come to our sale, we treat them all as VIPs. We offer good hospitality, I think, and a very good hands-on customer service. When someone comes in from overseas we'll assist with their flights, we'll send cars to pick them up at the airport, and we'll organize hotel accommodation for them.

We'll bring them to the K Club the night before the sale, we'll organize lunches for them either at our Jaguar pavilion or our balcony restaurant. We'll organize trips after or before the sale to places of note, such as some of the stud farms here like Coolmore, the Irish National Stud, Kildangan and Gilltown. We can organize shopping trips and golfing trips as well, because we want people to enjoy coming to Ireland and enjoy the unique hospitality that Ireland offers.

KR: Do you think this philosophy of great hospitality has helped the profile and results of the sale over the years?

HB: Undoubtedly. I think people have enjoyed their trips, and we've had new visitors in the last couple years, and they've made a point of saying how well they've been looked after. The first thing is to persuade them to come, and the only way to really do that is to demonstrate that the horses win and win well, and we've sold a Classic winner in each of the last 10



Orby graduate Sky Lantern
Racing Post

years. That's at the top of the tree, but we sell consistent numbers of winners everywhere. Another good horse flying the flag for us this year is the Horse of the Year in Hong Kong, Military Attack. He's a graduate of the Orby Sale. We've had Royal Ascot winners; there's winners all the time coming

from Goffs. We have to persuade them to come by telling them they'll like the horses, and when they come here they have to like the horses, or it's all for nothing. But we have great confidence in the horses, and we have great confidence in the vendors and the Irish breeders. And again, we want them to enjoy themselves. So not only do they end up with good horses, but they've enjoyed their trip and they'll make the effort to come back.

KR: What does Ireland, and county Kildare in particular, offer that the competition in Newmarket and Deauville don't, entertainment and hospitality-wise?

HB: County Kildare is horse country, for starters, so you're coming to the spiritual home of the horse. Anyone who has a love and a passion for the Thoroughbred racehorse will feel at home in Ireland, and specifically in County Kildare. The local area is jam-packed full of very nice hospitable hotels, ranging from the likes of the K Club and the Killashee down to the smaller family-run places.

It's packed full of some very nice restaurants, it has beautiful golf courses and beautiful countryside.

There are a number of real nice shopping areas we take people to. The Irish are just incredibly friendly, hospitable people. They have a passion and a love and a deep knowledge ingrained of the Thoroughbred, but they've also got a sort of joie de vivre. They love welcoming people to Ireland, and they love when people enjoy Ireland. There is something quite unique about the Irish hospitality, and we make a point of that.



The Goffs Pavilion
Racing Post

As part of our team, we have people who are specifically here to look after the customers, led by our marketing director Joey Cullen and our international director Elaine Lawlor, and the team to back them up who aren't auctioning the horses or running the sale. They're there

entirely to make sure the people who come in are looked after. On top of that, unique to Ireland, is Irish Thoroughbred Marketing, who are part of Horse Racing Ireland, and their entire focus is to promote Ireland as the premier country to own, breed, sell and buy horses. They back us up and they're incredibly helpful in attracting international buyers to Ireland, and when they're in Ireland, looking after them and making sure their every need is catered to, so all they really have to do when they get here is focus on the horses.

We do operate various different VIP and VVIP packages. If we think there are people we would like to introduce to Goffs, we'll make sure everything is taken care of to bring them here for the first time. I typically call them sale-changing clients. We make sure they're flown in and looked after in very much a VVIP way so that they want for nothing. Last year, a client said to me, "so you'll do all that for me and I don't have to guarantee anything?" I said, "no, you don't. I'm adamant and supremely confident that you'll be impressed by what you see when you look at the horse flesh." If you come in and give us two days of your time, we'll sort out everything and take care of you. Just come and look at what we've got, and I know you'll like what you see. I suppose there is a bit of risk there, but the proof is in the pudding. That man came and bought eight horses. It's a bit like the Avis ad in the '60s: when you're number two, you try hardest. And we recognize we're not the market leader in Europe; there is a very strong and very good market leader, so we have to go that little extra mile to persuade people to try us as well.

There's nothing second best about our horses, so we've got to get people to come, and that's how we go about it, in a very proactive way.

KR: Quality yearlings will always draw a strong cast of potential bidders, and last year Goffs made a move to further increase the quality of the Orby sale by condensing it to two days from the traditional three, while continuing to focus on quality individuals. Were you pleased with the results of the new format?

HB: We decided that we wanted to focus on real quality. The worst thing someone could say to me is that our horses weren't good enough, and perhaps we were diluting it by trying to stretch it out to three days. So we cut the sale down to two days and set ourselves no targets in terms of numbers cataloged. I gave a brief to our inspection team, of which I am one, to just go out and find the best horses you can, and if we end up with 200, 400, or 600 that's fine, I just wanted to make sure we hit a certain standard. We had a very good sale where the average left up to €90,331 (up 47%), and the turnover was up 33%. So even though the catalogue was 18% smaller in numbers, the turnover was up and we had a very strong clearance rate of 85%. Some Irish breeders really bought into the concise nature of the catalogue and sent us a significantly better draft of horses. They got the dividend; they were delighted, and we got some very favorable comments from both vendors and purchasers. So we followed that theme this year. We have 25 more horses than last year, but they're all of the same standard, and I hope and believe that we've hit similar standards, if not better again. To give you one bit of evidence, we have double the number of Galileo's in the sale, and Galileo is the world's leading sire. We have 16 this year and we had eight last year. When you look at the sire profile you'll see it's very strong. Galileo's, Dubawi's, whatever you want, it's there.

KR: What else do potential buyers have to look forward to at this year's Orby sale?

HB: They have another concise two day sale full of some of the best yearlings in Ireland. We have some very well-bred horses, such as the Montjeu out of Finsceal Beo ([lot 331](#)), the Dubawi out of Chinese White ([lot 273](#)) and the 16 Galileo's I've mentioned. It's a very strong catalogue. The physicals match the book, and the buyers will have a very enjoyable time. They'll be well looked after, and they won't find a more welcoming and helpful team.

KR: As you previously touched on, it is a common trend for the best Irish-bred yearlings to head to Newmarket for the Tattersall October sale rather than staying in their own backyard and going to Orby. What is Goffs doing to reverse this trend, and have you noticed any recent changes?

HB: We wouldn't be naive enough to ask people to put all their eggs in one basket, so if someone wants to send us all their horses we'd be delighted, but we recognize people like to spread their risk and go to various different places. What we're saying is that first and foremost, there are too many horses driving past our front door to get to sales abroad, whether it's Newmarket or elsewhere. We just want a slice of the action. We want a decent proportion of their best. We understand the alternatives--they do a very good job and there's no criticism of anyone else. What we're saying to them is look at what we're doing, look at the proactivity. We've managed to demonstrate that when we get the horses we will get prices as good, if not better, than any competitive sale. We just say, look at what we do when we get the ammunition, and put your faith in us. I understand on occasions it's a risk, but happily last year those who took the chance reaped the dividends. They got very well paid and they've come back to support us again this year. It's as much about marketing to the buyers at the same time as the vendors, so we can demonstrate to the vendors what we're going to do for the buyers.

Read tomorrow's TDN for Part 2 of this Q&A on Goffs' new sales and business strategies.