



IRISH DAILY  
**STAR**

# CHELTENHAM

2019

**48-PAGE FESTIVAL  
PREVIEW MAGAZINE**

in association with

**BoyleSports**



# PRESENTING PAT

**EXCLUSIVE WITH  
JUMP RACING'S QUIET  
MAN AS HIS PERCY  
GOES FOR GOLD**

# THE QUIET

**S**OON the time for talking will be over. Not that it will inconvenience Pat Kelly. He prefers to listen.

Soon, the days and weeks and months of quiet preparation at his small stable of 20 horses will be at an end.

At around half past three on Friday afternoon, Kelly's hero Presenting Percy will finally line up for his first chase of the season and attempt to bring the Gold Cup back across the Shannon.

Oh, and he's the favourite.

Even for Cheltenham's theatre of dreams, it's barely believable.

But after a lifetime watching and waiting, Kelly's not getting carried away now.

"This is not the be-all and end-all. With the way the season has been with the ground," says Kelly.

"If he gets there safe and sound that's the main thing. He's only eight, we'll see what happens.

"It's not the be-all and end-all."

The time has gone fast, but in a slow way.

A long hot summer gave way to an unusually dry autumn and winter, leaving racetracks with July ground in January.

First Percy missed the John Durkan in early December, then the King George and Savills Chases at Christmas before the Red Mills and the Bobbyjo Chases in February.

In between there was one memorable fleeting appearance over hurdles, when winning the Galmoy at Gowran.

But with every missed engagement over fences, every change of plan, his price shortened and the legend of horse and trainer grew taller.

Pat Kelly the enigma. Pat Kelly the conundrum. Pat Kelly the man of mystery.

Even his hurling ability is something of a riddle, according to his great friend Brendan Lynskey.

"Pat is like myself. He can be, what would you say... complex," says Lynskey, laughing.

"I don't annoy him about racing. I don't know anything about it.

"When I was hurling for Galway I used to knock about with a few lads that knew nothing about hurling. It gives you piece of mind.

"When you lose an All-Ireland semi-final or final, you really don't want to be listening to someone telling you what you'd done wrong.

"I wouldn't ask him about a horse running, you know, 'what do you think Pat' because I respect him. And he is a very private person.

"But he's still the same Pat Kelly

**PICTURE PERFECT:** Pat Kelly (left) and Brendan Lynskey with a picture of Presenting Percy outside Dan's Bar in Athenry and (inset) Davy Russell with Presenting Percy after winning the Galmoy Hurdle at Gowran Park, his only run this year



he was six or seven years ago. He has not changed. He's the same Pat Kelly.

"If you were stuck tomorrow morning for a lift to Cork you could ring Pat Kelly and he'd look after you.

"I know he did hurl, I can't tell you any more than that. I don't remember him hurling, but from what I've heard he was... fiery."

Every summer Kelly accompanies Lynskey to Croke Park to watch his beloved Tribsemen and soak up the wisdom of men who once wielded the ash for glory.

He keeps his counsel, listens and learns. But he's never short of a few words about Lynskey, his close pal, golfing buddy and one of the heroes of Galway's back-to-back All-Irelands in 1987 and 1988.

"He's a good honest to God hurling man. He's a special guy," says Kelly.

"As I always said it would take

10 men or a bulldozer to stop him. His hurling speaks for itself."

Kelly likes to let his horses speak for him. Not that he doesn't enjoy a bit of mischief too.

"Joe Cooney, Pat Fox and Brendan Lynskey are good friends. They're my three All Stars. You listen to these men," he says.

"I often see Pat in Cashel, you'd never think he played hurling, but he done Galway out of a lot of medals," he adds, laughing.

"When Kilkenny were beating Tipp I'd have a bit of fun with him.

"I would've said to him that I was in Kilkenny and had two pints of Guinness and 'You know when they gave me the change Pat, it came back with two All-Ireland medals'."

Kelly and Lynskey regularly meet to hit a few golf balls when the work is done and evenings are getting longer.

