

ANDREW LYNCH

Age: 29

From: Co Meath

Ruby Walsh gets first pick of Willie Mullins' string, Davy Russell can mine the Gigginstown House Stud and for a while there, it looked like Andrew Lynch had the rest.

Indeed, before Flemenstar picked up the lung infection that ruled him out of the reckoning for Cheltenham, it looked like the Lynch would literally have an embarrassment of riches.

As the debate raged about what engagement Peter Casey's charge might have at the festival, there was a very real possibility that Lynch might have to choose between him and Sizing Europe in either the Queen Mother Champion Chase or the Ryanair.

Despite being to the forefront of Irish racing for the past three seasons, Lynch remains incredibly low profile and he wasn't saying anything publicly. If you could imagine him in feverish diplomatic negotiations involving connections of both horses, in a bid to avoid a clash, it says much for his abilities in the white heat of battle on the biggest day that it would be a two-way street.

Andrew's father, Seán was a jockey who suffered many horrendous injuries, and at times, Andrew has found himself on the wrong side of bad falls too. Those setbacks have slowed his progress at times but once he became aligned with Henry de Bromhead, prosperity followed quickly.

He had his first winner on Tristernagh in a novice hurdle at Downpatrick in May 2002 and bagged a double at the same venue a fortnight later. Having ridden three winners in two weeks though, it took him two years to double that tally.

Winning the Amateur Derby at Epsom on Tender Falcon in 2004 provided a significant boost of confidence and a productive National Hunt campaign followed. That convinced him to turn professional in June 2005.

Blueberry Boy helped him make some impact but it was in 2006 that he showed his superb timing, flying home late on Victram to garner the Imperial Cup at Sandown. Victories in Graded races became common in subsequent seasons, with Forget The Past, De Valira and Duty responding to his urgings, while he was also associated with another highly-rated Michael O'Brien charge, Essex.

Like O'Brien, Jim Dreaper had always been an admirer and an association with Notre Père rescued an otherwise slow 2008/2009. After bagging the Troytown Chase, the pair pulverised a strong field in the Welsh National and finished the season by claiming the Guinness Gold Cup at Punchestown.

That was the signal for another upsurge in fortunes as he linked up with de Bromhead. Sizing Europe gave him his first Cheltenham festival success in the Arkle Chase in 2010. He didn't have to wait long for a second, riding Paul Gilligan's Bertie's Dream to victory in the Albert Bartlett Novice Hurdle.

He was back 12 months later as Sizing Europe took the Tingle Creek at Sandown before being crowned champion two-mile chaser at Cheltenham. Lynch made it a double once more, as Sizing Australia took the cross-country honours.

Sizing Europe has continued to farm many of racing's top prizes since then, even if he lost the Queen Mother Champion Chase in very controversial circumstances last year. Lynch had a fruitful partnership with Voler La Vedette too but was perhaps seen at his very best in defeat on the mare, when she threatened to dethrone the mighty Big Buck's in the World Hurdle.

Meanwhile, Lynch has guided Flemenstar through the top novice chases in Ireland last year and finished the season with an effortless victory in Grade 1 Powers Gold Cup at Fairyhouse. Flemenstar won't be in Cheltenham but there is plenty more for Lynch to look forward to with him.

Sizing Europe will be making the trip though and Lynch and de Bromhead will have other bullets in the chamber too.