



*From the Desk of*

# **Barry Irwin**

This morning I took the train from London to Newbury, where Gordian Troeller met me and drove me to the Lambourn yard of David Lanigan, whose father Bob used to board my broodmares in Ireland in the early 1980s.

When I eyeballed Animal Kingdom I could tell that the little pot belly he had acquired during the time between the World Cup and his workout last week at Ascot had disappeared, which is a testament to his fitness. Frankly, I was a little surprised he tightened right back up in so short a span of time.

Animal Kingdom is very relaxed in his new surroundings and has the routine down pat. He is buddies and works with a horse supplied by Sheikh Mohammed's jump trainer and bloodstock manager John Ferguson.

Animal Kingdom jogged up the hill with an exercise rider and, when he reached the summit, jockey Ted Durcan replaced the exercise rider, jogging the horse back down the gradient to the position where the work would commence. Animal Kingdom went five-eighths up the same hill he has been working on.

Although not on site for this work, Graham Motion gave the instructions for the breeze, asking Durcan this time to break off a few lengths behind the workmate so that Animal Kingdom would have to work a little harder, as he has a tendency to pull himself up when he reaches his company. Once Animal Kingdom put away his company, he tended to idle a bit, but the rider let him know his work was not yet done, and he responded with a surge that garnered a look of approval and awe from David Lanigan, who has been housing the horse in Lambourn.

"You don't see horses handle that incline around here like that," Lanigan told Irwin. "When I heard what the plans were after the World Cup to bring him here and run at Royal Ascot, I was very skeptical, because it is a very difficult proposition. But having seen how this horse handled it tells me he is a very special animal. He does everything like a real Champion. This move today--he upped his game once again. That move at Ascot really woke him up."

Jockey Ted Durcan said "If I owned this horse, I'd have every reason to be over the moon about him and his chances at Ascot. I don't have to tell you that he only does the bare minimum in the morning. He's that type of horse. Today, Graham wanted a good work, but he didn't want me to overdo it. Mindful of that I let him pass his company. Only when his ears indicated to me that he was thinking about easing up on the throttle did I squeeze him ever so slightly, just enough to send the message that I wanted him to keep on the boil. He responded like only the top ones do. He has figured out this little layout we have here and knows exactly what we expect of him. He couldn't be doing any better.

"He had a nice clean blow afterwards and will be better for the exercise."

Irwin thanked Durcan for his assistance in working with Animal Kingdom and the rider said "Oh come on, it's an honor to be involved!"