The routine has hardly altered despite the increased profile of

Kelly's stable in recent times.

A few years ago the pair were playing golf in Claremorris when Kelly's buggy overturned going up a hill, trapping the trainer underneath.

Lynskey came to his aid, lifting the buggy clear and bringing his stricken friend to Mayo University Hospital in Castlebar.

The All-Ireland winner was there to bring Kelly back to Craughwell too after the trainer had surgery on a broken leg.

Their friendship is rock solid, however that hasn't dulled their competitive instincts playing each other on the golf course.

"He doesn't tolerate excuses. That's not in his vocabulary," says Lynskey.

"PG is a perfectionist. Even playing golf he's a perfectionist. He's competitive, he likes to win. He's always had that. From as long as I know him. And so am I.

"We would ate one another

# REVOLUTION

**DAVID COUGHLAN** talks to Pat Kelly and those close to the Galway trainer as Presenting Percy goes for Gold



sooner than give a fiver to one another in a fourball! He loves that about me and I love that about him. That's the way he is."

One of their dearest friends and co-conspirators on the golf course, Dr Michael Corcoran, passed away just over two years ago after losing his battle with cancer.

It was another painful reminder of life's uncertainty.

Kelly has had his own fair share of tragedy to deal with. Faith, family, friendship and his horses have kept him going.

On Easter Monday 1997, he saddled Another Deadly in a handicap chase at Fairyhouse with Shane Broderick on board when disaster struck.

Six from home the horse came down with Broderick breaking his neck in the fall.

The jockey has gone on to carve out a good career as a trainer, but his injuries left him paralysed from the neck down.

**K**elly watched with horror too the fall that paralysed and eventually led to the death of his friend John Thomas McMamara at Cheltenham six years ago.

The threat of injury is never far away in this toughest of trades and he is only too aware of the dangers.

His own son Tony is a jockey, based in Durham at the yard of Rebecca Menzies.

Last April Tony suffered a serious back injury after a fall at Southwell and was rushed to hospital in Nottingham.

"He had surgery after cracking vertebrae in his back and had to get a bar and a plate put in," says Kelly. "You do of course (worry), but it can happen to you anywhere. Life can give you a kick in the teeth.

"The first guy I had working with me, Paul Martin, got killed on the road. He was driving home and hit a pillar.

"Shane Broderick was injured riding one of my horses. JT McNamara was a good friend and it was terrible what happened to JT.

"Life is up and down, it's your health that's important. The rest is just fame and glory."

Kelly's son has been a big help as the workload has increased in recent years, clocking up the air miles from England.

The trainer has enjoyed huge successes at Cheltenham, but some of his sweetest wins have been shared away from the bright lights with Tony.

"The day King Ali won at Galway (in October 2009) was a good one," says Kelly. "And the day he won a €20,000 handicap at Sligo when he beat Davy Russell a short head.

"Declan Cunningham is another good friend of mine who is an owner. Declan was a professional golfer and then opened a big golf shop, GolfStyle in Galway.

"We had some great times with King Ali and he was very good to Tony."

According to owner Philip Reynolds, Kelly's Craughwell yard is no more than an indoor sand arena and 20 loose boxes.

In an era of Galactico owners and trainers, he's an anomaly. A throwback to a time when Cheltenham was a storybook of folk heroes and fairytales.

He began his career riding point-to-points for Galway trainer Tommy O'Brien before a spell with Pat Hughes.

He then came under the tutelage of the late Tom Costello, the divining rod for Best Mate, Imperial Call and many more

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jumping greats.

It's a relationship that has endured with the Costello family and it was Tom Junior who discovered first Mall Dini and then Percy for Kelly and Reynolds.

This week Percy lines up as favourite for the Gold Cup, while Mall Dini is in the top five of the betting for the Aintree Grand National. Some finds.

After departing Costello's, Kelly went out on his own and had his first Cheltenham runner in 1990 when Conor O'Dwyer partnered Art Trail in the Supreme.

