

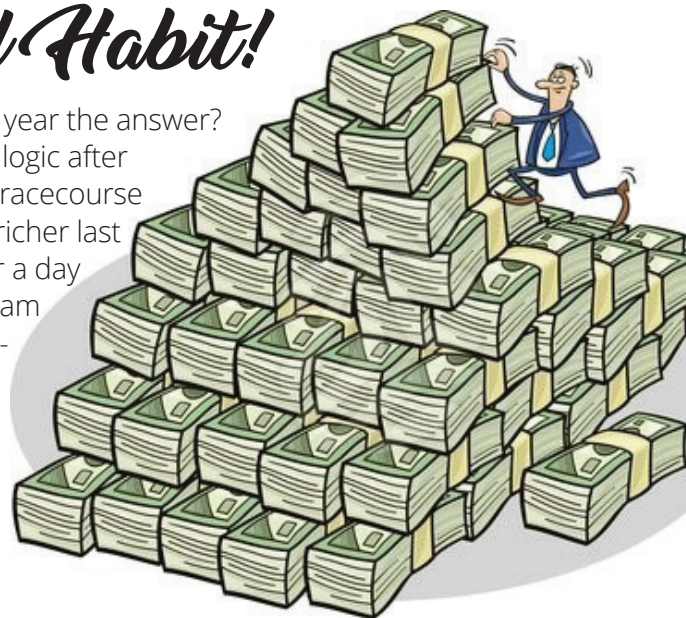
On Fire

Maine Chance Farms' multiple Gr1 winning stallion Vercingetorix has made a great start to his stud career, and the former Equus Champion was at it again at Greyville on Sunday. Vercingetorix had a pair of eye catching 2yo winners with his son African Warrior winning the first race, and fellow Vercingetorix son Padre Pio landing Greyville's second race. Both African Warrior and Padre Pio are out of mares by Jet Master-also damsire of the Silvano sired Gr1 SA Classic winner Hawwaam. Vercingetorix, whose yearlings made up to R1 100 000 at January's Cape Premier Yearling Sale, has 12 lots on offer at the 2019 National Sale.



A Good Habit!

Is punting just once a year the answer? That seems to be the logic after one racegoer left the racecourse more than £180,000 richer last Tuesday evening after a day of shocks at Cheltenham produced the second-biggest Placepot dividend of all time. The spectacular windfall was all the more impressive for having been scooped with just a single £2 line. The holder of the £2 winning ticket wanted to remain anonymous, but is a local man who makes a coach trip to the first day of Cheltenham every year.



Farewell To Top Sire

Multiple Gr I winner and star stallion Pioneerof the Nile (Empire Maker-Star of Goshen), perhaps best known for siring 2015 Triple Crown winner American Pharoah, has died suddenly at the age of 13.

WinStar Farm announced that Pioneerof the Nile bred a mare Monday morning and started acting uncomfortably once he was back in his stall. He was en route to the clinic when he died. Bred and owned by Zayat Stables during his racing career, Pioneerof the Nile won both the 2008 Gr1 CashCall Futurity and Gr1 Santa Anita Derby and was runner-up in the 2009 Gr1 Kentucky Derby. He entered stud at Vinery in 2010 and spent three years there before transferring to WinStar in 2013. He was perennially among the leading sires and was represented by Eclipse 2-Year-Old champion Classic Empire in 2016.

Hot Water

Toowoomba trainer Ben Currie has lodged a stay application against a decision to stand him down and hopes to have it heard by the end of the week. Queensland's leading trainer on overall winners, Currie was stood down after stewards charged him last month with seven offences including the use of a jigger. On Monday, the Queensland Racing Integrity Commission's internal reviewer, Kane Ashby, confirmed the stewards' decision to stand Currie down pending a result in the case. It means unless Currie gets a stay this week he will be unable to train after next Monday.

OLD vs NEW

The old and the new generation meet again at Turffontein on Saturday 30 March. Legal Eagle and Soqrat are amongst 11 entries for the R1,25 million Gr1 HF Oppenheimer Horse Chestnut Stakes to be run over 1600m. Legal Eagle has made this race his own over the past three years but supporters of the Australian-bred Cape Guineas winner Soqrat may feel that the multiple SA Horse Of The Year is beatable this time. Declarations are due on Monday 25 March.



Writing On The Wall

Philippi trainer Riaan van Reenen has packed it in and moved across the Peninsula to work as an assistant for his former boss, Glen Puller. He told Michael Clower on Saturday: "I only had ten horses at the end and it just wasn't financially viable to continue but the writing was on the wall a long time ago. The market has gone to the big trainers." There are now only three trainers left at Philippi and there seems no solution in sight to save the small guy.



DERBY COUNTDOWN

There are just over 10 weeks until the 240th running of the Gr1 Investec Derby, the premier Classic and the Greatest Flat Race in the World, at Epsom Downs Racecourse on Saturday, June 1. The 2019 renewal of the historic race over a mile and a half, Britain's richest at £1.5 million, has 96 contenders remaining following the March 5 scratchings' deadline.

Part of The Game?

An Aussie website has asked punters to list the most annoying things about punting. The long list includes Tipsters congratulating themselves by congratulating others. E.g. "Brilliant ride by that jockey (who just happened to be on the horse I've been tipping all week)." "Great training performance (with that horse I mentioned was over the odds)." Also high on the needle list was taking the field in what looks a tricky exotic leg only to watch the favourite win like Black Caviar. Or when you've backed the winner and then get the 'hold all tickets, race review' announcement.