

THE DERBY - 1948

Braving uncertain weather, over a million racegoers throng Epsom Downs for the one hundred and sixty-ninth running of the world's greatest racing classic.....The Derby. Forty-seater Buses jostle four-seater baby saloons, baby Pearly Princesses accompany full-sized Pearly Queens. That famous racing Prince, the Aga Khan is accompanied by his attractive Begum. Epsom presents, as ever, a cosmopolitan cross-section of the whole world.

Films are represented by a generous familiar smile. Art turns up to find the meaning of it all - against this background are the tens of thousands of ordinary folk using a well-earned day to play an honest half dollar with those innocent philanthropists....The Bookies. The King, the Princess Royal, Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh make their way to the paddock to look over the horses whose names are household words for this one day of the year.

The little men whose names are even better known move towards their mounts. Best known of all is Gordon Richards astride the second favourite, "The Cobbler," No. 19.

Excitement rises as the runners get out on to the course. It's a day for long shots. Ten days of rain have drenched the turf and the morning wind and bursts of sunshine have dried the surface, the crowd gets a blast of last-minute advice. There's a final punter's rush.

Top-hatted Leslie Firth is almost ready. It's one last moment full of suspense for a million racegoers. The horses are lined up, they are set and they are off on a mile and a half test for the biggest prize in racing history. Two of them are left behind already, but the others race on uphill with the Derby roar to cheer them on.

Settling down from a good start, the second biggest field in Derby history, faces the slope. Outsider "Healy-in-Arden" and white-banded "Terzie" make the running, closely followed by "Ottoman" and "Blue Falls."

Flashing past the seven furlong post, they are coming into the first bend. "Terzie" the film world's horse with a white noseband is in the lead, but only just. "Healy-in-Arden" is still there and coming up are "Royal Drake," "My Babu" and "The Cobbler." The winner is still anybody's guess.

Round Tattenham Corner, and this is where the pace tells and stamina comes into its own. Gordon Richards and "The Cobbler" drop back. France's "Royal Drake" is closing-in on "Terzie" Now the French horse takes the lead, and it's "Royal Drake," with Parisian jockey Bayasbere up, who's in front as the horses thunder into the straight.

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Downhill on the last lung-bursting furlong the English-bred horses have fallen behind and the duel now is between two French thoroughbreds - "Royal Drake" and the Aga Khan's "My Love." Look at that horse "My Love." Overtaking his rival, he goes past the post winner by one and a half lengths, with "Royal Drake" second making the French Derby triumph complete. For the second year in succession a horse from across the Channel has pulled off racing's top classic, and taken out of Britain thirteen thousand pounds. For jockey Bill Johnston it's his first-ever Derby win. For the Aga Khan it's his fourth Epsom victory. And for "My Love's" backers, odds of 100-9 have come off.