

THE DERBY

Under clouded skies and with a near gale blowing, thousands trekked by foot, bicycle, donkey cart and limousine to Epsom Downs for the revival of a national sporting festival - the first post-war Derby. Goloshes, macs and umbrellas were out instead of the usual summer outfits but rain and wind were soon to give way to a burst of June sunshine. Here's the scene at Epsom 1946.

Hours before the race the crowds began to assemble. Tic Tac men and honest Joe were there - just begging the racegoers to take their money. Pearly kings just out of battle-dress and servicemen from all parts of the Empire were among watchers who packed the free side from the winning post to Tattenham Corner. Wayside lunches at 5 bob a time raked in the money and there was plenty of tea but no beer.

Making a day of it, Epsom turned on all the fun of the fair - shaking the money up early - after the race, only the lucky few will have any left.

Back in circulation is Prince "I've-got-a-horse" Memorial, the feathered character everybody knows. Ah there you are!

Excitement was in the air as the crowd of a quarter of a million packed into line the rails 100 deep and wait for the off.

For the first time in Derby history the King and members of the Royal family drive in a closed car down the famous course. A royal progress from Tattenham Corner to the Grandstand. It's a call for a mighty cheer from the Victory Derby crowds.

With 17 runners competing for the punters favour, many an expert eye took a last minute check-up in the paddock. Here, they're just horses - but somewhere among 'em there's a winner. Anxious watchers pronounced the going "perfect". Said one rider, "It's not too heavy and not too light and we couldn't have a fairer test."

Winning attention in the parade were Lord Derby's GULF STREAM with Harry Wragg up - a hot 5 to 1 favourite at the call over. Big-boned HAPPY KNIGHT, and a 50 to 1 outsider - AIRBORNE - only grey in the race.

And now the line-up, and they're ready - all steady - and they're off. And they're all away in a line - Friar Tuck's well behind and first to nose ahead is AIRBORNE with HAPPY KNIGHT and GULF STREAM up alongside. The air's electric now and the Royal onlookers hear the famous Derby roar.

They're pulling out now. AIRBORNE's fallen back - and it's GULF STREAM, HAPPY KNIGHT and EDWARD TUDOR out in front, with PHEMERBOROUGH and QUI VA LA looking like good chances. Favourite till the day before the race, HAPPY KNIGHT carries a lot of money. But he's plenty of challengers and it's still anybody's race.

Up to Tattenham Corner and it's PHEMERBOROUGH out ahead now - HAPPY KNIGHT second - GULF STREAM, KHALID - QUI VA LA and FAST AND FAIR all still well in the running.

The pace is getting 'em now - and they're battling for a win over the last lung-bursting half mile. GULF STREAM looked a winner but he's beaten and it's AIRBORNE's race with GULF STREAM a length behind second, and RADIOTHERAPY third.

A great day and a grand race for AIRBORNE. Owned by Mr. Ferguson, the colt goes in among the great names of English racing - Victory Derby winner, and a backers dream at 50 snackers to one.