The 50-1 chance was leading the opening race of the Festival when he broke his leg coming down the hill.

Four years later Kelly saddled Take The Town in the four-miler only to see the 12-1 shot part company with jockey Willie Mullins – the race seemingly at their mercy.

**It would be another 22 years before Mall Dini finally gave him his first Festival winner in the Cotswolds.**

Grand National-winning jockey Jason Tittley rode regularly for Kelly in those early years, winning two Galway Hurdles for the Craughwell yard on Natalies Fancy and No Tag.

The Clareman is not surprised by Kelly's recent success – or his media-shy public persona.

"He hasn't changed a bit," says Tittley.

"He always had them well schooled and they always looked a million dollars. He hasn't changed anything, he just has better horses now.

"I think the more people talk about him, the less he wants to talk to anyone. He's that kind of person, he just wants to let the horses do the talking.

"Of course we often had a barking match back then.

"I'd have my say and he'd have his say and we'd try and meet in the middle. Although difficult enough to meet him in the middle, I think!

"I was talking to him the other morning. He'd still be roaring and shouting down the phone.

"He just wants to do the right thing for the horse and fellas ringing him day and night drives him mad, it always did.

"Why is he not running? Is he sick? Is there something wrong? Never mind an owner asking him those questions, but the press driving him mad..."

"I'd say he'd rather if the horse had run a couple of times this season, but this season has driven everyone mad with ground.

"If he'd run and come home lame, there's no Gold Cup. There's only one Gold Cup and that's all that's in his mind."

Tittley won the 1995 Aintree Grand National on Royal Athlete for Jenny Pitman.

These days he breaks and pre-trains horses for Reynolds and is in regular contact with Kelly.

He has his own view on the Craughwell man's hurling abilities.

"His brothers would be better

hurlers than him. Teddy and John and Kevin, his three brothers would've been good hurlers," says Tittley.

"I don't think Pat was let near a hurl too much. It was more of a weapon than a hurley with Pat," he adds, laughing.

Tittley was present for the first incarnation of Kelly's partnership with Reynolds.

The Clareman rode Sovereigns Parade for the connections in a chase at the 1999 Galway Races when Reynolds and his late father, the former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds, had wagered "small fortunes" on the 7/2 shot.

"They'd a good few quid on him on the day and he did the splits going to the last. Oh Jesus!" recalls Tittley.

"Of course I got the blame for falling off."

The partnership ran its course and the Noughties were leaner for Kelly. More than a decade passed and then everything changed again.

Fast in a slow way.

Nearly 15 years after Sovereigns Parade, Kelly bumped into Reynolds in the parade ring one afternoon at Cork.

"I said we really should get a horse together for old time's sake – now that Tittley has retired we might get a decent jockey!" jokes Reynolds.

"Pat said: 'I'll only ring you when I get one.' Now, many a trainer has said that and you wouldn't be out of the parade ring, but the phone would ring. In Pat's case it took two years for him to ring me."

What Kelly had found was a three-year-old at Costello's that would become Mall Dini and start a fairytale journey.

Mall Dini took the Pertemps in 2015, Presenting Percy landed the same race a year later and then came a stunning RSA win 12 months ago.

The Gold Cup has been the plan ever since.

"I don't quite understand why he's being called the people's horse, but a big part is surely that it's a small trainer that nobody seems to know much about," says Reynolds.

"His facilities are very small. He uses a field that was previously a point-to-point track, that's owned by a local guy called Gerry McGarry.

"And a couple of mates of Gerry

**GREAT PARTNERSHIP: Owner Philip Reynolds celebrates after Pat Kelly sent out Presenting Percy to win the RSA Chase on Day Two of last year's Cheltenham Festival**



**'Health is what matters. The rest is just fame and glory'**

make sure that the place is kept immaculate for the horses.

"They go around and they repair the hoof marks after every lap. They move the sticks out so that they don't go on the same piece of ground twice.

