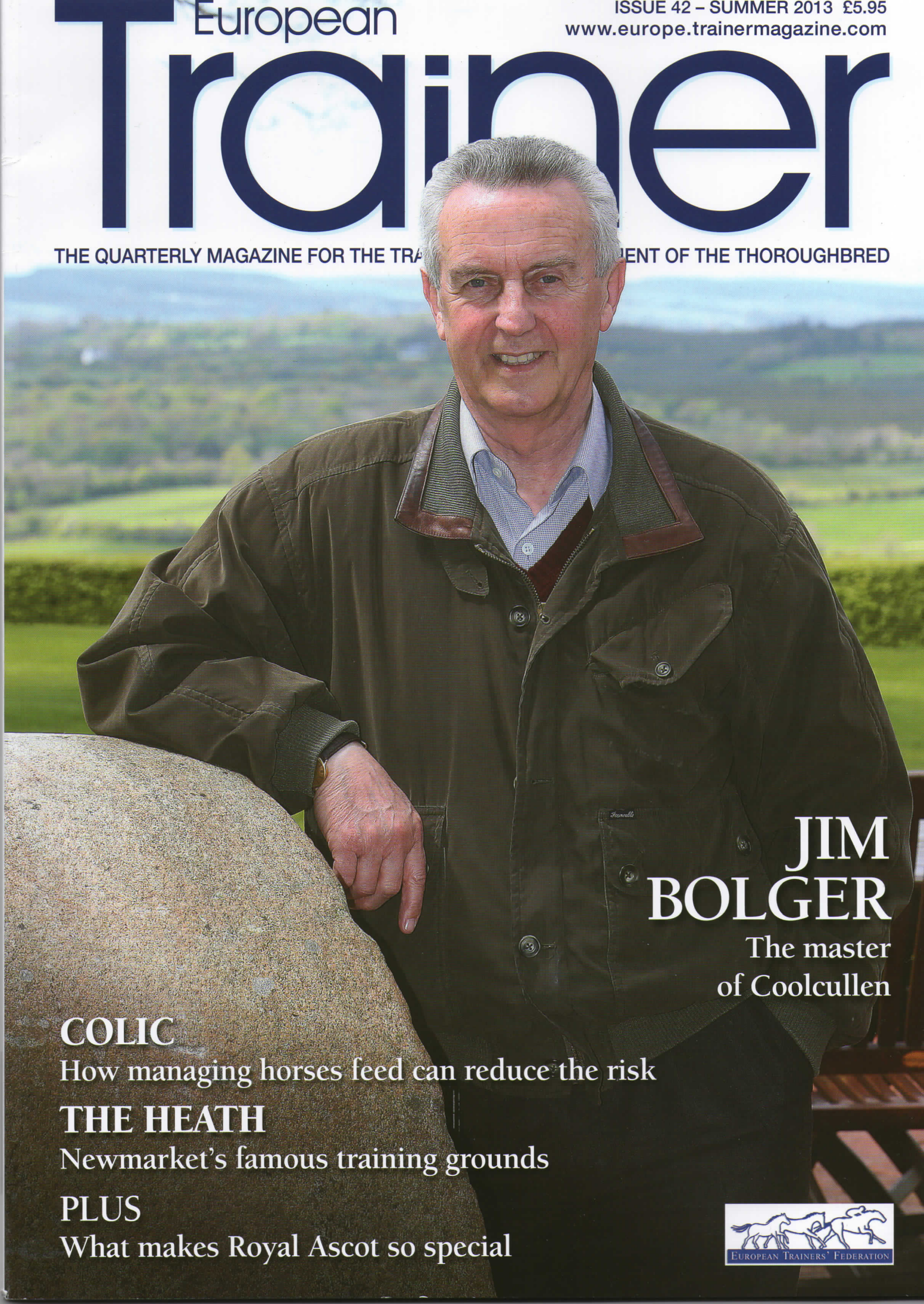


ISSUE 42 - SUMMER 2013 £5.95
www.europe.trainermagazine.com

European Trainer

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR THE TRAINERS' INTEREST OF THE THOROUGHBRED



**JIM
BOLGER**
The master
of Coolcullen

COLIC

How managing horses feed can reduce the risk

THE HEATH

Newmarket's famous training grounds

PLUS

What makes Royal Ascot so special



JIM BOLGER

The master of Coolcullen

There is nothing laid back or casual about Jim Bolger. His easygoing manner is relaxed and comfortable, sitting back in conversation at his home, but his alertness is as sharp as his features and his attention to even the most miniscule of detail is clearly visible all around.

WORDS: LISSA OLIVER PHOTOS: CAROLINE NORRIS

HE HAS three major thoroughbred properties and each is as immaculate as the other. The neatly swept woodchip paths in front of the boxes at the famous Glebe House racing yard in Coolcullen, County Kilkenny, are immediately striking and the spotless Beechy Park yard, in nearby County Carlow, is equally spotless. One gets the impression that Redmondstown Stud, in County Wexford, must be akin to an exclusive private maternity clinic. If there is just one word with which to sum up Bolger it's perfect, and perfection starts from the bottom up.

Both Bolger and his horses scream success; even those who cannot quite match the achievements of his greatest stars are

still walking decorously round the parade ring with the sheen of their skin bouncing off their coats. They all look like stars and they are all treated as stars and given every opportunity to shine. The same can be said of the people who have arrived at Bolger's for education. He doesn't admit to having any special skills for bringing out the best in both people and horses, but manages to do so anyway.

The key may well lie in his clearly defined aims and sharp focus on attaining them. Tellingly, when asked what he considers to be the most valuable background skills he brought with him as a fledgling trainer, Bolger reveals, "Growing up on a mixed farm and working as an accountant. It's very important to keep finances right in any business. Accountancy was a stopgap, I saw it as the best

