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Revolutionary multi-million pound system that trains young horses

Turkish owner believes his brainchild is the safe injury-free racehorse educator of the future and he is bringing it to Lambourn.



Learning Curve: Young horses travel around an all-weather circuit in Turkey harnessed to the KurtSystem Photo: KurtSystems

By Tom Peacock

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Lambourn is about to give birth to one of the most unusual projects in the history of preparing young racehorses, a £6.5 million scheme that its founder predicts will revolutionise training.

The KurtSystem, a futuristic construction that its inventor, Mehmet Kurt, believes eliminates breakdowns in young animals caused by rider error, as well as strengthening muscles and bones, is about to be built at Kingwood Stud. The prototype was developed using more than 1,000 horses on Kurt's farm in southern Turkey. The horses are harnessed within what looks a little like a rollercoaster, running along an overhead rail, which can monitor their heartbeat and

breathing. Under constant supervision, the horses move at varying speeds on a mile-round all-weather track.

As their education continues, they are gradually introduced to weighted saddles to prepare them for when they enter a regular training environment.

“I’ve always bought English horses,” Kurt said. “I have over 100 in Turkey. Although they are very good quality, I realised a high percentage of injuries were occurring in pre-training. Because they went into training at two, we found there were leg and muscle problems in 60-70 per cent of them. The interesting factor was the better quality ones were more prone to injury. Either I had to find a cure or I had to give up my love of horses.”

Kurt has been obsessed by this project for the past 15 years, and it was developed through laborious trial and error. For it to be acceptable, the 68-year-old, who spends most of his time in Britain, felt it had to be showcased in a major racing nation, so he came to Lambourn.

He says no horse has fallen while using the KurtSystem, nor have any picked up injuries, and they apparently seemed happier than when being ridden in pre-training. “The amazing thing is that when you’ve got 10 horses using it together, by day two it’s like they’ve got a brain frequency amongst each other, they are working in synchronisation. I must emphasise, the cabin is not pushing or pulling them, they’re doing it completely naturally.”

In a significant step for the project’s future, legendary ‘horse whisperer’ Monty Roberts has endorsed the scheme, while leading trainers have offered enough encouragement for Kurt to proceed.

With his planning application, approved and Kurt’s persuasive powers working on the traditionally conservative Lambourn community, it is full steam ahead for the KurtSystem. Around 70 per cent of the construction will involve British companies and Kurt stresses that he is not intending to put Lambourn work riders out of a job. “This is not a training system, it’s nothing to do with them racing, this is almost pre-nursery,” he said.

“My whole ambition is to make sure horses are strong and healthy before they start their racing life; to build a foundation for their future.”

He has spent an estimated £25 million so far, and Kingwood will cost another £6.5 million to build. There seems no drive for immediate return for Kurt – the project appears more about a legacy; that his brainchild might one day become standard procedure throughout the sport. “It’s quite normal for people to be sceptical, but I’m confident it works,” he said.

Ultimately, in the results-driven world of racing, he could be turning prospective clients away if one of his horses wins the 2017 Brocklesby Stakes.