



INHSC

Irish
National
Hunt
Steeplechase
CLG

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POINT TO POINT NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2025



JILL FARRELL

INHSC
Chairperson



PAUL MURTAGH

INHSC
Registrar

Welcome to the INHSC Autumn 2025 Newsletter for the Point to Point Industry.

We would like to begin this Newsletter on a sad note by paying tribute to two young men immersed in the Point to Point industry who were taken too soon - Mikey O'Connor and Michael O'Sullivan.

Mikey O'Connor held a Qualified Riders Permit and a Trainers licence at the time of his sudden passing on 04 September. A stalwart of the Cork & Waterford circuit, in a career spanning 28 years in the saddle, his tally of 429 winners made him the 5th most winning rider between the flags. A winner of three Southern titles, which included over a half century of winners in the 2007/08 season, Mikey also rode 91 winners on the racecourse most notably, three wins on Rebel Fitz and four wins on For Bill, both for his longtime supporter Michael Winters.

Since our previous newsletter was issued in January, there was also the untimely passing of Michael O'Sullivan following a fall in Thurles on 06 February. While he flourished in the professional ranks from September 2022, the early part of Michael's career was spent honing his skills on the Point to Point circuit.

It was fitting that Michael had his first competitive ride at his local Duhallow (F) Kanturk fixture on 19 March 2017, finishing 3rd aboard his uncle Eugene's, Milano Citizen. In just his second full season riding, Michael went on to claim the coveted Under-21 Riders title, with 16 winners. Since February, our thoughts have been with the O'Sullivan family, a family that have been to the forefront of all aspects of the Point to Point industry in recent decades.

On behalf of everyone in the INHSC and the wider Point to Point community, may we express our deepest condolences to both Mikey and Michael's family, friends and colleagues. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a n-anamacha.



Mikey O'Connor

Michael O'Sullivan

On a happier note, we are pleased to announce that a book commissioned by the INHSC to mark the 150th year of its foundation is now on sale in bookshops and online. *National Hunt and Point-to-Point Racing in Ireland - A History* by Frances Nolan is a tribute not only to the sport itself, but to the communities, traditions & people who have shaped its enduring legacy. This book would make an ideal Christmas present for any racing enthusiast and further information can be found on page 2.

In contrast to the Spring 2024 season, which endured the largest number of cancellations and rescheduled fixtures in a season due to the inclement weather, the Spring 2025 fixture list faced minimal interruption, with 72 fixtures being held from the initial 73 scheduled. Not without its challenges however, a very dry spell from late March until the end of the season, meant that a considerable number of Hunt Committees had to water their tracks, often at great expense. It is important that this time, effort and expense is recognised by the wider industry, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank Hunt Committees up and down the country for their continued efforts in prioritising the safety and welfare of our horses and riders by ensuring high standards at their respective Point to Points.

Finally, we would like to congratulate the Qualified Riders Association for hosting such a successful Awards night in the Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny in June. As always, this was a memorable night for all the award recipients and their families which recognised their talent and dedication. It was great to see recently retired IHRB Medical Officer Dr John Downey receive recognition from the industry which he has served so faithfully in recent years, and we all wish him a long and happy retirement.

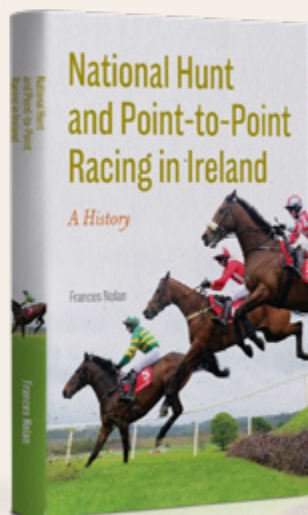
INHSC DIRECTORS:

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(Chairperson)

Dr Tom McDonogh
Robert Steele

Victor Connolly
Nicholas Lambert

Richard Rohan



INHSC 150th Anniversary Book

National Hunt and Point-to-Point Racing in Ireland - A History

is now available to purchase in bookstores and online [here](#).

Commissioned by the INHSC to mark the 150th anniversary of its foundation, the book traces the evolution of national hunt and Point to Point racing in Ireland from the seventeenth century to the present day, and is a story of a people, a place, and their horses. This publication also serves as a meaningful reminder of the importance of Irish National Hunt and Point to Point racing and the INHSC's ongoing commitment to its development. A must read for those in the Point to Point industry, this book would make an ideal Christmas present for anyone with an interest in racing.

