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Opening Extract from...

Henry Cecil

Trainer of Genius

Written by Brough Scott

Published by Racing Post Books

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For my father Mason Hogarth Scott.
1900–1971.
Whose fascination with racing inspired my own,
whose support let me follow my dream,
whose love will never die.

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Frontispiece: Sir Henry Cecil and Frankel after the Greenham Stakes at Newbury, April 2011.

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13

FRANKEL

THEY ARE the racing stories that insiders most love to tell. They are the tales of being there on the morning when a great horse works for the first time and you believe you have seen a galloping version of the Holy Grail. One of them happened on the Limekilns at Newmarket during the week before the Eclipse Stakes in July 2010. It was when the Frankel legend really began.

Before that moment when the rider squeezes leg and hand to ask the horse beneath, nobody is ever sure. Sometimes it can be a major surprise, most famously one foggy morning at Chattis Hill near Stockbridge in Hampshire in the spring of 1913. The rider of a big grey two-year-old with strange white splotches all over him was told to follow a sharper bunch up the working ground but 'not to bother if he can't keep with them'. Imagine the fury of trainer Atty Persse when out of the gloom appeared the spotted colt ten lengths clear having evidently set off some way in front. Imagine the disbelief when the rider stuttered out that he had actually started at least six lengths behind. A week later Atty tried it with good visibility and could hardly believe what his eyes were telling him.

The Tetrarch, as he was called, had given a stone to a decent older handicapper and beaten it in a canter. When he first ran, in a maiden

race at the Craven meeting, he was the greatest certainty in racing history. The security at Chattis Hill was so tight, and stable lads so terrified into silence, that The Tetrarch started at 5-1 against. He only ran as a two-year-old and was never beaten in seven races. They called him 'The Spotted Wonder'.

There was not much secrecy on the Limekilns in July 2010 but there was wonder just the same. Frankel was a half-brother to the Lingfield Derby trial winner Bullet Train. His dam Kind's five consecutive wins in 2004 had been for trainer Roger Charlton, but in 1993 Warren Place had themselves won three races in a row with his grand-dam Rainbow Lake, culminating in a seven-lengths rout in the Lancashire Oaks at Haydock. Everyone knew that Frankel was from one of Juddmonte's best families and most in the yard had heard that the bay colt by the 2001 Derby winner Galileo had a good stride on him but had been rather uncontrollable early on. For five furlongs Tom Queally kept the brakes on that morning. It was when he released them that the lightning struck.

'I have never seen anything like it,' says Teddy Grimthorpe. 'One moment Frankel was with them, the next he was streaking away as if the others had lead in their legs. I have to watch a lot of gallops and know how misleading it can be when you don't know all the horses, weights or instructions. But you could not mistake this. He was going so fast at the end we thought he would finish in Newmarket High Street. When we gathered afterwards, nobody said anything, and Queally was white as a sheet. What could we say?'

It was not a feeling Tom Queally would ever forget. 'It was the stride that amazed me,' he says. 'When I moved on him he did not seem to be going any quicker but he just left the others for dead. We had to be excited, but of course you can never be sure until they have passed the racecourse test.' Which, in the European Breeders' Fund Maiden Stakes over a mile at the Newmarket July course on

the dark, rain-pelting evening of 13 August, is what Frankel did. The official verdict was half a length, not four lengths in a canter as The Tetrarch did in 1913, and the starting price was a well-noised 7-4 favourite, not a lock-down 5-1 against. But this was never meant to be a betting coup. It was a hoped-for starting point on a journey to much better things and, given that he'd cruised up to and passed a well-fancied colt called Nathaniel (who was to win the next year's King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Ascot), this first soggy glimpse of Frankel was still a pretty impressive one.

Henry Cecil certainly thought so. 'We didn't know if he would go on the ground, so we are delighted with him really,' he told Racing UK at the side of the unsaddling enclosure. 'We were always going to be very easy on him and Tom hasn't really had to ask him for anything. I haven't really galloped him but he's got good engagements. Potentially he could be very nice.' It was all said in that civil but don't-declare-all-your-hand way that trainers employ as their after-race default, but there was almost a skip in Henry's raincoated step as he signed off with sing-song jauntiness, 'Thank you for talking.'

