

The Big Interview / Peter Doyle



“Imagine what I picked up from Richard Hannon and Liam Browne. Captain Ryan Price, Jack Doyle, Jack White...” \ Laura Green/Tattersalls

The jolly agent

Amy Lynam sits down with esteemed bloodstock agent Peter Doyle, who has built an indisputable reputation for unearthing equine talent

THE part I enjoy most about interviews is picking the brains of successful individuals, charting their path to the top, gleaning the lessons they learnt along the way and understanding what made them successful. Immediately, with Peter Doyle, you understand that his personality lent itself to attracting clients.

A warm smile, easy conversation and bellowing laugh that would make any onlooker wish they were in on the joke, make him a person you want to be around, and I sometimes forgot I had a job to do as I listened to the veteran bloodstock agent recall stories from his career.

In my opinion, most successful people have two sides to them, and it appears to be the case with Doyle, too; the joviality takes a backseat when necessary, the twinkling eyes behind thick-framed glasses can quickly turn serious to scrutinise a horse's appeal or when talking shop. It came as little surprise that I was going to have to work hard to learn Doyle's secrets, if any at all, and in fairness, it's what he had to do.

“They wouldn't tell you. They weren't going to teach you; you had to learn by watching,” Doyle says, recalling his beginnings working the sales with his father, legendary bloodstock agent Jack Doyle, and trainer Captain Ryan Price - a name unknown to me, but soon put right by Doyle.

“What a man,” Doyle continues. “Great trainer, former SAS during the war, and he was champion trainer a few times, and trained two Grand National winners.

“He said to my father one day, ‘You know what we're going to do, Doyle? I think we go take on all these flat trainers. Must be simple, if they can have winners like this.’

“So, they started buying yearlings, that was the start. They bought lots



of the best yearlings. It's amazing, the horses they bought, and I'm running behind them trying to hear what they were saying.”

In the year that Peter left a career in accounting to join his father, he married Anna, who has since become a key cog in the wheel in what has become Peter & Ross Doyle Bloodstock, since their son Ross joined the team in 2001.

Anna learnt what she was getting into early on, she tells me. “I got a taste of what that might entail the day of our wedding, because his father left the reception to go to the sales in Doncaster,” she says.

“I remember at the time thinking it was rather rude and now I completely understand. For the last 25 or 30 years, I've completely understood what our priorities are. If I was on my deathbed and he had to go to a sale, I'd be saying, ‘Go! You can't miss it!’ So, it was a learning curve, I must say.”

Perfect start

Jack Doyle's decision to move to England was the catalyst in Peter and Anna going out on their own in 1978.

“It was a very up and down business in the early days,” Peter recalls. “The first yearling we bought on our own was a yearling at Doncaster for £5,000 for a pal of ours in Wicklow, Pat Clark, who I played rugby against, and she won first time out.

“I sent her to Liam Browne to be trained - a break from the family altogether. [My brother] Paul was training, pals of Jack's were all training on the Cur-

“He doesn't run with his face,” Richard Hannon Sr on Kool Kompany \ Healy Racing