NEW POINT TO POINT REGULATIONS

RIDER MAY NOT RIDE AGAINST A HORSE THEY TRAIN

A new regulation has been introduced which precludes a rider, who is also a handler from riding a horse for a different handler if they themselves have a runner in the race.

Regulation 23 (b)(v) - A Rider, who is also a Handler, may not ride in a Point to Point Steeplechase against a horse they train, unless they are riding a horse they also train.

FENCE COLOURS

Commencing from the Mid-Antrim (H) meeting in Toomebridge on Saturday 4 October, both toe and knee board markings on fences at Point to Points will be white. This change is being made as there is a strong scientific basis for moving to white identification markers on fences, based on their visibility to racehorses. The two other main National Hunt racing jurisdictions (Britain and France) exclusively use obstacles with white markings, and this change will ensure Ireland will be aligned in this regard also.

All hurdles and fences on Irish racecourses will also change to white markings, with these changes being rolled out simultaneously from October.



NEW HELMET STANDARDS FOR QUALIFIED RIDERS

New Helmet standards for all riders have now come into effect, full details of the standards can be viewed [here](#). IHRB Medical officers will be inspecting helmets and body protectors at Point to Point fixtures throughout the season. If riders have any queries in relation to these new standards, please contact Dr Jennifer Pugh, IHRB Chief Medical Officer.

BRIDLES AND CHIFNEYS

Commencing from the start of the upcoming season, in the interests of safety, a Horse must be equipped with a bridle or a chifney which may be attached to a head collar other than when in a horsebox or stabled, or when in a horsebox or stabled at the direction of an IHRB Official.

2025/26 INHSC Novice Riders Series

The INHSC Novice Riders Series, initiated by the Directors of the INHSC in 2021, will continue this season. All races confined to Novice Riders during the Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026 seasons will be included in the series, points will be awarded to placed riders on the following basis:

Winner: 10 points
 Second: 7 points
 Third: 5 Points
 Fourth: 3 points

The winner of the series will receive a €1,500 voucher with the second and third placed riders receiving vouchers for €500 and €250 respectively. The leading overall female Novice Rider will receive a voucher for €750.

47 races were run in the 2024/25 Novice Riders series, with more than half in the Open and Winners category and the remaining being in Maidens for horses aged 6yo & up. As well as sponsoring this series, the INHSC contributed over €17,000 to Hunt Committees to programme a race for Novice Riders at their fixture. 81 individual riders, which is a quarter of all Qualified Riders scored points in the series with more than half that number registering at least 10 points.

Having finished third in the previous season's series, Eoin Staples jumped out and made almost all of the running to be crowned leading Novice Rider at the annual Point to Point Awards in the Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny on 7 June. Getting off the mark at the South Westmeath fixture in Umma House on 20 October where he won the Novice Riders Open on the ex-track performer Priory Park's first run in a Point to Point, this link-up proved important and gave Eoin 40 of his 67 points as the pair combined to win 3 more Novice Rider Opens in the space of just 6 weeks. Never headed throughout the Spring season he held a comfortable 22 point advantage in the final standings ahead of joint runners up, Michael Kenneally and Patrick Gleeson. During a busy season, Eoin also represented Ireland in the Fegentri series for Qualified Riders.

Pandora Briselden scooped the €750 voucher as the series leading lady rider. Having only acquired her Qualified Riders Permit on 31 January 2022, she rode her first Point to Point winner at Tinahely on 15 October 2023 aboard You No Me Too Well. Scoring points in 5 Novice Riders races, her association with I Masked Du Potier proved particularly fruitful as she

scored 22 of her 35 points aboard the Pat Doyle trained 7yo. In only her 3rd season riding in Point to Points, 5 wins from just 14 rides meant her overall strike rate in Point to Points last season was an impressive 35%.



Victor Connolly (INHSC Director), Pandora Briselden and Eoin Staples

Final Standings in the 2024/25 INHSC Novice Riders Series

Eoin Staples	67
Michael Kenneally	45
Patrick Gleeson	45
Alan Harney	44
Josh Williamson	42
Kevin Healy	40
Sam Hamilton	35
Pandora Briselden	35
Josh Ahern	32
Darragh Hanlon	32

POINT TO POINT AWARDS 2024/25

Congratulations to all the award recipients at the 44th Point to Point Awards which were held on Saturday 7 June in the Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny. A special mention to Dr John Downey who received a warm reception when receiving the Personality Award in recognition of his long service to the industry.