Teddy Grimthorpe had been watching in his hotel in Deauville. Beforehand he hadn't been quite so jaunty. For not only had he seen Frankel's potential for himself, he had heard of it not just from the trainer but from his stud managers and from the man who first set eyes on Frankel as a living being. Jim Power was stud groom at Banstead Manor Stud, the Abdulla breeding operation's headquarters near Newmarket. At 10pm on 11 February 2008 he had looked at the closed-circuit TV screen in his house near the foaling barn and told his wife he didn't think he would be going to bed for a while. 'I knew that Kind was near to her time,' remembers Jim, 'and I could see she was getting restless. By quarter to eleven I was all changed up and ready, and it was really a textbook foaling. I just felt inside

to make sure the little nose and the two front feet were in position and then let things happen as naturally as possible. She was very straightforward. Mind you, so was her mother Rainbow Lake.'

Of such mixtures of professionalism and paternity is a stud groom's life made up. Jim had worked for Juddmonte for 20 years before finally retiring in 2010 with his finest produce heading for the stars. He was originally a would-be jockey with Brian Marshall at Lambourn in 1959, had moved on to stud work at Hever Castle in Kent, and had first come to Juddmonte's stud at Wargrave in Berkshire to break the yearlings. When that operation was transferred across the Irish Sea to Ferrans Stud in County Meath, he moved across to Banstead Manor, where he was assistant stud groom for the foaling of both Commander In Chief and Tenby in the 1990 crop. He was not easily impressed, but he was with Frankel.

The distortions of hindsight make scepticism necessary. Although I was then still wet behind the ears in racing terms, I still remember finding it fascinating but unlikely when the great Madame Couturie assured me that from the moment she foaled him she could see that her future French Derby and King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes winner Right Royal was going to be a champion. Madame Couturie's Haras du Mesnil in Normandy was where the youthful Henry Cecil had spent three surprisingly badly fed months in his late teens; but in his sixties, the superfoal appeared rather closer to home. 'I am not going to claim I was saying it immediately,' says Jim Power of the future hero who clocked 123lb at the first scale, 'but he definitely had plenty about him. There are some that you do remember. Tenby was a very tenacious foal, I remember telling people about him, and we also began to think a lot of this chap – especially when he came back from Ireland.'

Frankel had to travel across the water to accompany his dam on her return visit to Galileo at Coolmore Stud in Tipperary, where

she duly conceived Frankel's talented full-brother Noble Mission. With an 11-month gestation period, equine gynaecology produces a 'foaling heat' in a mare within four days of the original birth, but the Juddmonte practice is to wait until the 30-day cycle comes round. So it would have been a four-week-old and still unnamed Galileo colt who accompanied his mother in the luxury horse box off down the motorways and on to the ferry to see his father again. There is not a lot of romance in the routine but it is efficiently and sensitively done and, in crucial response to the rose tints of hindsight, the Juddmonte team have a monthly marking system for all their foals and yearlings. What was to be Frankel was already being given 8s and 7++s. Unlike the famous 9s and 10s freely allocated by the judges in *Strictly Come Dancing*, these seemingly lower marks still indicated a very high rating.

In 2008, those marks and the Galileo foal's general demeanour had a special significance, because the Juddmonte and Coolmore Stud operations had for some time been doing a 'foal share' arrangement whereby they took turns at having the pick of the crop. In the year 2000, for example, Coolmore had chosen Rainbow Lake's son of Sadler's Wells out of the Abdulla group and he had turned out to be Powerscourt, winner of the Arlington Million and the Tattersalls Gold Cup. In 2008 it was Juddmonte's turn. But there were plenty of other athletic and beautifully bred foals running around Banstead when Frankel and Kind came back to England at the end of April. Why should Frankel stand out?

'He was very inquisitive and attentive to what was going on around him whether he was in the stable or in the field,' says Jim Power. 'He was always the first one to come up to you and was the type of foal who would defy you not to take notice of him. But it became more marked after he was weaned in July. I remember him in the paddock one morning going right away from the others with

this open galloping stride. You could see it then as you can see it now. The hind legs powered him forward but the front legs really reached out and pulled on the ground. It seemed to give him an extra ten or twelve inches of rotation. Yes, he certainly made an impression.'

