

Harness racing at Musselburgh this weekend



The UK's most prestigious harness racing festival takes centre stage at Musselburgh Racecourse this weekend, 28-29 July 2012.

Organisers expect an increased attendance will reward the decision to move the event to a weekend slot with the Famous Musselburgh Pace and an international free for all drawing top entries from across the British Isles.

Harness racing has a huge following in Europe and the USA while in France the sport is more popular than traditional horse racing. In harness racing, horses race in a specific gait whilst pulling a two wheeled cart known as a Sulky, with a driver taking the place of a jockey.

On Saturday the Hurricane Pace will feature six heats and the final with three other races, including a maiden, condition pace and international free for all, making up the 10 race meeting and a strong local hope for the Hurricane race is Lady Roulette which is owned by Pathhead based Billy Sives.

Featuring Grade 1 to 5 horses, the two day festival has attracted top entries from the UK's leading stables competing for more than £30,000 prize money. The Free for All on Saturday will be hotly contested with Stoneriggs Mystery, Forafewdollarsmore and Rhyds Five Star all vying for the

honours. Gates open at 4pm with the first race at 5.30pm and the Hurricane final at 9.15pm.

On Sunday there are 13 races, including five heats and the final of the Famous Musselburgh Pace, two Grade 1 races and a three year olds Derby. Heat 5 appears to be the one to watch with Stoneriggs Mystery, Forafewdollarsmore and Rhyds Five Star all lining up again and joined by last year's winner Mahogany Jasper, which is trained by Alexis Laidler and driven by husband William "Rocker" Laidler, who together have 19 horses running over the weekend.

Gates open at noon on Sunday with the first race at 1.30pm. Entry on each day is £15 with children aged 16 and under allowed free entry when accompanied by an adult.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: "We are delighted to welcome back harness racing to Musselburgh and have been working hard to identify what dates work best for this traditional fixture. We feel by settling on a weekend slot it will have a wider appeal not only to committed harness racing fans but for the general public who can experience the best of British harness racing."

Jim Kemp of the Musselburgh Fair Day Association which organises the event, said the Famous Musselburgh Pace remained the crown jewels of British harness racing.

He said: "It's long history and tradition is a top draw and makes the Famous Musselburgh Pace is the race that all harness

racing trainers and drivers want to win. The fields this year are exceptionally strong and we will have the cream of the harness racing industry on show over the weekend.

“We have built up a strong relationship with Bill and his team at the racecourse and working together we can ensure harness racing at Musselburgh continues to prosper. It is no exaggeration to say you can’t get a hotel bed in or around Musselburgh this weekend, which is good for local businesses and shows the level of interest in the racing festival.

“I hope many local residents will come along and experience the excitement of harness racing which has its own set of rules, skills and challenges which sets it apart from horse racing.”

