

# The Vardy Story

MARK SMITH

Having travelled to South Africa and Cape town from the UK for the past 4 years I have fallen in love with the Queens plate festival in Kenilworth.

I've been to a lot of race big meetings in the UK but the Queens plate festival has always been special, with this year's event being the most amazing yet.

First of all the new layout was exceptional and oozed class from top to bottom. Comparable if not better than anything I've seen over here in the UK.

The night before the Saturday race meeting I was looking through the race cards to study some form and try and give myself some ideas of what horses to pick on the day. I was totally surprised to see that a horse named 'Vardy' was running in the main race the L'Ormarins Queens plate!

Being from the UK and more importantly from Leicester (The home of Leicester City football club and of course Jamie Vardy) I was completely dumbstruck to see his name. Vardy is of course the top goal scorer in the current Premier league season and Leicester's main striker.

I immediately checked to see if the horse was owned by the Thai owners of Leicester City (who also own various race horses including 'Fox Vardy' and are keen racegoers). I was surprised to see that it wasn't.

The write up and form was pretty impressive and although it was clearly up against some very stiff opposition it was clear to me that it had a good chance of winning. As it said in one of the write ups 'Vardy has a lot in common with his human namesake.....blistering pace!!'

I was immediately messaging friends back in Leicester and even added a post on Facebook announcing my find! (Picture attached) No one could quite believe it and a few were dashing off to the bookies over in the UK to have a flutter! It certainly put Kenilworth races on the map back home in Leicester.

An even more amazing twist to the story was that it was actually Jamie Vardy's birthday on the day of the Queens plate! It was all just too good to be true!! I felt like I was dreaming! There was only ever going to be one horse for me to back on the day!

The day came and we were delighted to enjoy the fabulous new layout at the race course. The weather was perfect as always. The main race finally arrived after some delays and 'Vardy' looked in pristine condition. Of course we all know that he romped home to take the victory in fine style and make it the perfect story for a Leicester lad! However there was to be one more wonderful twist to the tale.

Whenever I travel to Cape Town I carry some Leicester city stickers. I give out to the taxi drivers, bar staff, waiters/waitresses and anyone else I meet who is interested in football or LCFC.

As 'Vardy' was coming off from the track with everyone celebrating I was stood by the rails and managed to attract the trainer Adam Marcus's attention. He came across to me and I presented him with one of my stickers, shook his hand and congratulated him on the fantastic win. He was totally delighted and couldn't believe that I was actually from Leicester and lived only 1 mile from the King Power stadium! I continued to explain to him that it was actually Jamie Vardy's birthday that day as well which he was totally surprised at.

He immediately invited me to come around after the main presentation of the Queens plate had taken place to meet the owner and have some photos taken with them. Which of course I was only too pleased to do. I had plenty more Leicester city stickers and was handing them out freely to the cameramen, punters and anyone else who wanted one. The whole atmosphere was electric.

I finally got to meet the owner who was again totally surprised that we were from the city of Leicester. He was even more surprised to hear that it was actually Jamie Vardy's birthday on that very day his horse had won the Queens plate. I'm still not sure he believed me but I'm sure he checked it out (to find out that it was true when he arrived home.

I gave him one of my stickers (which he was delighted with), shook his hand and congratulated him on the fantastic victory. We then had a photograph taken with him that included the actual Queens plate itself!! (Picture attached) I then went on to have another chat with the trainer Adam Marcus and had a picture taken with him and the Blue Queens plate sash (Picture attached). He was still amazed that it was actually Jamie Vardy's birthday. Probably a good job I showed up or neither the owner or trainer would have probably ever known the unusual twist to their win

It was truly an amazing day that I will never forget!! And all this was before the fantastic after party began where we celebrated the night away.

I am now sitting here back in the UK, at work, freezing cold with the rain pouring down outside typing this letter to you. But still I have the biggest smile on my face from the happy memories!! All thanks to you guys  
Hopefully I'll be back at one of the best racecourses in the world next year although I doubt I will be able to replicate the remarkable set of circumstances that took place at this year's event!

I will be certainly be watching closely at the MET which I understand Vardy will be running in again at Kenilworth race course in a few days time. Unfortunately on this occasion I will be watching from the UK and not the course itself.

Thanks for the opportunity to tell this unusual story and I hope that you all enjoyed reading it.