

2023 Racecourse Groundstaff Awards Winners Announced

For immediate release

- **RCA announces Hamilton Park, Plumpton and Ayr Racecourses as Racecourse Groundstaff Award individual category winners**
- **Awards celebrate the best in class of racecourse groundsmanship and turf husbandry**
- **Lingfield Park Racecourse's George Ash wins Neil Wyatt Lifetime Achievement Award**

The Racecourse Association (RCA) is delighted to announce the winners of the Racecourse Groundstaff Awards for 2023.

Sponsored by Agrovista Amenity, DLF Seeds & Science and Duralock the award winners were decided by an industry panel made up of representatives from the Professional Jockeys Association (PJA), British Horseracing Authority (BHA) and National Trainers Federation (NTF).

The winners and runners up across the three racecourse categories are as follows;

Flat winner- Hamilton Park Racecourse

Jump winner – Plumpton Racecourse

Dual purpose winner - Ayr Racecourse

Flat runner up – Salisbury Racecourse

Jump runners up – Stratford Racecourse

Dual purpose runner up – Kempton Park and Lingfield Park Racecourses

Consequently, Hamilton Park, Plumpton and Ayr will all be in the running to be crowned the 2023 Racecourse Groundstaff Champion, where the announcement will be made at the twelfth annual RCA Showcase Awards held at Aintree Racecourse on Thursday 23rd November.

The winners and runners up are deemed to have demonstrated the highest levels of commitment, innovation and excellence across the year to racecourse groundsmanship and turf husbandry. Many of this year's winners and runners-up are familiar to the Racecourse Groundstaff Awards given their outstanding commitment in this area, with Ayr and Salisbury featuring in both the 2022 and 2023 best in class.

The racecourses all showed tremendous commitment to improve their racing surfaces, welfare standards, environmental sustainability, Owners and Trainers areas and the continued professional development (CPD) of the groundstaff team.

The **Hamilton Park Racecourse** groundstaff were recognised for their dedication in maintaining and presenting Hamilton Park to the highest of standards. They have a committed team of four, who are responsible for everything from track preparation, lawn maintenance and floral planting. The team were praised for the work they carried out on the new elevated decking area for Owners and Trainers. Furthermore, the two newly installed beehives impressed the panel. **Carol Bartley, Clerk of the Course at Hamilton Park, said:** "Hamilton Park are incredibly proud to win the

Groundstaff Award for Best Flat Racecourse. Our small but dedicated team comprising of Head Groundsman Mark Bemrose, Darius Spis, Fraser Holmes and Raymond McClaren work tirelessly to not only provide a safe, high quality racing surface but also in turning out the lawns, flower displays and hanging baskets around the resort to compliment the buildings and surrounding grounds. We are very grateful to the judging panel and the sponsors for their recognition with this award.”

Plumpton Racecourse was praised by the judging panel for exceptional work to the track. The racecourse invested in padded hurdles, in turn reducing their faller rate significantly, they have also installed a new surface on their two road crossings which they can manipulate to create a more consistent Going. The drainage work that the team have carried out was complimented by the panel. Away from the track, the team are improving their stables and veterinary treatment box. The team at Plumpton was praised for their proactive and forward-thinking attitude. **Marcus Waters, Clerk of the Course, said:** “The whole team at Plumpton are delighted to win the Jumps Groundstaff Award. The groundstaff have worked incredibly hard throughout the year maintaining and improving many aspects of the course. This winter we saw record rainfall in November, prolonged periods of freezing temperatures and irrigation taking place in February for the first time ever at Plumpton. The attitude and dedication of the team really shone through with conditions on the course being superb throughout the year.”

Ayr Racecourse impressed the judging panel with their continued investment in the track. The drainage, sand banding and gravel banding has helped improve the racing surface and create more consistent Going. The racecourse continually impresses Trainers and Jockeys resulting in good field sizes. The training and CPD that the team have undertaken was also highlighted by the panel. **Graeme Anderson, Clerk of the Course, said:** “We are delighted to receive this award and go one step better this year to win the category. We would like to thank the sponsors, Owners, Jockeys and Trainers for their support over past 12 months. It has been a difficult and busy year and it is great that the team’s hard work has paid off and been recognised with the award.”

In addition to this, three further awards were given; the Richard Linley Award to **Keiron Proctor**, in recognition of his passion, commitment and willingness to learn, Kieron joined the industry with no prior experience in 2021. The Neil Wyatt Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to **Lingfield Park Racecourse’s George Ash** to celebrate his fantastic career, innovative thinking, and commitment to racing, having started at Lingfield in October 1967. The photographs of George throughout his years at Lingfield were hugely enjoyed by the panel. The Special Merit Award was given to **Goodwood Racecourse** for their resilience and commitment during the 2023 Qatar Goodwood Festival. The team worked extremely hard in challenging conditions, with 14 Going changes over the five days.

The judges commended the commitment and innovation these tracks have shown throughout the year and their tireless work to enhance the quality and safety of the racing surfaces and other areas of the course.

George Noad, representing the NTF, said: “The high quality of work undertaken by Groundstaff this year has made it very difficult to pick winners. However the awards have gone to Groundstaff who provide an excellent racing surface and continue to show improvements on the track. The

hard work undertaken by Groundstaff is very important for the safety of all the sport's participants and they deserve our thanks."

Dale Gibson, PJA Interim CEO, said: "All Jockeys appreciate the tremendous team effort from groundstaff up and down the country, helping maintain and repair racing surfaces. Once again we witnessed unusual weather patterns this year, highlighting the expertise and experience of all groundstaff who are so important to the industry. The PJA, our safety officers and members congratulate all nominees and individual award winners."

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Notes for Editors

About the Groundstaff Awards

The Groundstaff Awards are the racecourse industry national awards, celebrating excellence in turf husbandry across all British racecourses. The event is managed by the Racecourse Association (RCA) and sponsored by Agrovista Amenity, DLF Seeds & Science and Duralock.

This is the 26th annual Groundstaff Awards and the overall winner will be announced at the RCA Showcase awards, this year being held at Aintree Racecourse on Thursday 23rd November.

Racecourses are invited to submit entries across 6 categories (Dual Purpose, Flat, Jumps, Richard Linley Award, Merit Award and Neil Wyatt Lifetime Achievement).

The category winners from Dual Purpose, Flat and Jumps will have the chance to be crowned Champion groundstaff team.

For further information please contact [Holly Cook](#).

About the Racecourse Association

The Racecourse Association (RCA), formed in 1907, is the trade association for British racecourses. 59 racecourses are members and have equal voting rights.

The RCA has owned RaceTech since March 1998. The RCA serves the interests of its 59 British racecourse members both inside and outside the sport, empowering them to be the best venues that they can be. The RCA is responsible for the management of the Racegoers Club, the official fan club of British Racing.

The RCA works on behalf of racecourses to represent their views within the sport through the tripartite structure of the Members' Agreement alongside BHA and The Horsemen's Group. Outside of horseracing, the RCA works alongside the Government, other sports and leisure venues, and national charities to meet the needs of racecourses.

Additionally, the RCA encourages and facilitates racecourse community engagement, involvement in horse welfare initiatives, responsible drinking campaigns, and various other partnerships within the sport. The Showcase & Awards, the marquee event of British

Racecourses to celebrate and reward excellence and innovation, is hosted by the RCA annually in November.

For more information, please contact Paul Swain 07791 414027 or 01344 873536.

www.racecourseassociation.co.uk