*Champion Rider
 Barry O'Neill and
 Ann Marie Duff
 (Irish Field)*



*Debbie McCrellis (P2P.ie) and
 Champion Lady Rider Toni Quail*



Champion U-21 Rider David Doyle



Personality Award Winner Dr John Downey

Autumn 2025

Novice Riders Races

In addition to sponsoring the 2025/26 Novice Riders Series, this Autumn the INHSC will provide a further €5,100 to entice 14 Hunt Committees to programme races for Novice Riders at their fixture. The full list of races confined to Novice Riders in the 2025 Autumn Season are scheduled to take place on;

5 October	Westmeath (F)	Open Lightweight Race
12 October	Galway Blazers (F)	Maiden Race 6yo & Upwards Geldings
19 October	Shillelagh & District (F)	Maiden Race 6yo & Upwards
19 October	South Westmeath (H)	Open Lightweight Race
26 October	Meath (F) & Tara (H)	Open Lightweight Race
2 November	Limerick (F) Rathcannon	Open Lightweight Race
8 November	Co. Clare (H) Quakerstown	Maiden Race 6yo & up Geldings
9 November	Wexford (F)	Maiden Race For 6yo & Upwards Geldings
16 November	Golden Vale (F)	Open Lightweight Race
16 November	Wicklow (F)	Maiden Race For 6yo & Upwards
23 November	Stonehall (H)	Winners Of Two
30 November	Carlow Farmers (F)	Open Lightweight Race
7 December	Ballinagore (H)	Open Lightweight
7 December	Louth (F)	Maiden Race 6yo & Upwards

SAFETY VIDEO

Earlier this year, the IHRB and HRI jointly commissioned a safety video, primarily for the benefit of Fence Marshalls acting at Point to Points. Footage was filmed at the Meath (F) & Tara (H) fixture in April with contributions from Barry O'Neill, Dr Jennifer Pugh, Leo Gracey and Moira McElligott. The aim of the video is to highlight relevant safety information in a short video format, the video can be viewed [here](#).

We would encourage each Hunt committee to circulate this video by WhatsApp in the days leading up to a Point to Point to all volunteers who may be asked to work as a Fence Marshall at their fixture.

A big thanks to Colin Kehoe, HRI Health & Safety Business Partner and all the Hunt Officials at the Meath (F) & Tara (H) Point to Point who helped out on the day.

Congratulations to Denise O'Neill



On 17 June, Denise O'Neill celebrated 40 years' service with the IHRB, the majority of which has been spent in the Point to Point Department. Denise has served as PA to 3 INHSC Registrars, Sean Barry, Josh Byrne and Paul Murtagh. During her long service, Denise has been instrumental in many of the positive changes that our sport has witnessed, while her breadth of knowledge regarding the administration of Point to Points is unmatched. Always at the end of the phone to help with any industry query, in particular, Denise has always gone out of her way to help guide and assist Hunt Committees with the smooth running of their fixture.

Jill Farrell (INHSC Chairperson) congratulating Denise O'Neill on her 40 year's service in the IHRB

Congratulations

To the 17 Qualified Riders who rode their first Irish Point to Point winner during the 2025 Spring Season

19 January	Ballinagore (H)	Shane Kehoe	Fralimonti Bilberry
19 January	Killeagh (H)	Jack Collins	Ceis Charraigin
02 February	Wexford (F)	Matt Gahan	The Coffey Boy
22 February	Avondhu (F)	Eric Mellerick	Curraheen Queen
22 February	Avondhu (F)	William Verling	Pure Decent
02 March	Carbery (F)	Luke Kelleher	Loyal Praetorian
02 March	Carlow Farmers (F)	James Costello	Lyreen Og
16 March	Kilworth & Araglen (H)	Jake Leddin	Just Keeps Rolling
30 March	Ballymacad (F)	Adam Lord	Winning Paddy
30 March	Ballymacad (F)	James Sampson	Macgiloney
13 April	Laois (F)	Cathal Connolly	Kilmore Coral
13 April	Louth (F)	William Hamilton	Votre Saint
21 April	East Antrim (H)	Aidan Coonan	Squire OHara
27 April	Kilkenny (F)	Josh Halford	Honey Be Good
27 April	Doneraile (H)	Mark O'Flynn	Ludovico Sforza
09 May	Fermanagh (H)	Dara O'Sullivan	Brock Beauty
25 May	Ormond (F)	Orla Queally	Pat Coyne



Jack Collins at Killeagh (H) Carrigarostig



James Sampson at Ballymacad (F) Oldcastle



Mark O'Flynn at Doneraile (H) Dromahane



Orla Queally at Ormond (F) Ballingarry

POINT TO POINT INSURANCE UPDATE

INHSC sponsored race for Handlers with 10 winners or less at Golden Vale (F) Turtulla on 16 November

The INHSC will once again sponsor a 5yo & upwards maiden race at Golden Vale (F) Turtulla on Sunday 16 November for Handlers that have not trained more than 10 winners and have held a Point to Point Handlers Permit at any time during the 2024/25 Point to Point season. The winning owner will receive a bonus of €1,000 and the winning Handler will receive a trophy.