"The effort that they put in is incredible. Michael (Moloney) and the lads at Ballybrit have been fantastic too. I think they recognise it's been a difficult season and Galway people really stick together."

Last week the winter finally arrived and Percy had a few spins around Ballybrit with the fences turned the opposite way to help recreate Cheltenham conditions.

It was the first sight of the Gold Cup favourite over birch since his Festival win last March.

As ever there were a few dissenting voices on social media over the lack of action from the horse and the lack of soundbites from the trainer this winter.

Once again Percy did the talking for Kelly with an emphatic win at Gowran, albeit over hurdles, in late January.

Afterwards Tony Kelly tweeted: "Mother Teresa had her critics, but time and patience will get a



**SMALL OPERATION:** Pat with Gold Cup favourite Presenting Percy and the horse's groom Kim Scott



**FAMILY AFFAIR:** Trainer Pat Kelly and his son, jockey Tony after King Ali won at Galway in '09

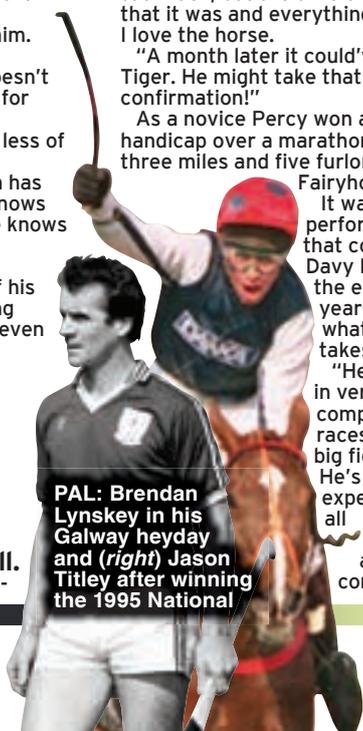
snail to Jerusalem." Jockey Davy Russell will ride the eight-year-old in Friday's showpiece and he has never doubted Kelly's approach. Both to the horse and the media. "He has a way about him. Just because he trains Presenting Percy, he doesn't have to change his way for that," says Russell. "You'd probably think less of Pat Kelly if he did that. "My experience of him has always been good. He knows this horse inside out, he knows what he wants." The Cork jockey has partnered Percy in 13 of his 18 starts to date, running away with the RSA by seven lengths 12 months ago.

**R**ussell's wife Edelle gave birth to a baby boy shortly after last year's Festival. They named him Liam Percy Russell. "There was a combina-

tion of things. A good friend of mine, his father was called Percy Vaughan and I've always liked the name," says Russell. "We were thinking it might be too much, but the time of year that it was and everything and I love the horse. "A month later it could've been Tiger. He might take that for his confirmation!" As a novice Percy won a handicap over a marathon three miles and five furlongs at Fairyhouse. It was a performance that convinced Davy Russell the eight-year-old has what it takes. "He's been in very competitive races with big fields. He's experienced all of those things and come out

the right side of them. "The horse felt great at Gowran. If he's good enough, Pat is the right man to do it. I wouldn't question Pat Kelly about it." Reynolds has been coming to Cheltenham for years and retiring to a restaurant in nearby Chipping-Camden for the post-race discussion. With the heroics of Mall Dini and Percy the patrons have been treated to more than a few renditions of Reynolds' party piece, the Kris Kristofferson classic 'Me and Bobby McGee'. He may do the whole Kristofferson back catalogue if Percy wins the Gold Cup on Friday. Tittley believes Kelly will find a quieter spot. "I'd say Pat would prefer to be below in the bar where the stable staff drink at the back of the stable yard and sit down in a corner," says Tittley. Any celebrations at Dan's Bar in Athenry, owned by Kelly's brother Kevin, will make more than enough noise on the trainer's behalf. And despite Kelly's reticent public persona, Lynskey believes his great friend appreci-

