

## Callaghan takes California trail to hit pay dirt and new heights

By Chris McGrath, Racing Correspondent

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Go west, young man... On the Turf, at any rate, the old counsel seems as pertinent as ever. Still only 28, Simon Callaghan certainly qualified on account of his youth; and he has soon been rewarded for a corresponding sense of adventure.

Last year, Callaghan abandoned a promising start to his training career on home soil to dig a deeper seam in California. He had seemed impossibly young when his father, Neville, handed over his Newmarket stables in 2008 – but 67 winners over two seasons represented a fairly seamless transition. Unlike many others, in a similar position, the old man had been typically astute in ensuring that Callaghan's racing education was not confined to his own regime. He was instead sent to serve under prolific achievers either side of the Atlantic, in Richard Hannon and Todd Pletcher. And it was his experience with the latter that ultimately quickened Callaghan's pioneering instincts.

When he left, Callaghan took with him a filly named Dubawi Heights, who had been a bit player in Group races as a juvenile. In May, she won a Grade One prize at Hollywood Park, and she has since proceeded to finish second in the Beverly D Stakes at Arlington. She is now being prepared for the Yellow Ribbon Stakes at Santa Anita on Saturday week – prior to a possible crack at the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Turf.



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*Californian racing, with its centralised facilities and better prize money, presents an idyllic contrast to the straitened British racing scene Simon Callaghan left behind*

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"The filly has really helped my status and career," Callaghan said. "She has a fantastic temperament, and has improved with every race. She has all the right attributes for racing out here: a great cruising speed, toughness and honesty. She has come out of her last race extremely well, and the Yellow Ribbon is ideal, timing-wise, for the Breeders' Cup."

With this template to work from, Callaghan feels confident he has a repeatable formula. "I'm always looking for European horses to bring over," he said. "I know the form pretty well and like to think I've quite a good understanding of the type you need out here. They need to be sound, to handle fast turf, and to go the right kind of distance. Many of the horses that are hardest to place in Britain, fillies in particular, can achieve so much more out here. It's a difficult climate back at home, just now, and I'm starting to get new owners who are seeing how much more viable it can be out here."

As he evolves his own methods, Callaghan is dovetailing the different lessons absorbed from his various mentors. "Subconsciously you pick up so much, then you try to put it together and do it your way," he said. "Dad was very good at placing his horses, and they always looked very well, carried good condition. He had a good feeding system."

And Pletcher? "Very methodical. No stone is unturned, and every horse has its own routine. He expects you to work hard, but working with such nice horses is its own reward. He's got a system, and it's a system that works. There aren't many people who could train so many horses, and retain such a personal approach."

Though he has so far had no more than a couple of dozen winners in California, Callaghan stresses that his barn is all about quality. "Really, that's the angle we're looking for," he said. "Most of our owners are European and they're making quite a commitment to send a horse out here. You'll only really be doing that in the hope of obtaining 'black type'. Obviously, it can't always work out, but in principle we're not looking to run in lower grade."

Absence will scarcely make his heart grow fonder, as he contemplates the funding calamities back home. After all, a trainer in California simply hires as many stalls as he may require on the back stretch, and trains on the racetrack itself. "It's much more feasible to make the business work out here," Callaghan said. "Not just because of the better purse-money, but also because there are nowhere near as many overheads. Things were going well in Newmarket, but to get the very top owners – and horses to win at the very top level – is very hard. I can always go back. John Gosden and Jeremy Noseda trained out here, before returning home to be equally successful. But I've certainly no regrets, and at the moment can't see myself anywhere else."

### Turf account

#### Chris McGrath's Nap

Silenzio (3.10 Goodwood) Has clicked over this trip, unlucky at Windsor and then a stylish winner at Folkestone. Probably remains ahead of the game under his penalty.

#### Next best

Eclipseoftheheart (8.20 Kempton) Got off the mark when switched to this surface last time and she looks bred and trained to improve again.

#### One to watch

Model Pupil (Charles Hills) Comes from a very good family and laid solid foundations on his debut at Newbury last Saturday, betraying his inexperience before finishing off well for third.

#### Where the money's going

Questioning was again in demand with Victor Chandler yesterday for the Betfred Cambridgeshire on Saturday, now 9-1 from 12-1.

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