Winning Handler Richard J. O'Hara (pictured left) following Kilbuny Supersonic's win at Killinick (H) Lingstown - 9 March

The National Hunt Steeplechase, Point to Point and Field Sport CLG, which is the company that operates the insurance policy for all hunting in Ireland as well as over half the Point to Points in Ireland is now trading as the Field Sport Insurance Group (FSIG). The FSIG have renewed the insurance policy covering Point to Point fixtures for the 2025/26 season, which will be the third of a 3 year commitment entered into by the Point to Point Industry in 2023, to assist in funding this insurance policy through large contributions from the INHSC, QRAF CLG, Horse Racing Ireland, Goffs and Tattersalls and temporary insurance levies on entries and Hunters Certificates funded by Owners and Handlers. It is currently envisaged that these contributions and levies will all be reconsidered next Summer in consultation with all industry stakeholders.

Ahead of the upcoming season, the FSIG have confirmed that any rider who has not previously signed and lodged a legally witnessed waiver with them, must do so prior to riding at a Point to Point run under their insurance policy. Completed waivers should be sent to p2pwaivers@gmail.com

ACADEMY HURDLES

Following extensive consultation with industry stakeholders, Academy Hurdles are being introduced by Horse Racing Ireland into the Irish race programme. These races are for 3yos only that have not run under any N.H. Rules or Rules of Racing other than in Academy Hurdles or Junior N.H. Hurdles (in Great Britain) and have not won an Academy Hurdle or Junior N.H. Hurdle

(in Great Britain). The first of 7 scheduled races this year will take place at Cork on 12 October, with the final race at Leopardstown on 29 December. The relevant qualification criteria for the 2026 Spring season has been amended, so any horse which runs in an Academy Hurdle in December and does not win, will remain eligible for a Hunters Certificate for the Spring season.

INHSC BONUS RACES FOR 6YO & UPWARDS MAIDENS

The INHSC will also sponsor 6 races in the 2025 Autumn season for 6yo & upwards maidens that will each carry a bonus of €800, which in addition to the prizemoney for the race will ensure that the winning owner receives €2,200. These races will take place on;

12 October	Galway Blazers (F)	Maiden Race for 6yo & Upwards Geldings
25 October	Island Hunt (F)	Maiden Race for 6yo & Upwards
1 November	Tipperary (F) Lisronagh	Maiden Race for 6yo & Upwards
8 November	Co. Clare (H) Quakerstown	Maiden Race for 6yo & Upwards Geldings
23 November	Killinick (H)	Maiden Race for 6yo & Upwards
7 December	Louth (F)	Maiden Race for 6yo & Upwards

Congratulations to all the winning connections of INHSC sponsored races and bonuses during the Spring 2025 Season:



Drumnasoo, winner of the 6yo & Up Maiden at North Down (F) Kirkistown – 8 February



Minella Mission, winner of the 6yo & Upwards Geldings Maiden at Kildare (F) Punchestown – 22 February



Black Soul, winner of the 6yo & Up Maiden at Co. Limerick (F) Athlacca – 6 April



Peppers Corner, winner of the 6yo & Upwards Mares Maiden at East Antrim (H) Loughanmore – 21 April

INHSC to Sponsor Fairyhouse Hunters Steeplechase

The INHSC will sponsor the first Hunters Chase of the 2025/26 Season which is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 11 November at Fairyhouse. The Eoin O'Brien ridden, Lisleigh Lad won the corresponding race last season to credit Eleanor Broderick with her first racecourse winner, before going on to land the Jack Tyner Memorial Hunters Chase at Cork on Easter Monday.



Eleanor Broderick and Eoin O'Brien following the INHSC sponsored Hunters Chase at Fairyhouse – 12 November 2024

3 Hunters Steeplechases and 1 Point to Point Bumper have been scheduled to take place for the remainder of the year.

Fairyhouse 11 November

- Hunters Steeplechase 5yo and up (Winners of 2)
- Point to Point Bumper (placed in a Point to Point since 1 October 2023)

Down Royal 26 December

- Hunters Steeplechase 5yo and up (Not won under Rules since 1 March 2025)

Limerick 29 December

- Hunters Steeplechase 5yo and up (Maiden)



Q&A

Eoin Staples

***Winner of
2024/25 INHSC
Novice Riders Series***

When did you first become interested in Horseracing?