way to try and get the capital to get started. When originally leaving home I wanted to make enough money to buy horses." It's clear, both then and now, that Bolger understands the importance of getting the foundations right.

"I was undecided at that time whether I wanted to be involved with showjumping or racing, but it was easier to have showjumpers then," he says. "I was a not good competitor, but I was a good dealer. As an example, I paid £600 for a good novice, he was a good looking horse and won a number of good classes and I was fortunate enough to sell him for £13,000."

It's startling when Bolger reveals that was in 1976. It's very easy to forget that at 71 he is already a few years past retirement age, when he doesn't actually look anywhere near close. And, alongside the showjumpers, he was



already training his own racehorses, laying the foundations of success with success, more or less from day one.

"I already had a couple of racehorses and the week that I sold the good showjumper I had two runners in Tralee and they both won," Bolger says. "I took out my licence in July 1976 and had four winners and an away double that season. The following season I had

"Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that the operation would become as successful as it is"

22 winners, then 32 winners the season after and 44 winners the next.

"I never really intended to become a public trainer," he continues, "I just got sidetracked for the past 30 years! Breeding and owning racehorses is a very high-risk business and not something I'd ever recommend to anyone."

For Bolger, more than most trainers, the high risk is immense. Not only does he train, but he also owns the vast majority of his horses and each season has bred around 75 of his two-year-olds in training. "It is an expensive process and a risky one. I had to buy fillies and train them, and the ones I liked I kept. Then they had to be covered and the foals reared, and there's the keep of the mares. And you hope at the end of it to have a successful racehorse."

Bolger has certainly had his share of successful racehorses and, unusually for a leading trainer, many of them he bred at his own Redmondstown Stud. It is a huge undertaking to breed, race, and train one's own horses, but it has also proved a huge success, putting Bolger in a very enviable, and unique, position.

