

DICK FRANCIS

Bestselling author of **THE EDGE**

"ONE OF THE BEST MYSTERY WRITERS AROUND."
Saturday Review



ENQUIRY

Throwing a race for personal profit
is the last thing this jockey would do—
and exactly what he stands charged with....

ENQUIRY



Sale of this book without a front cover may be unauthorized. If this book is coverless, it may have been reported to the publisher as "unsold or destroyed" and neither the author nor the publisher may have received payment for it.

**A Fawcett Crest Book
Published by Ballantine Books
Copyright © 1969 by Dick Francis**

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Ballantine Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York.

This book, or portions thereof, may not be reproduced by any means without permission of the publisher.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 76-96007

ISBN 0-449-21268-8

This edition published by arrangement with Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

Manufactured in the United States of America

**First Ballantine Books Edition: October 1987
Seventh Printing: September 1991**

Praise for Dick Francis and ENQUIRY

"Francis is a wizard. . . . He lays all the essential clues to his horse puzzle baldly on the table, while directing the reader's hypnotized eye to the chandelier."

Atlantic Monthly

"His name on the jacket is a guarantee of pleasure."

Washington Star

"Everything required in a modern thriller . . . an intricate plot that unravels skillfully, mayhem, sex, suspense, excitement, and surprise denouements."

The New York Times Book Review

"Francis is right up there at the top among the best mystery writers in the world."

STANLEY ELLIN

Also by Dick Francis:

NERVE*

FOR KICKS*

ODDS AGAINST*

FLYING FINISH*

BLOOD SPORT*

DEAD CERT*

FORFEIT*

SLAYRIDE*

THE SPORT OF QUEENS

TRIAL RUN*

WHIP HAND*

HIGH STAKES

REFLEX*

TWICE SHY*

BANKER*

BONECRACK

KNOCKDOWN

IN THE FRAME

THE DANGER*

RISK

SMOKESCREEN

RAT RACE

PROOF*

A JOCKEY'S LIFE: The Biography of Lester Piggott*

BREAK IN*

BOLT*

HOT MONEY*

THE EDGE*

STRAIGHT*

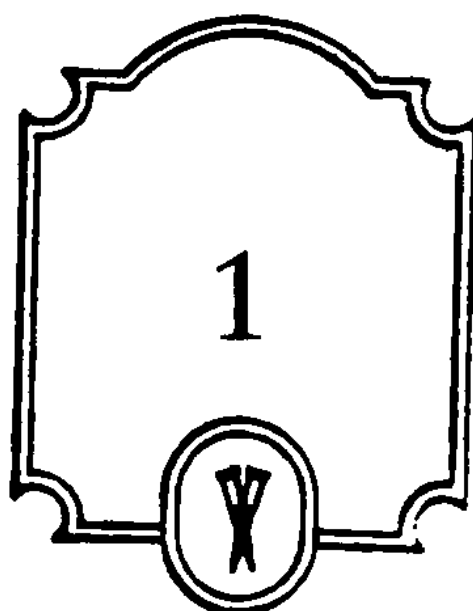
LONGSHOT**

**Published by Fawcett Books*

***Forthcoming from Fawcett Books*

PART ONE

February



Yesterday I lost my license.

To a professional jockey, losing his license and being warned off Newmarket Heath is like being chucked off the medical register, only more so.

Barred from race riding, barred from racecourses. Barred, moreover, from racing stables. Which poses me quite a problem, as I live in one.

No livelihood and maybe no home.

Last night was a right so-and-so, and I prefer to forget those grisly sleepless hours. Shock and bewilderment, the feeling that it couldn't have happened, it was all a mistake. . . . This lasted until after midnight. And at least the disbelieving stage had had some built-in comfort. The full thudding realization which followed had none at all. My life was lying around like the untidy bits of a smashed

teacup, and I was altogether out of glue and rivets.

This morning I got up and percolated some coffee and looked out the window at the lads bustling around in the yard and mounting and cloppeting away up the road to the Downs, and I got my first real taste of being an outcast.

Fred didn't bellow up at my window, as he usually did, "Going to stay there all day, then?"

This time, I was.