He did on Juddmonte's Irish farms manager Rory Mahon when Frankel was shipped over to New Abbey Stud and then to Ferrans for the next stages of development and education. 'I immediately gave him a 7++,' says Rory in sober marking mood. 'He was a well-balanced colt with a very good walk and stood on good limbs, and his temperament was very good.' All this information was being fed to Philip Mitchell back at Banstead, and through him to Prince Khalid himself. The foal choice would have to be made. Kind's colt by Galileo would be the pick. Frankel would be trained in England and run in the green and pink colours, not prepared by Aidan O'Brien in Ireland in the dark blue silks of the John Magnier team.

But as summer moved into the autumn of 2009 and the Galileo colt took quickly and kindly to saddle and bridle, to trotting and circling in the covered school, and to cantering on the white-railed all-weather track, two crucial issues still needed resolving: there had to be a decision on who would train him and on what he would be called. They, as with all things Juddmonte, would be finally taken by the quiet, scrupulously polite man who likes to list himself in the owners' table as plain K. Abdulla, but with whom courtesy should never be confused with softness, nor shyness with lack of will.

One morning in Paris a year later, in the summer of 2010, he sat and talked of the racing passion first lit when friends took him to Longchamp way back in 1956. Never once did the courtesy or the self-effacing shyness slip, yet neither did the impression alter that the unique owner-breeder achievements of his international Juddmonte empire still depend on his being at the heart of it all. As he spoke, the words carefully chosen in still quite accented English, you had

to think how far and yet how close he was to the thousands who also have racing as their thing. Indeed your first impression of the impassive features on the rather slight but immaculately dressed figure at the centre of the Juddmonte team might make you think he was not experiencing much buzz from it all. 'But I do enjoy it,' insisted the Prince. 'I like being in England, I like visiting my horses and going to the races. But I don't like showing myself and talking to the press. I don't think it suits me really.'

He was sitting in a silk-lined anteroom at the top of the stairs in his Paris town house on the edge of the elegant Parc Monceau, that kilometre-round showpiece immortalised by a series of Claude Monet paintings in the late 1870s. He was not half a mile from the Bois de Boulogne and ready to lunch with important visitors from his native Saudi Arabia, where his brother-in-law is King Abdullah. Yet he would be returning in time to watch a once-raced Oasis Dream colt called Uphold wing home at 100-30 in the second division of a maiden race at Nottingham. Betting shop punters who blindly back the pink and green would have been as pleased as a prince in Paris, especially those who got the early 7-1.

'It is still my only hobby,' Prince Khalid said with a degree of self-mocking sadness, 'but while I have very good people working for me I like to be involved. We have budgets on everything because you cannot say to managers that you should just go and spend, that's not good for anyone. When I first said to Lord Weinstock that I was going to have horses I did not expect to make money, and we are not really doing that, but it is all within reason. At one stage I felt the operation was getting too big. It is important for me to be able to deal with one manager.'

To that end Teddy Grimthorpe has each day to brief himself from the trainers of the 250 horses spread almost evenly between England and France, and some 40 in America, and report every evening to his

patron wherever he may be in the world. By the time the manager does so, the miracle of satellites means he will be talking about a race his employer has already watched. The search is for excellence, not mere indulgence, and the key to Khalid Abdulla's interest is his fascination with how his equine families evolve. 'I have my stud book with me all the time,' he said. 'With breeding I think the dam is the key more than the stallion. With a bad dam, nothing is going to work out. We have to sell to keep the standard. With unraced mares [such as Workforce's dam Soviet Moon] it is a judgement. I cannot take any credit for Workforce [who won the Derby in 2010] but at least we did not sell the dam.'

But with Frankel, Prince Khalid cannot avoid taking credit for both the trainer and the name. For the legendary Bobby Frankel had died in America in November 2009. He had saddled the Belmont Stakes winner Empire Maker among many other fine horses for the Juddmonte flag. His flair for training and his Jewish Brooklyn humour had long made him a favourite of the Saudi Prince. As the yearling allocation arrived it was decided to let the best one honour Bobby Frankel's name. Back in 1998 Sheikh Mohammed changed the name of what he thought was his best two-year-old from Yaazer to Dubai Millennium and the big bay colt later repaid the billing with a runaway victory in the 2000 Dubai World Cup. Frankel got the right title first time.