"I find that 80 broodmares give me enough two-year-olds," he says. "Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that the operation would become as successful as it is. When I first started out, I thought it would be nice to perhaps one day win the Moyglare



A group of two-year-olds on their way to the gallops



Stakes. That has happened a few times, but I haven't bred and owned a Moyglare winner yet and that remains an ambition. I didn't expect to breed the quality of colts that I have. It has taken 35 years to reach this level, although I was probably more or less there ten years ago."

Much depends on staff and facilities, and Bolger has always ensured his horses have the best of both. "I always wanted a private place, with its own gallops. The horses are very happy with their environment; there's never been a horse who doesn't want to go down the gallop. With our own facilities they can work any time they want to. I rented in Dublin first,

"I always wanted a private place, with its own gallops. The horses are very happy with their environment; there's never been a horse who doesn't want to go down the gallop"

then bought my own place in Kilkenny in 1982.

"I make the environment as nice as possible to suit the temperament of the animals as well as the humans. The most important thing is budget. The stables in Coolcullen were designed to cause the least amount of intrusion on the environment as possible, so that's why I looked for stables replicating Goffs Sales Complex. The airflow is very important and the top doors are left open for most of the year. I hadn't been there long when it started to prove successful. In my first year at Coolcullen we had Flame of Tara and Give Thanks, and between them they won the

Respiratory Solutions



PROGRESS
Equine

Flexineb™

FLEXINEB nebulisers
Targeted delivery straight to the lungs. Silent, flexible, portable, battery driven.

HAYGAIN®
hay steamers

HAYGAIN Hay Steamers
Eliminate respirable dust in hay and haylage, producing clean, palatable forage.



KILLS
Mould &
Bacteria

www.haygain.com +44 (0) 333 200 5233

Lingfield Oaks Trial, Musidora Stakes, Lancashire Oaks, Athasi Stakes, Coronation Stakes, Pretty Polly Stakes at the Curragh, and the Irish Oaks.”

Bolger isn't actively involved in the general daily running of Redmondstown, but he does plan the matings. The yearlings come up from Wexford in March, when the colts go to Beechy Park and the fillies to Glebe House. “We take them in at the end of August to break. I might sell a few just to keep the show on the road. Some existing owners might buy a share in some. I've sold a few foals as well, three from the first crop of Sea the Stars – they fetched €825,000, €800,000, and €350,000. I never regret selling horses, I always hope they'll be very lucky for their owners and their wins will enhance my pedigrees. I bred and sold the Irish Derby winner Soldier Of Fortune and I was very pleased for his owners.”

Obviously as a trainer Bolger likes to have a few good ones himself and this puts him in an ideal position as a breeder, with the ability provided by firsthand knowledge to identify potential champion sires. “I felt both Teofilo

“We'll turn out as many as we can in the winter. Dawn Approach wasn't turned out – when he's fresh he can get a bit exuberant so it was safer to keep him under wraps”

and New Approach would be successful,” he says. “They both had a good pedigree and racecourse performance and they both had good constitutions and were very sound. I feel the same about Intense Focus. All three won the Dewhurst Stakes.”

Another tool on Bolger's side is the company he helped found with Dr Emmeline Hill, the award-winning geneticist. Equinome can identify the Speed Gene and those with the CC gene are sprinter milers and two-year-old types, those with the CT gene combination tend to be 1600m-2000m types, and the TT gene is found in stayers, who are generally late maturing. “As far as recognising TTs, Equinome is invaluable for training purposes. I would certainly recommend it,” says Bolger. “If a mare is not worth the cost of the Equinome test then she's not worth breeding from. The test is going to benefit her breeder for the rest of her lifetime. When our foals are born within a week they have the Equinome test. The TTs are left until last to be broken,

then they're turned out again and not trained seriously until April or May. So there are big savings made there, in terms of training costs. Before Equinome, a trainer had to guess. Any trainer would get it nearly right, but there are some surprises.

