

# LIVERPOOL DAILY POST

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## Winning formula all in the gee-genes

WITH Aintree's baffling obstacles and last-minute twists, the winner of the Grand National is usually anyone's guess.

But research carried out by a Merseyside-born scientist means the steeplechase, which takes place on Saturday, could soon become less of a gamble.

Geneticist Stephen Harrison, 44, who grew up in Sefton, claims to have found the formula for the perfect racehorse.

The six-year study is the first proof of a link between genes and their role in the individual performances of horses.

Dr Harrison, a former pupil at St Mary's College, Crosby, believes the breakthrough could have massive implications for the multi-million pound breeding industry, as it could remove the prospect of producing a "dud".

He said: "We anticipate that the data will help trainers identify from day one optimum running distances for horses, develop appropriate training regimes and target specific races which will suit the horses' individual genetic profiles."

Dr Harrison, who works for Thoroughbred Genetics, in Sittingbourne, Kent, took DNA samples from 1,000 thoroughbreds, including classic winners such as Falbray and Giant's Causeway.

He traced collections of genes passed on from mother to offspring, but not by fathers. The genes contribute to energy and

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muscle systems and are said to have a direct impact on the performance of a racehorse.

The research found winners of major races usually came from particular genetic types, suited to running certain distances or even the racecourse itself.

It revealed some genetic lines were built for stamina while others produced better sprinters.

Dr Harrison added: "We can work out from the pedigree what genetic variants they could have, then assign different genes to the winners of the big races."

"Derby winners are more likely to have a different variant of genes to those who win the 2,000 Guineas, which is half a mile shorter."

Dr Harrison is married to public relations worker Annie, with sons Daniel, five, and three-year-old Louis.

He said his results were currently more applicable to flat racing. But he added his findings for Grand National winners would be published later this year.

However, Simon Clare, of Coral bookmakers, was sceptical about the findings.

He said: "I've heard many 'sure-fire' systems and none have yet come to fruition. If this is taken literally and he could assure who the best horse is for each race, then the idea of betting would



Merseyside-born geneticist Stephen Harrison, of Godmersham, Kent, with former race horse Sunley Sense. He has studied the DNA of 1,000 horses

become redundant. But that's just not going to happen. The reality is the breeding industry has been refined for hundreds of years to produce champions, but every year there are lots of expensive horses who don't even make it on to the racecourse.

"Horses are fragile, the beauty of horse racing is the glorious uncertainty."

The three-day Grand National, which begins on

Work out what genetic variants they could have

Thursday, is the world's biggest steeplechase. ■ PATTERNSALL tickets for all three days, and selected grandstand badges for the Thursday, are still available. Tickets to the John Smith's No Nonsense Enclosure are available for just the Saturday. Call 0151 522 2929, log on to [www.aintree.co.uk](http://www.aintree.co.uk) or visit the racecourse ticket office. RACING: PAGES 29-30

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IAN DOYLE  
at Goodison Park



Everton	2
Sunderland	2

DAVID MOYES claimed not to have heard the smattering of boos that greeted the final whistle at Goodison on Saturday.

But the Everton manager couldn't fail to notice how his team contrived to jeopardise their hopes of European qualification at the precise moment they should have been reinforcing them.

April fools? Sadly, nobody in blue was laughing. The last-gasp win at Sunderland on New Year's Eve provided the springboard from which their excellent 2006 Premiership form was built.

And while Saturday's hugely disappointing slump against the same opponents - Everton twice surrendering the lead and fortunate not to lose the game during injury time - far from signals the end of their UEFA Cup aspirations, it makes matters that little bit more difficult.

Despite the fillip of Leon Osman's early goal, a worryingly lethargic Everton never really sparked into life and Sunderland were thoroughly deserving of their point, their first in six weeks and only their 11th of the season.

A derby hangover? Perhaps. Certainly, the verve, vigour and enterprise that has been prominent in Everton's play since the turn of the year, though largely absent at Anfield last week, again made only a fleeting appearance at the weekend.

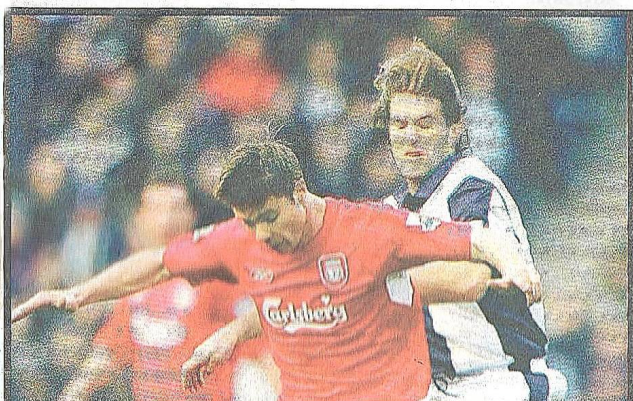
Nevertheless, Moyes's side created enough chances against Sunderland's porous defence to have won the game. Strange, then, that for substantial spells of proceedings, particularly during the first half, they were second best to their Championship-bound visitors.

"We were complacent," professed Moyes, correctly.

Those jeering supporters' frustration at the result will only have been intensified by the fact on the two occasions Sunderland drew level, the home side responded by instantly increasing the tempo.

James McFadden's strike came 10 minutes after Jonathan Stead had equalised; there wasn't quite enough time to restore their advantage after Rory Delap's 80th-minute header.

What is it about Goodison Park and Stead?



Djibril Cisse makes it 2-0 for Liverpool

## Fowler joy as goal tops his big believer

