

25 February 2010

Bottle shows its Glass at the Mascot Gold Cup

A bottle came out top when a field of 54 characters assembled in the sunshine on 26th April for the fourth running of the Mascot Gold Cup at Wetherby Races, the world's largest mascot event, sponsored by Foresters and organised by Sue Ryder Care and Yorkshire Young Farmers. This was the fourth running of the event since its conception by members of Yorkshire Young Farmers in 2006 and it was as always a huge hit with the race day crowd as well as raising over £15,000 for charity.

Billy Bottle who promotes recycling for British Glass in his day job had a previously poor record in the race having never had a top ten finish in three outings. However Billy must have done enough in training to impress Harrogate farmer and owner of 'Organic Dales' Stephen Lofthouse, who paid Billy's entry fee and put the Organic Dales name to the eventual winner. Handicappers were left stunned at the speed the bottle achieved as he left the field of 53 for dead at the start and held off late bursts from the Worth Valley YFC 'Spud' and last year's winner the 'Wokon Noodle Box', who came second and third respectively.

A large number of mascots from professional sports teams participated with H'angus the Monkey of Hartlepool Town (7th) leading piers such as Ronnie Rhino of Leeds Rhinos (9th) and Ozzie Owl of Sheffield Wednesday (12th). Full results can be found on the event's official website www.mascotgoldcup.org.uk which shows last home was Chip the Sausage representing the MLC and supporting Sue Ryder Care.

Prior to the race, a mascot parade had been held where a panel of judges including Emmerdale's Maxwell Caulfield, his lady wife from ITV's Wild at Heart, Miss Juliet Mills and dignitaries from the sponsors chose the best mascot in show. Winner was Toby Tyke of Barnsley F.C. with Ronnie Rhino placed second.

Each year in addition to setting out and removing the fences before and after the race it is the duty of members of Yorkshire YFC to choose a positive ethical theme to promote with the event. This year they chose 'Be keen, be green, support your local market' as sponsored by the National Market Traders Federation. Members from across Yorkshire are challenged to create their own Club mascot on this theme and Fay Quigley, President of the NMTF placed the Mean Green Market Machine from Worth Valley YFC first. This giant market stall mascot was so big that it needed two runners just to carry its weight. These were Vice Chairman, Dave Johnson and Chairman Thomas Ogden who has now won this prize four years on the trot. Second prize went to Catterick YFC who had Jack Henry as the mascot, Jack of all trades. Jack made up for his disappointment when he was awarded the Corus sponsored prize for best mascot made from recycled materials which delighted the large group of supporters from Thirsk YFC who had come to cheer him on.

Mascots then took in refreshments prior to the big race kindly provided by Jaffa, Taylors of Harrogate and Pure Life Water. A handicapping system is put in place based on size and shape of costume together with shoe size and of course previous form with the large cumbersome mascots gaining a 60 yard start over the slighter ones in the two hundred and fifty yard trip. Fences, sponsored by Corus, Sovereign Healthcare, Skipton Building Society and Bradford Market services also come into play and cause chaos due to the limited visibility that mascots often have. At least ten falls occurred with feet, costumes and PC Bill's helmet littering the turf in the aftermath of the race, yet all made it to the line intact and determined to return for glory in the 2010 Mascot Gold Cup at Wetherby.

Sue Ryder Care Fundraiser and past Chairman of Yorkshire Federation of YFC Andrew Wood explained how he was delighted with the event and amount raised. "Mascots have now

raised over £65,000 in the four years that the race has been run and we are very lucky to work with Yorkshire Young Farmers in this high profile event. We need to raise over £10 million each year just to provide our services in Yorkshire alone so event such as this which raise funds and our profile are very important to us, a huge thank you is due to the team at Wetherby Racecourse and conference centre, all the mascots, our sponsors and everyone who volunteers their time for this event.”

A DVD of the event is in production and will shortly be available to order for a cost of £6. For more information or to register an interest for the 2010 Mascot Gold Cup contact Andrew Wood on 01535 640432 or email Andrew.Wood@suerydercare.org.

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