ates the success. "He does. Deep down, he does. He's proud of what he's achieved, you'd never know that, but he is," says Lynskey. "He never blew up Percy. He never blew up Mall Dini. He always said to me that they are nice horses and to wish a bit of luck. "His faith is important and he would always say: 'With God's help they could win'." In a world filled with chatter, Kelly's quiet approach could make the biggest bang of all this year. No horse has won the Gold Cup without a competitive run over fences that season since Easter Hero in 1929. No horse from west of the Shannon has ever captured the famed showpiece. With limited resources Kelly has overcome the odds time and again to prove a match for the biggest names in racing. Friday is the largest test of all. As for his hurling ability, well the final say goes to the man himself. "A bit like Mae West. Fast in a slow way," he says, laughing. Mercifully the same can't be said about Presenting Percy.



**PAL:** Brendan Lynskey in his Galway heyday and (right) Jason Tittley after winning the 1995 National

IRISH DAILY  
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12 PAGE PULLOUT

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# TOP OF THE WORLD

**KELLIE HARRINGTON EXCLUSIVE**

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**SEVEN days is a long time in the life of a world champion.**

Last Saturday Kellie Harrington was standing in the ring in New Delhi, arm raised in glory after winning gold. Today she is back to work at St Vincent's Psychiatric Hospital in Fairview.

"I'm looking forward to getting in. I saw them on Monday and told them I had the goodies for them. Chocolate bars and all that," says Harrington.

"I only do every second weekend and I get it covered if I'm away training or in competition.

"Sometimes it feels like I'm asking for my job back when I've been away for so long, but I love it."

It's Thursday morning and Harrington is trying to place Troy Parrott in her mind after hearing about his latest wonder goal.

The young Tottenham striker comes from Buckingham Street, around the corner from Portland Row, where Harrington grew up.

"It's a very close community and everybody knows everything about everyone," she says. On Monday evening the community came out to celebrate her achievement after defeating Thailand's Sudaporn Seesondee to win her first world title.

Kids in school uniforms and boxing tracksuits waved tricolours as her final round was shown on the big screen.

It was like Italia '90 in November.

Those who couldn't brave the cold watched from windows as Des Cahill introduced the new 60kg champion to the stage — to her people.

Harrington is a big presence in this area.

Her image beams down from a billboard at the corner of Sean McDermott Street as part of a campaign to inspire young people in one of the most disadvantaged parts of the country, a place where gangland crime has threatened to rip the neighbourhood apart.

**Limit**

"Anything is possible when we push ourselves to the limit," reads the quote attributed to the 2016 world boxing silver medalist.

"They're going to have to update the billboard now."

"People forget about the good stuff that happens in the community," says Harrington.

"We have loads of sporting heroes from around here, like Olivia O'Toole and Wes Hoohalan.

"Not just in sport — actors Lynn Rafferty, Laurence Kinlan and Barry Keoghan, they're all from around here.

"Barry would be my friend, I'd know him very well. We're close.

"It's all about encouraging. Not just kids, but people in general. No matter what you want in life you can get it, you just have to work for it.

"Everyone in the community they all know me, they all know what I've been through. How hard I fought to get to where I am.

"It's not about going out there and just winning medals and coming back and saying: 'hey look at me.'

"It's about coming back and saying: 'I got a medal, this is what you can do.'

"This is where I came from and this is what I've been through in life.

"If I can get through all of that crap then anyone can do it, with the right help and the right attitude.

"If I can do it, anyone can do it."

**PAL:** Harrington is friends with actor Barry Keoghan



**STAR:** Harrington on stage at her homecoming on Sean McDermott Street and (left) with her little cousin Erin Duffy, aged 10 months, and her lightweight gold medal upon arrival in Dublin



**GOLDEN GIRL:** Kellie Harrington after taking gold last week



**TOUGH:** Harrington had a few battles on her way to gold, including with Karina Ibragimova of Kazakhstan in the semi-final bout



**GLORY:** The boxer celebrates with her coaches Zaur Antia and Dmitry Dimitru, hidden, following the historic victory in India

# LOCAL HERO

**David COUGHLAN**  
EXCLUSIVE

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"The Starbucks Confession Box, that's what it was." She has no time for sugar-coated comments from coaches either.