Not many felt that the Prince had chosen the wrong trainer either, although there has to be sympathy for the uncomplaining Roger Charlton, who had trained Frankel's dam Kind to win five in a row in 2004 and who had won the Derby for Khalid Abdulla with Quest For Fame (subsequently a big US winner with Bobby Frankel) in his own first year of operations, 1990. Prince Khalid will not be drawn beyond a quiet smile and the words 'they are all good trainers but I have to choose'. However, it's hard to think that the analyst in

him had not noticed Henry's fortunes were on the drift when the yearling Kind was sent to Roger Charlton rather than to Warren Place, where her own dam Rainbow Lake had won three on the bounce in 1993. Similarly, it was an unhappy coincidence that at the time of the Frankel allocation in 2009 Charlton had just endured his least successful season in 11 years with only three individual winners in the Juddmonte colours, while a resurgent Henry Cecil had 12 including Twice Over, Midday and the Royal Ascot winner Father Time.

Whatever the reasons, it was to Warren Place that Frankel headed on 14 January 2010, and his subsequent success is a huge tribute to the team Henry Cecil had recently assembled around him. For, in the wonderfully restrained wording trainers use for such things, there were times when Frankel was to prove 'not entirely straightforward'. By the time he left Ferrans the colt had been trotting and cantering up to a mile with behaviour that Rory Mahon assures us was impeccable. But he would not be the first nor the last young colt to find the wide-open spaces of Newmarket and the invitation to go slightly quicker as intoxicating as a slug of whisky in a hitherto abstemious teenager.

From being controlled, almost circumspect with the power they find in their legs and limbs, they suddenly want to rush and run a hole in the horizon. Still being new to the language of bit and bridle, they ignore all instructions from above, much to the alarm of the rider. If the central thrill of riding a thoroughbred is like having a living, thinking, jumping motorbike between your knees, this is like the motorbike with the throttle out and the brakes and steering broken. All of us ex-jocks have our horror stories. Here, with the young Frankel, was the danger of another one.

Henry and Mike Marshall went through their roster of riders and came up with Dan de Haan, the big, powerful horseman son of Ben de Haan, winner of the 1983 Grand National on Corbiere. 'I rode



Henry Cecil on the Newmarket gallops with Frankel – ridden by Dan de Haan, the first rider to experience the colt's exceptional quality.

him after a couple of weeks,' remembers Dan, 'and he was a bit keen but settled all right. Then one day in May when he had gone right across the Limekilns quite unrideable the boss asked me to ride him again. We tried him in a three-piece bridle but he was hanging out to the left and you could not steer him. I remember Mike Marshall coming to me with a long face one morning and saying, "I'm not sure he is going to make it."

'But,' Dan continues, with the relish reserved for those who have had a physical hand on equine greatness, 'we then put the cross-noseband on him and, though he was still quite keen, I thought he might come round. He's only a small horse to ride compared to big old chasers or something like Twice Over, but half his problem was that if you were sat behind something his natural stride was so much longer than theirs that you had to pull him back and as he had a

temper if you took a pull he would just try and take off with you. The day I realised that he was a monster was down the Al Bahathri one morning. I had him on his own and when I found he was not actually running away I suddenly tumbled what he was. When I pulled up Mike asked me how he had gone, and I said to him, "I promise you, this is an absolute beast."'

Such tales are the hot coals around which racing people warm their hands on winter nights.

The big deal for Dan and others privy to the Galileo two-year-old was where it would run. 'I watched the first time he worked upsides on the watered gallop,' says Dan. 'Steve [Kielt] the farrier was with me, and after seeing what Frankel could do he hurried off and backed him for next year's Classics. The trouble was that, as Frankel's half-brother Bullet Train had won the Lingfield Derby Trial, Steve went and did it for the Derby itself. Looking back, Frankel was always going to be a bit too free to run in that.'

Interestingly enough, Frankel was pretty tractable in a 12-runner field first time out. And on his next appearance at Doncaster Tom Queally was able to hold him up in second place until two furlongs out, and that with only two others for cover. That day Frankel's principal rival was a Godolphin colt called Farhh, who had left his field six long lengths behind on the July course three weeks before Frankel's debut at the same track in August. But Farhh had to be withdrawn after having something akin to a nervous breakdown at the starting stalls. So while Frankel did look astonishing at Doncaster, streaking almost half a furlong clear of a filly called Rainbow Springs, it was hard to give his form a rating. It was not so difficult the next time he ran, at Ascot.

