

CHELTENHAM RACECOURSE MEDIA RELEASE

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# **STEWART FAMILY TO SUPPORT THE FESTIVAL'S OPENING RACE AS SPINAL RESEARCH SUPREME NOVICES' HURDLE IS ANNOUNCED**

Cheltenham Racecourse announced today that the opening race of The Festival, on Tuesday, March 16, will this year be called the Spinal Research Supreme Novices' Hurdle. The race is being sponsored by the Stewart family, headed by Andy Stewart, the well-known businessman and owner.

One of Andy's sons, Paul, suffered a severe spinal injury in a snowboarding accident in December, 2008. He was paralysed from the waist down and initially told by doctors that he would never walk again. However, pioneering treatment in the UK and in Miami has seen Paul progress to the stage where he can now get around with only a walking stick.

Spinal Research is the UK's leading charity funding medical research around the world to develop reliable treatments for paralysis caused by a broken back or neck. Every year more than 800 people in the UK and Ireland are paralysed following an injury to their spinal cord. Spinal Research raises money to fund research into clinical treatments as well as vital basic scientific research. Thanks to this work, the treatment of paralysis is improving all the time and some therapies can now, in some cases, help restore movement and feeling, in the process transforming the lives of paralysed people.

Commenting on his support of this historic race, Andy Stewart said: "For obvious reasons this is a cause close to my heart, and a high-profile sponsorship seemed a great opportunity to increase awareness of Spinal Research and highlight the great work that it does for victims of spinal injuries.

"We are holding a Racing Legends Dinner at the Jumeirah Carlton Hotel in London on Tuesday, April 6, which I'm hoping will add a significant sum to the charity's coffers. Many people involved in racing have experienced spinal accidents and we are committed to continue the quest to help, understand and to seek a cure."

Peter McNeile, Cheltenham's Director of Sponsorship, added: "It is a typically generous gesture by Andy Stewart and his family to support the Spinal Research Supreme Novices' Hurdle and give such a boost to an extremely deserving charity.

“The Stewart family has had some great days at The Festival as owners with the likes of Big Buck’s and Celestial Halo and it will be terrific to see Paul Stewart walking into the Cheltenham parade ring as one of the sponsors this year.”

Last season’s Spinal Research Supreme Novices’ Hurdle was won by Go Native, who beat Medermit by a neck. Both horses are now leading fancies for this season’s Smurfit Kappa Champion Hurdle.

The Festival 2010 takes place from Tuesday to Friday, March 16 to 19.

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***For more information on Spinal Research, visit [www.spinal-research.org](http://www.spinal-research.org)***