“We drive them for a month to six weeks, to put good mouths on them. Bearing in mind the number of races that are won by a short head, the more manoeuvrable they are the better. They'll be brought along slowly and will gradually muscle up. For their initial starting stalls training we drive them through the stalls in long reins.

“When they've done some cantering we'll walk them through with a rider and when they're ready for it we'll teach them to jump out and have them walk through and stand there. The March runners will do their first serious work, just a half speed, in the first or second week of February.

“One old maxim I like to follow is walk for a mile, trot for a mile and then do whatever

you like. Good riders are the key. They are very important. They get wet and cold in the winter and I really appreciate the work they put in. I'm very fortunate in that most of my staff have put down roots locally and have families close by and they take a big interest in my training operation and put in a huge effort to keep the stable successful. Whatever the class of horse you have, the biggest asset is staff and their handling of a horse. You can spoil a horse in a week.”

To his staff, and many others who have passed through Coolcullen, the biggest asset they have is Bolger. The recently run Two Thousand Guineas is a fine example of his multiple skills as a trainer. Not only did he have the winning horse in Dawn Approach, but, as he points out, “I had four champion apprentices riding in the race and a champion trainer – Aidan O'Brien!”

When young people come to him, what they take away is down to them. “I very much leave it to themselves to prove to me what they



Stable star
Dawn Approach

**GROUP 1 WINNERS TRAINED
BY JIM BOLGER**
Alexander Goldrun

Audi Pretty Polly S. (twice), Vodafone Nassau S., Cathay Pacific Hong Kong Cup, Prix de l'Opera Casino Barriere d'Enghien

Condessa

Yorkshire Oaks

Dawn Approach

Qipco 2000 Guineas, Dubai Dewhurst S., Goffs Vincent O'Brien S.

Eva Luna

Heinz 57 Phoenix S.

Finsceal Beo

Stan James 1000 Guineas, Boylesports Irish 1000 Guineas, Prix Marcel Boussac Royal Barriere de Deauville

Give Thanks

Irish Guinness Oaks

Intense Focus

Darley Dewhurst S.

Ivyanna

Oaks d'Italia

Jet Ski Lady

Gold Seal Oaks

Loch Garman

Criterium International

Lush Lashes

Darley Yorkshire Oaks, Coolmore Fusaichi Pegasus Matron S., Coronation S.

Mantovani

Heinz 57 Phoenix S.

Margarula

Darley Irish Oaks

New Approach

Vodafone Derby, Emirates Airline Champion S., Tattersalls Millions Irish Champion S., Darley Dewhurst S., Bank of Scotland (Ireland) National S.

Parish Hall

Dubai Dewhurst S.

Park Appeal

Moyglare Stud S., Tattersalls Cheveley Park S.

Park Express

Phoenix Champion S.

Polonia

Prix de l'Abbaye de Longchamp

Priory Belle

Moyglare Stud S.

Saoirse Abu

Independent Waterford Wedgwood Phoenix S., Moyglare Stud S.

St Jovite

Budweiser Irish Derby, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Diamond S.

Teofilo

Darley Dewhurst S., Laing O'Rourke National S.

want to do. If they can prove to me that they want to work hard and learn then I will give them the time, if not, it won't happen." Bolger is considered by some to be a hard taskmaster, but those who have learnt from him have no complaints. "It's very satisfying," he says, "I can look back and say I didn't do them any harm. I encourage staff to become proficient at skills other than riding; I never limit their experience. I would say 99% of their skills are gained in the yard.

"Aidan O'Brien was with me for three-and-a-half years, and he was successful from the word go. Willie Mullins was with me for two years and he has become Ireland's most successful jump trainer. When young people come to me to learn the business they have to commit to three-and-a-half years. They must work just like everyone else and they'll get increased responsibility as they become ready for it."

