

FREE!

1 MAY 2014



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
GROcers AND HAIR & SKIN SPECIALISTS
WEDNESDAY LONDON



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HIS MAJESTY THE PRINCE OF WALES
GROcers AND HAIR & SKIN SPECIALISTS
WEDNESDAY LONDON

Waitrose weekend

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SPORT



Clare Balding



I am not a regular at the ballet. I've been to see a few and love Matthew Bourne's choreography but until last week I had never seen a children's production. My baptism was wonderful thanks to the London Children's Ballet (LCB) performing *Nanny McPhee*. Emma Thompson, who wrote the screenplay and played Nanny McPhee in the film, was there to witness a wonderful interpretation from children aged nine to 16.

They come from a variety of backgrounds and from all over the coun-

try. One had got up at 5am to travel every Sunday from Totnes in Devon, another was a boy adopted from Kenya whose mother suggested ballet to help his focus. What they had in common was a huge level of commitment to a physically taxing and difficult art.

You may wonder why I am writing about ballet in a sports column but Lucille Briance, who has been chair and artistic director of the LCB for 20 years, made the point that ballet is more than art, it is elite sport. Speaking to the children, it was clear they agreed.

Every child was fit and healthy and had benefited from clear instructions, tough training and making a massive company work together as one.

James Lovell, a 14-year-old from Swanage, Dorset, who played the eldest son Simon, told me afterwards that he was sweating buckets. He had been on stage for almost two hours and felt as if he'd run a marathon. Ballet may not technically be a sport but it has plenty of similarities.

Talking of commitment, fitness and precision, AP McCoy was crowned champion jockey for the 19th consecutive season at Sandown in

April. He remains singularly unimpressed with himself, which is part of the key to his success. He passed the extraordinary landmark of 4,000 winners earlier this season and there are many who believe he could push that towards 5,000 before his riding career is over. He knows, better than anyone, that will depend on good health more than anything else. Jump jockeys live with the constant threat of injury - not afraid of it, but aware of the dangers.

'He passed the extraordinary landmark of 4,000 winners earlier this season'

Horse of the Year was the wonderfully improved Sire de Grugy, bought as a birthday present for Steve Preston and trained to six successes this season by Gary Moore. A special mention must go to

Gary's son Jamie who rode Sire de Grugy with such conviction to every one of those victories. My highlight of the jumps season was the reception Jamie got from his fellow jockeys after the Queen Mother Champion Chase. Moore was Champion Conditional jockey 10 years ago but injury and lack of opportunities have made life difficult. This year it all came right, thanks to the Sire on fire.

@clarebalding