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NEWS:

After Gorge got the year off to the best possible start with victory on New Year's Day, the rest of January was a tale of hellishly hard tracks on one hand and preparations for the grand UK venture on the other. While we could not even mention some of the tracks without our keyboard jarring up, preparations for England have gone swimmingly. In fact Gorge and travelling partner Onajet have now both arrived in Yorkshire and are settling well among the superb facilities of Mark Johnston Racing in preparation for Gorge's assault on the world's biggest jumps meetings at Cheltenham and Aintree.



Gorge and Onajet discuss custody of hay at 35,000 feet

HORSES IN TRAINING

GORGE 7yog Thunder Gulch (USA) – Heed Zamelina: Sadly rounded out his Australian campaign with a below par effort due to another rock-hard track. Snow or not, Gorge has so far enjoyed being in England where there is lots of give underfoot.

ONAJET 7yog Superjet (USA) – Our Ampulla: Ditto as for Gorge’s final run (only Onajet went considerably slower). Has impressed everyone in the UK as a very likely jumping type, so may improve on his Australian form, although in helping Gorge stay calm for the flight and settling-in process he has already done his job.



England: Snow and give underfoot

LEICA VINO 5yog Nothin’ Leica Dane – Sweet Madeleine: This month continued his pattern of a very respectable run at Ballarat (his third of these) followed by a disappointing effort elsewhere. This is probably not due to him being a home body but rather the fact that the Ballarat track is the best-watered in the state! Has been given a slight freshen up and will now be saved for jumping and wetter ground.

BLARNEY (NZ) 5yog O’Reilly (NZ) – Tall Story (NZ): Pulled far too hard when apprentice-ridden at Mornington, then felt the firmish ground when beaten 3 lengths at Hanging Rock. Another having a freshen-up now to wait for rain.

SEA TOWN 4yog Ladoni (GB) – My Kind of Town (NZ): Outpaced on a track best described as “Bedrock 1” at Stawell. May well head to hurdle trials next.

STORMING NORTH 3yog Giants Causeway (USA) – Reem Albaraari (GB): Has jumped out in company and is now officially qualified to race, although likely to be given more jump-outs to complete his education before stepping out raceday.

MIZEN HEAD 3yof Secret Savings (USA) – Hultarani (USA): In tremendously good health but currently just ticking over and, again, waiting for rain.

2yof Denon (USA) – Desert Mistral: This lovely strong filly has done extremely well in the paddock and will resume full work at the start of February.

EDGE OF DESTINY 2yoc Galileo (Ire) – Reggae (Ire): In full work and doing everything like a professional. The colt who Anthony bought cheaply because he was “so small” continues to grow and develop nicely.



Edge of Destiny

PUBLICITY BLUES:

The unwritten rules of Victorian racing state that publicity must always go to the same trainers wherever possible, as evidenced by the ridiculously slanted “grand national preview” night we sat through in disbelief last August. But even so, it is incredible that Gorge’s grand overseas trek has been so studiously ignored by Melbourne’s big daily papers: has any horse ever previously jetted off on an overseas racing venture with so little coverage from these guys? It is all the more remarkable when the UK racing media are providing plenty of coverage, with Anthony giving numerous interviews from Yorkshire last week. Well done to Sky Channel and especially to Shane Anderson of 3UZ for knowing what a good racing story is, while the big papers spin out yet another yawn-fest discussion on what David Hayes’ latest import might do in 8 months time... .