None of the lads looked up. . . . They more or less kept their eyes studiously right down. They were quiet, too. Dead quiet. I watched Bouncing Bernie heave his ten stone seven onto the gelding I'd been riding lately, and there was something apologetic about the way he lowered his fat bum into the saddle.

And he, too, kept his eyes down.

Tomorrow, I guessed, they'd be themselves again. Tomorrow they'd be curious and ask questions. I understood that they weren't despising me. They were sympathetic. Probably too sympathetic for their own comfort. And embarrassed: that, too. And instinctively delicate about looking too soon at the face of total disaster.

When they'd gone, I drank my coffee slowly and wondered what to do next. A nasty, very nasty, feeling of emptiness and loss.

The papers had been stuck as usual through my letter box. I wondered what the boy had thought, knowing what he was delivering. I shrugged. Might as well read what they'd said, the Goddamned reporters, God bless them.

The *Sporting Life*, short on news, had given us the headlines and the full treatment: "CRANFIELD AND HUGHES DISQUALIFIED."

There was a picture of Cranfield at the top of the page, and halfway down one of me, all smiles, taken the day I won the Hennessy Gold Cup. Some little subeditor letting his irony loose, I thought sourly, and printing the most cheerful picture he could dig out of the files.

The close-printed inches north and south of my happy face were unrelieved gloom.

"The Stewards said they were not satisfied with my explanation," Cranfield said. "They have withdrawn my license. I have no further comment to make."

Hughes, it was reported, had said almost exactly the same. Hughes, if I remembered correctly, had in fact said nothing whatsoever. Hughes had been too stunned to put one word consecutively after another, and if he had said anything at all it would have been unprintable.

I didn't read all of it. I'd read it all before, about other people. For "Cranfield and Hughes" one could substitute any other trainer and jockey who had been warned off. The newspaper reports on these occasions were always the same, totally uninformed. As a racing Enquiry was a private trial, the ruling authorities were not obliged to open the proceedings to the public or the press, and as they were not obliged to, they never did. In fact, like many another inward-looking concern, they seemed to be permanently engaged in trying to stop too many people from finding out what was really going on.

The *Daily Witness* was equally fogbound, except that Daddy Leeman had suffered his usual rush of purple prose to the head. According to him:

"Kelly Hughes, until now a leading contender for this season's jump jockeys' crown, and fifth on the list last

year, was sentenced to an indefinite suspension of his license. Hughes, thirty, left the hearing ten minutes after Cranfield. Looking pale and grim, he confirmed that he had lost his license, and added, 'I have no further comment.'"

They had remarkable ears, those reporters.

I put down the paper with a sigh and went into the bedroom to exchange my dressing gown for trousers and a jersey, and after that I made my bed, and after that I sat on it, staring into space. I had nothing else to do. I had nothing to do for as far ahead as the eye could see. Unfortunately I also had nothing to think about except the Enquiry.

Put baldly, I had lost my license for losing a race. More precisely, I had ridden a red-hot favorite into second place in the Lemonfizz Crystal Cup at Oxford in the latter part of January, and the winner had been an unconsidered outsider. This would have been merely unfortunate had it not been that both horses were trained by Dexter Cranfield.

The finishing order at the winning post had been greeted with roars of disgust from the stands, and I had been booed all the way to the unsaddling enclosure. Dexter Cranfield had looked worried more than delighted to have taken first and second places in one of the season's big sponsored steeplechases, and the Stewards of the meeting had called us both in to explain. They were not, they announced, satisfied with the explanations. They would refer the matter to the Disciplinary Committee of the Jockey Club.

The Disciplinary Committee, two weeks later, were equally skeptical that the freak result had been an accident. Deliberate fraud on the betting public, they said. Disgraceful, dishonest, disgusting, they said. Racing must keep its

good name clean. Not the first time that either of you has been suspected. Severe penalties must be inflicted as a deterrent to others.

Off, they said. Warned off. And good riddance.

It wouldn't have happened in America, I thought in depression. There all runners from one stable—or one owner, for that matter—were covered by a bet on any of them. So if the stable's outsider won instead of its favorite, the backers still collected their money. High time the same system crossed the Atlantic. Correction: more than high time; long, long overdue.