While there were still only four opponents this time, the Royal Lodge Stakes is one of the premier mile races for two-year-olds in Europe and what Frankel did to the rest of the field was nothing less

than astounding. Again he was anchored off a slow pace, but if his rivals thought they might catch him out in a sprint finish, the answer came in an extraordinary move round the final turn when Queally allowed him to run and that great Frankel stride came powering home ten lengths clear of the others as if he was a greyhound who had just slipped his leash.

After this Henry was a bit more effusive than the 'potentially he could be very nice' marker first time out. 'He's a star,' he said. 'I think he is the best two-year-old I have had since Wollow. I haven't had one like this for a long time.' No one thought he was getting over-excited, and if Frankel was visually slightly less impressive in the Dewhurst at Newmarket three weeks later, he was still winning the most important two-year-old race in the British calendar by two and a quarter lengths under a hand ride and finished so strongly that Queally had trouble pulling up.

He was a star to follow, and that day the trainer was making his own celestial progress for the very next race was Twice Over's bid for a second Champion Stakes. It was to be the last time the event would be run at Newmarket before moving to the new, jazzed-up end-of-season 'Champions Day' at Ascot. A victory by 'my best friend' for Newmarket's most lauded trainer was almost too good to be true. But with Queally cutting for home down the incline from the Bushes two furlongs out that's exactly what happened and the crowd went wild with delight.

As with Twice Over's Eclipse Stakes victory, we were being presented with a perfect bookend to the Henry Cecil story. But Frankel and the man himself had quite a chapter yet to write.

When Henry Cecil is on song he tilts his head and you are not sure whether he is serious or going to make a joke about you or himself. He was on song one end-of-March day in 2011, and he was entitled

to be. 'I think we could win it,' he said with that funny little smile. He was serious – and not just about Twice Over in the Dubai World Cup that Saturday. He was talking about the trainers' title. 'Why not?' he continued. 'We were close last year and had a couple of unlucky seconds. We will need a lot of luck but you have got to try, haven't you?'

At Warren Place on this Tuesday morning Henry had been up at five and on the phone to his wife Jane and his jockey Tom Queally at Meydan, Sheikh Mohammed's astonishing racecourse in Dubai, to talk through Twice Over's progress. 'He's enjoying himself and doing very well,' said the trainer, yet before you started to think he was getting mushily sentimental he dived off into elaborate detail about the problems with Twice Over's front feet and of how he had flown farrier Steve Kielt out to fit the special shoes that made such a difference.

That is the thing about Henry, he likes to wear his learning lightly. 'I don't want to be a bore,' he had said as he smoked what was clearly not his first cigarette on the patio outside the kitchen at 6.30am. It was a beautiful Newmarket morning. Clumps of daffodils splashed yellow across the garden and over in the yard Guineas and Derby favourite Frankel headed a 140-head string that was set to add to those glory years which had gathered ten trainers' titles and for which Twice Over's Champion Stakes victory the previous October had taken the Group One success total beyond the century mark. Boredom? Wonder more likely.

The first wonder, of course, was that Henry was there at all. The ink should perhaps never have run dry on how family problems, his twin brother David's cancer and then his own had reduced him and his stable to a sick shell of what it once was: remember, in 2005 just 12 winners were logged from fewer than 40 horses and most of Warren Place was either empty or rented out. 'I am still having some

remedial chemotherapy,' he said briefly, 'but I am determined to stay positive. I am sure it helps your body if your mind keeps positive.' Warren Place was now again too full to have tenants and a look round that Tuesday suggested there was a lot to be positive about.

Frankel was in a barn over on the far side. 'We tried bringing him in to one of the boxes nearer the house,' said Henry, 'but he much prefers the barn. He likes to have other horses to talk to.' In a celebrated interview some years ago, Henry stated quite openly that his horses talk to him. Quite what Frankel said when his trainer pulled back the exercise sheet that morning remains between the two of them, but the shining slab of muscle across the colt's quarters was a loud enough statement of his well-being.

