



The Suffragette Derby

Michael Tanner

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On Wednesday 4 June 1913, fledgling newsreel cameras captured just over two-and-a-half minutes of never-to-be-forgotten British social and sporting history. The 250,000 people thronging Epsom Downs carried with them a quartet of combustible elements: a fanatical, publicity-hungry suffragette; a scapegoat for the Titanic disaster and the pillar of the Establishment who bore him a personal grudge; a pair of feuding jockeys at odds over money and glory; and, finally, at the heart of the action, two thoroughbred horses - one a vicious savage and one the consummate equine athlete. Taken together, this was a recipe for the most notorious horse race in British history. One hundred years on, this particular Derby Day is remembered for two reasons: the fatal intervention of Emily Davison, a militant suffragette who brought down the King's runner, and the controversial disqualification of Bower Ismay's horse Craganour on the grounds of rough riding - the first and only time a Derby-winner has forfeited its title for this reason. The sensation of Davison's questionable interference in the name of suffrage has overshadowed the outrage of Craganour's disqualification and the intricate reasons behind it. Now, with a view to allowing this scandal the attention it deserves, Michael Tanner replays the most dramatic day in Turf history - and finally uncovers the truth of the Suffragette Derby.

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