Since moving to St Mary's club in Tallaght she has struck up a strong bond with trainer Noel Burke, who is not afraid to speak his mind.

"After my first fight in India, he said to me: 'I thought there was something wrong with the streaming. I thought it was slowing down,'" she says, laughing.

"He said: 'But then the next fight came on and I realised that's just Kellie!'"

"I says: 'Nice one Noel, thanks for that!'"

"That's how honest he is. I really appreciate that and I know that the next competition I'm in I need to start faster in the first round.

"If I have a sparring session, he'll tell me straight out: 'What the hell were you doing there Kellie? You stood there, you didn't move, you stood to trade punches, what are you doing?'"

"I appreciate that, sometimes coaches tell a boxer, 'ah you're great.'"

"They're going around telling everyone in the world 'my boxer is the best boxer in the world. They're this and they're that'. I prefer them to be brutally

honest with me, otherwise you won't improve."

Her relationship with Ireland coach Zaur Antia is just as close, although there are inevitable bumps in the road.

Her phone hasn't stopped hopping since last Saturday's win, with messages from friends and family, and people like Katie Taylor and President Michael D Higgins.

She only got it reconnected three weeks before the championships in India and after Antia had sent her home from training.

"My bill was overdue, not because I didn't have enough to pay it, I just don't have it on direct debit," she recalls.

"I just never got around to it with training, so they cut me off and I'd been trying to get it turned on for a few days.

"I was on the floor of the gym one morning at ten to nine trying to sort it out and at nine o'clock Zaur says 'come on, let's go'."

"So I legged it up to the top of the gym, trying to hide and finish it."

"Then at five past nine I got wind Zaur had sent me home!"

"So I left and did a yoga class instead and just relaxed and came back in the next day.

"I got a text message off somebody after I won the final

and they were like: 'Zaur won't tell you to go home again!'"

"I told him and he had a good laugh. He's a great coach."

**Afraid**  
"We both get on so well, we're not afraid to say how it is with each other."

"I respect that in people. If I find people are bullshitting me, I'd say good luck. You know?"

Antia, along with Dmitry Dimitruk and high performance director Bernard Dunne, have been

**'I'm doing this for my community and my country, not for Shane Ross'**

## STRONG ROOTS THE KEY TO HARRINGTON'S SUCCESS

"The two of them are in the corner slipping and I'm slipping in the ring. It's comical."

Since gaining a sports grant in 2017, Harrington has been able to put more of her energies into reaching the summit of her sport.

"I'm very grateful to everyone at the Institute of Sport, all the coaches, and to Dublin City Council and all the people who have supported me throughout my career," she says.

**Chance**  
Two years ago Harrington was fighting at 64kg, which is not an Olympic category, leaving her with no chance of competing at the Rio games.

This time her Olympic dream hangs in the balance as the IOC investigate the International Boxing Association over the election of controversial Uzbek businessman Gafur Rakhimov as head of the body.

Yesterday the IOC put plans for boxing at Tokyo on ice — a

target that was firmly in sight for Harrington as the new 60kg world champion.

"That's one of the goals that I want to reach, but small steps to get there," Harrington says.

She knows there will be more lows to get to the highs again.

For now the world champ is enjoying some home comforts after going two weeks without meat in India.

Harrington has three brothers, Joel, Aaron and Christopher — the latter

working as a football coach in Iceland.

She spends much of her time back at her parents' house on Portland Row and they keep her grounded.

"I heard my ma saying to someone the other day: 'I can't believe it. I just can't believe it,'" she says, laughing.

"I was like: 'Thanks very much! She can't believe it! Jesus Christ!'"

"But sure I couldn't believe it myself to be honest with you."

"You train for it and then when you're hand is raised 'the champion of the world' — is this actually me?"

"It's unbelievable."



**PRIDE:** Harrington's parents Yvonne and Christy