I became interested in horses when I was around 6 or 7, my brother Sean started riding out in Michael Murphy's and I was mad to get into racing then, so I started riding out in John Martin Walsh's when I was 10.

Your first ride in a Point to Point race was not on a typical Point to Point track as it was on the inside of Cork racecourse when Point to Points resumed following a 3 month suspension in April 2021?

It took a while for me to get my first ride with the Covid restrictions at that time, but it was Richard O'Keeffe that was good enough to give me my first ride on Swallows Court in the 5yo Geldings Maiden.

Two years later you recorded your first Point to Point winner at the Co. Limerick (F) fixture in Rathacannon aboard the Paul Pierce trained mare Getaway Theatre, what can you remember about that day?

Paul and Andy Pierce have been brilliant to me from the start, I rode Getaway Theatre on her previous run, and she ran better than her finishing position. That day down in Rathacannon was unbelievable, it was more a feeling of relief as much as enjoyment, but it was a brilliant day.

Things really picked up in the last 2 seasons, with almost 100 rides and 10 winners, culminating in you winning the INHSC Novice Riders Series last season by 22 points, with the majority of those points on the late Edward O'Grady trained Priory Park?

Yes, I got a lot of support in the last 2 seasons from Colin Bowe, Rob James, Andy Pierce and the late Edward O'Grady, I will be forever grateful for those opportunities. It was brilliant to win the INHSC Novice Riders Series last season, Priory Park has been a career changing horse for me with 4 wins last year and a further hurdle win since I've turned professional. Edward was a brilliant man and had Priory Park in tip-top shape every time he entered the parade ring, I've a lot to thank him for.

You also got some international experience last year taking part in the Fegentri series for Qualified Riders?

The Fegentri series was brilliant, you get to ride against different styles and see how other country's do it. I'd highly recommend it to anyone.

You have enjoyed a good start since turning professional at the end of the season with support from numerous Trainers?

Since I have turned professional it feels like a dream, and I haven't woken up. The support I've been getting from various Trainers and Owners has been unbelievable. My agent Garry Cribbin is doing a brilliant job and my boss Gavin Cromwell is putting a lot of trust in me. I'm just delighted to be able to repay that trust back.

Finally, what advice would you have for any young Novice Rider starting out in Point to Points?

One piece of advice I'd give to a young Novice Rider is to surround yourself with good people and keep striving to get better.

INHSC

presentation to

Michael Hourigan

At Punchestown last April, the INHSC were delighted to make a presentation to Michael Hourigan, in recognition of his long career spanning 52 years as a licensed National Hunt Trainer. Michael started out in racing 63 years ago at the age of 14 as an Apprentice to Charlie Weld on the Curragh, before going on to ride 14 winners prior to acquiring his training licence in 1973. Michael trained almost 1000 winners over jumps, on the flat and between the flags. He will forever be associated with 2 of the best National Hunt horses in Ireland during his golden period in the 1990s and 2000s. Dorans

Pride ran every year for 10 seasons between 1993 and 2003, winning 29 times under rules, 6 times at the highest level and most notably the Stayers Hurdle at Cheltenham in 1995 under a brilliant Shane Broderick ride. Beef or Salmon won 19 races and a remarkable 10 Grade 1s including the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup in 2003, 2006 and 2007 and the Lexus Chase in 2002, 2004 and 2005 at Leopardstown, while at Punchestown he won the John Durkan in December 2003 before going on to easily win the Punchestown Gold Cup at the festival the following April in the hands of Timmy Murphy.



Michael Hourigan receiving his presentation from Nick Lambert (INHSC Director)

The Directors of the INHSC would welcome feedback and suggestions at any time to info@inhsc.ie on any matter relating to Point to Points.

Current INHSC Directors:

Jill Farrell
(Chairperson)
(Co. Cork)

Dr Tom McDonogh
(Co. Galway)
Robert Steele
(Co. Down),

Victor Connolly
(Co. Carlow)
Nicholas Lambert
(Co. Kilkenny)

Richard Rohan
(Co. Cork)



phone: **045 445 600**
website: **www.ihrb.ie**
X : **@TheINHSC**
email: **info@inhsc.ie**