Bolger's horses, too, are expected to work

hard. "I agree with the maxim 'no pain, no gain.' To get horses fully fit they're going to have to work. The secret is in getting them to do as much work as necessary without them finding out! They'll do 20 minutes walking, then 15 minutes trotting, then do whatever work is needed, finishing with 20-30 minutes on the walker, about an hour and a half altogether. That's the routine for six days a week; on Sunday we'll ride out any running the following week or that are prone to set fast.

"They like routine and they're creatures of habit. If everything is right for them they don't get bored. They only come from Coolcullen to Beechy Park to learn how to gallop. The grass gallop at Beechy Park is very good. Coolcullen has a grass gallop, all weather woodchip gallop and all weather sand gallop. Most fast work is done on the woodchip and they'll have two or three spins at Beechy Park.

"The horses in training are not turned out,



JIM BOLGER

they would get too many scratches and scrapes. We'll turn out as many as we can in the winter. Dawn Approach wasn't turned out – when he's fresh he can get a bit exuberant so it was safer to keep him under wraps. With Dawn Approach we put him on a treadmill four days a week and he was ridden out the other three, just a trot and a hack canter on both."

As one would expect, feeding is also an important issue. "They are fed on Gain only, we don't use supplements," Bolger says. "We take blood samples of every horse before they begin their fast work and make sure the blood count is adequate for young horses going into fast work, and might put them onto iron tonic if necessary. They all get linseed oil, all of the time."

"The horses are fed three times a day and they have their big feed in the evening time, with haylage ad lib. We've been making our own haylage since 1992, using Italian Rye

grass. It's very hardy and is ten inches high at the moment [in early May after a severe winter]. It will have its first cut before the end of the month. The second cut will be in late July, early August, and the haylage taken will be all for the horses. The late cut, in late September, is only for cattle."

With such attention to detail, the combination of stud and stable works well. "It's a huge advantage having homebreds," Bolger admits, "I'll keep an open mind on the individual, but it helps to know the family and quirks." He is also astute when it comes to pedigrees and improving a mare. "When you look at the breeding of Dawn Approach, nothing on the dam's side had been covered by a bad sire. Phone Trick, Pleasant Colony, Alydar and Sea-Bird II. A champion mare is not too far away, in Miss Oceana, a full sister to Kittihawk Miss. Kittiwake [third dam of Hymn of the Dawn] was sold for \$3.8 million as a 17-year-old."

With an accountancy background, Bolger is more aware than most of the importance of the racing industry to the Irish economy and it's hardly surprising that he is annoyed by the poor levels of prize-money. "The one thing the industry needs is a proper level of prize money, it's the lifeblood of the industry," he says, not for the first time. "Owners need to win to help ease the burden of costs and the levels are not where they need to be. The industry has 20,000 employees and they need to be kept in employment." It's interesting to note that Bolger and neighbour Willie Mullins are the biggest employers, in any sector, within a 20-mile radius.

Jim Bolger has made a huge impact on horseracing as a trainer. And as a breeder. And as an owner. As an educator he is second to none. Little wonder that young up and coming trainers aspire to his standards. Racing has served him well. And Jim Bolger, the Master of Coolcullen, has served racing well. ■

RacingBlue

Do you have horses that fail to stay the distance?
The problem: Muscle fatigue?
The solution:

STORM

B-alanine

WINNER
BETA International 2012
INNOVATION AWARD

BETA International 2012
WINNER
Sponsored by
HORSE&RIDER

STORM™ is a scientifically proven award-winning* feed supplement that boosts lactic acid buffering in muscle for sustained speed and power.

Trainers across the world's leading racing nations are now staying the distance with STORM™.

STORM™ is recommended by vets, nutritionists, and exercise physiologists.

STORM™ is protected by global patents and is available exclusively from Racing Blue. For further information on STORM™ and the science behind it, visit:

www.racingblue.com

Racing Blue, Festival House, Jessop Avenue, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 3SH UK
Tel: +44 (0)1242 633660
Email: storm@racingblue.com

Designed by Nature, Improved by Science