



News release

Strictly Embargoed until 10pm on Thursday 20 March 2008

The Professional Jockeys Association 2008 Lesters Awards Ceremony

The 18th annual Lesters Awards ceremony, which recognises flat and jumps jockeys achievements, was hosted by The Professional Jockeys Association (The PJA) at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Birmingham on the evening of Thursday 20 March 2008.

The Desert Springs Resort and Golf Club, the leading European destination for Golf and Luxury Spanish homes, located in Almeria, South East Spain, sponsored the sparkling evening event for the first time as well as the Conditional Jockey of the year Award. Over 500 guests, along with England under 21 football manager Stuart Pearce MBE and actress Claire King of Emmerdale and Strictly Come Dancing fame, partied and played the night away on the casino, which was sponsored by bookmaker William Hill.

The inaugural Chief Executive Award, recognising services provided to the jockeys profession by an individual was presented to trainer Reg Hollinshead. Aged 84 his career as a successful trainer has spanned more than 60 years and during this time he has mentored numerous leading jockeys from both the flat and jumps including The PJA's Kevin Darley, who was Champion Flat Jockey in 2000, Walter Swinburn, Leighton Aspell, Fergal Lynch, Willie Ryan and Paul Eddery.

Kevin Darley, who joins The PJA in April as Industry Liaison Director was awarded the Betfair Flat Jockey Special Recognition award. Darley, retired from the saddle in November last year after a career as a jockey spanning over 31 years. The Allied Irish Bank Jump Jockey Special Recognition Award was received by Russ Garrity, who was Mick Easterby's long-time jump jockey and retired from the saddle last year.

AP McCoy was crowned Jump Jockey of the Year for the eleventh time and received his Lester from author Jilly Cooper. Jamie Spencer, the current joint Champion Flat Jockey with Seb Sanders, was awarded the Flat Jockey of the Year Award, for the second time. A full list of award winners and sponsors are detailed below.

Josh Apiafi, Chief Executive of The PJA commented, "We are very grateful to our main sponsor of The Lesters; The Desert Springs Resort and Golf Club as well as our award sponsors who support this event, who are The Racing Post, Betfair, Weatherbys Bank, Allied Irish Bank, At The Races and The Racegoers Club.

Moving The Lesters from mid January to Maundy Thursday seems to have proved to be a success. The idea to hold the event on this date was suggested by the majority of The PJA membership and will hopefully from now on be recognised as The Lesters evening”.

Each Lester Awards category, apart from the Flat and Jump Ride of the Year Award, is decided on voting from the membership of The PJA. Four nominations are made per category, with the winner of The Lester Award receiving the most votes. The Flat Ride of the Year is sponsored by The Racing Post with At The Races sponsoring the Jump Ride of the Year Award. This category is decided upon votes cast by readers and viewers of The Racing Post and At The Races respectively, with four nominations put forward initially by the two organisations.

The 2008 Lesters Award Winners and Nominees

Chief Executive Award - Reg Hollinshead

Apprentice Jockey of the Year Award – presented by Nic Coward, Chief Executive of the BHA

Lester Award: William Buick

Nominees: Greg Fairley, Adam Kirkby & Patrick Macdonald

Lady Jockey of the Year Award – presented by Karen Wiltshire

Lester Award: Hayley Turner

Nominees: Kirsty Milczarek, Cathy Gannon, Natalie Gemelova

The Racing Post Flat Ride of the Year

Lester Award: Paul Hanagan - Fonthill Road, Paddypower.com Sprint Handicap, 13.10.07

Nominees:

Ryan Moore - Medley, JPRA Sceptre Stakes, 13.09.07

Jamie Spencer - Zidane, Bluesquare.com Stewards Cup, 04.08.07

Jimmy Fortune - Winker Watson, TNT July Stakes, 12.07.07

Betfair Flat Jockey Special Recognition

Lester Award: Kevin Darley

Nominees: Vince Slattery, Dale Gibson, Michael Tebbutt

Weatherbys Bank International Jockey of the Year

Lester Award: Ruby Walsh

Nominees: Johnny Murtagh, Paul Carberry, Christophe Soumillon

Desert Springs Resort and Golf Club Conditional Jockey of The year

Lester Award: Tom O'Brien

Nominees: Dougie Costello, Daryl Jacob, Charlie Poste

At The Races Jump Ride of the Year

Lester Award: Andrew Thornton - Miko de Beauchene, Coral Welsh National Handicap Chase, 27.12.07

Nominees

Graham Lee, L'Antartique, Paddy Power Gold Cup Chase, 17.11.2007

Tony McCoy, Straw Bear, Stan James Christmas Hurdle, 26.12.07

Christian Williams, Tension Point, Coventry Telegraph Juvenile Novices Hurdle, 15.07.07

Allied Irish Bank Jump Jockey Special Recognition

Lester Award: Russ Garrity

Nominees: Vince Slattery, Warren Marston, Brian Harding

The Racegoers Club Flat Jockey of the Year

Lester Award: Jamie Spencer

Nominees: Seb Sanders, Ryan Moore, Steve Drowne

Jump Jockey of the Year – presented by Jilly Cooper, Author

Lester Award: A P McCoy

Nominees: Robert Thornton, Richard Johnston, Graham Lee

Ends

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