So too was his demeanour as he followed his half-brother Bullet Train to join the rest of the string taking their preliminary trot round the big covered ride that Noel Murless installed in the sixties for the princely sum of £10,000. Frankel is not massive but is plenty big enough and there was real power across that slightly low-set neck. Almost too much power to judge by the way he had pulled in the Dewhurst, and to control it on that Tuesday he had a cross-noseband on his muzzle and Shane Fetherstonhaugh on his back.

You will recall that Frankel was not the first Derby favourite Shane had ridden through the winter. He was the quiet figure in the saddle who had stayed calm and unflurried while Motivator did his routine whip-rounds at the bottom of the Warren Hill canter and let fly his double-barrelled bucks on the way home. Frankel was not as dance-on-the-spot volatile as Motivator, but a sudden leap as he followed Bullet Train out of the school and the arms-tugging stretch of his neck up the canter indicated some pretty high-calibre explosive at the end of the rein.

'I think it is very important to match the rider to the horse,' said Henry suddenly, all serious. 'Shane is just about the best rider we have.

He is very calm and he settles Frankel well. But the horse is growing up. They do, you know.' The words were quick and crisp but the eyes were watchful because we had driven round to Warren Hill and Henry had marched over to his normal vantage point three-quarters of the way up the Polytrack. At 68 he was still a slightly dandified figure with a dark-blue French-style cap topping a brown leather bomber jacket, yet another cigarette on the go between gloved fingers.

'Here they come,' he commented as specks began to grow in the distance. No binoculars, but no doubting the focus on what was happening in front of us. 'Frankel is going to work a mile tomorrow up the Cambridge Road Polytrack. He has done a lot of conditioning and is where I want him to be but tomorrow will be the first time we move him away from his leader. He won't work again on Saturday because I am away, but after that it will be Wednesday and Saturday up to the Greenham. He's a proper horse, but there are some other nice ones here you know.'

What followed was a recitation of horse names often unknown but always enviably related. 'That's been backed for the Derby,' Henry said casually as a handsome bay sailed easily by. 'He's called World Domination, by Empire Maker out of Reams Of Verse. That's All Time, a full-sister to Passage Of Time. That's Midsummer Sun, a half-brother to Midday by Monsun. They are all unraced, but I think they could be decent.'

It was possible to see the determination beyond the throwaway 'I don't want to be a bore' style. 'That's Panoptic, she's in the Guineas. She ran twice last year but got fizzed up both times. But she works well. She might get there but we will have to see how she gets on. I think the most important thing in training is to go with your horses, not to try to bring them with you. You have to let them want to do it.'

Warren Hill is a very public place to do your daily business and watching the horses is mixed with banter from passing owners and

trainers. Former Warren Place tenant Ed Vaughan came up to say thanks for the Indian meal he and Henry's older son Noel had with Henry the night before. Michael Stoute passed complete with purple Breeders' Cup baseball cap. Not so much banter there, but then Michael had lots of business to do with his string, which had also won ten titles.

Everything about Henry that morning was a statement not just of how happy he was to be back but how keen he was to take it all the way. His life had looked as if it was dying on him, now he was almost pinching himself with the simple delight of once again playing the game. There was an ease but not an idleness about him. For he was thinking not just of that year but of the next, and for all his casualness you could sometimes almost feel the electricity crackling off him.

'Look at this,' he said back in the stable, pulling the rug off a handsome bay with a big white blaze. 'He's Frankel's full-brother. Of course we haven't done anything with him yet but he looks decent, don't you think?' There are a number of such almost rhetorical questions as he happily goes from box to box: three as yet unnamed Dansili colts belonging to Khalid Abdulla as well as one called King Of Dudes owned by Andrew Tinkler, and another called Malekov owned by the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, and a handsome Teofilo-sired son of Oaks winner Love Divine called Hologram owned by the Lordship Stud.

The world wanted Henry again, and you could understand why. Khalid Abdulla had been the most successful as well as the most loyal of all his owners, having had 389 Cecil-trained winners up to the end of the previous season. Earlier that March I had visited Prince Khalid's elegant London office overlooking Cadogan Square and asked him what made the trainer stand out. 'Henry is very special,' said Frankel's owner. 'He seems to really understand his horses and he again has a very good team working with him.'