The truth of the matter was that Squelch, my red-hot favorite, had been dying under me all the way up the straight, and it was in the miracle class that I'd finished as close as second, and not fifth or sixth. If he hadn't carried so many people's shirts, in fact, I wouldn't have exhausted him as I had. That it had been Cranfield's other runner Cherry Pie who had passed me ten yards from the finish was just the worst sort of luck.

Armed by innocence, and with reason to believe that even if the Oxford Stewards had been swayed by the crowd's hostile reception the Disciplinary Committee were going to consider the matter in an atmosphere of cool common sense, I had gone to the Enquiry without a twinge of apprehension.

The atmosphere was cool, all right. Glacial. Their own common sense was taken for granted by the Stewards. They didn't appear to think that either Cranfield or I had any.

The first faint indication that the sky was about to fall

came when they read out a list of nine previous races in which I had ridden a beaten favorite for Cranfield. In six of them, another of Cranfield's runners had won. Cranfield had also had other runners in the other three.

"That means," said Lord Gowery, "that this case before us is by no means the first. It has happened again and again. These results seem to have been unnoticed in the past, but this time you have clearly overstepped the mark."

I must have stood there looking stupid, with my mouth falling open in astonishment, and the trouble was that they obviously thought I was astonished at how much they had dug up to prove my guilt.

"Some of those races were years ago," I protested. "Six or seven, some of them."

"What difference does that make?" asked Lord Gowery. "They happened."

"That sort of thing happens to every trainer now and then," Cranfield said hotly. "You must know it does."

Lord Gowery gave him an emotionless stare. It stirred some primeval reaction in my glands, and I could feel the ripple of goose pimples up my spine. He really believes, I thought wildly, he really believes us guilty. It was only then that I realized we had to make a fight of it; and it was already far too late.

I said to Cranfield, "We should have had that lawyer," and he gave me an almost frightened glance of agreement.

Shortly before the Lemonfizz, the Jockey Club had finally thrown an old autocratic tradition out of the twentieth century and agreed that people in danger of losing their livelihood could be legally represented at their trials if they

wished. The concession was so new that there was no accepted custom to be guided by. One or two people had been acquitted with lawyers' help who would presumably have been acquitted anyway; and if an accused person engaged a lawyer to defend him, he had in all cases to pay the fees himself. The Jockey Club did not award costs to anyone they accused, whether or not they managed to prove themselves innocent.

At first, Cranfield had agreed with me that we should find a lawyer, though both of us had been annoyed at having to shell out. Then Cranfield had by chance met at a party the newly elected Disciplinary Steward who was a friend of his, and had reported to me afterward, "There's no need for us to go to the expense of a lawyer. Monty Midgely told me in confidence that the Disciplinary Committee think the Oxford Stewards were off their heads reporting us, that he knows the Lemonfizz result was just one of those things, and not to worry, the Enquiry will only be a formality. Ten minutes or so, and it will be over."

That assurance had been good enough for both of us. We hadn't even seen any cause for alarm when, three or four days later, Colonel Sir Montague Midgely had turned yellow with jaundice and taken to his bed. It had been announced that one of the Committee, Lord Gowery, would deputize for him in any Enquiries which might be held in the next few weeks.

Monty Midgely's liver had a lot to answer for. Whatever he had intended, it now seemed all too appallingly clear that Gowery didn't agree with him.

The Enquiry was held in a large lavishly furnished room in the Portman Square headquarters of the Jockey Club. Four Stewards sat in comfortable armchairs along one side of a polished table, with a pile of papers in front of each of them, and a stenographer was stationed at a smaller table a little to their right. When Cranfield and I went into the room, the stenographer was fussing with a tape recorder, unwinding a lead from the machine which stood on his own table and trailing it across the floor toward the Stewards. He set up a microphone on a stand in front of Lord Gowery, switched it on, blew into it a couple of times, went back to his machine, flicked a few switches, and announced that everything was in order.

Behind the Stewards, across a few yards of plushy dark red carpet, were several more armchairs. Their occupants included the three Stewards who had been unconvinced at Oxford, the Clerk of the Course, the Handicapper who had allotted the Lemonfizz weights, and a pair of Stipendiary Stewards, officials paid by the Jockey Club and acting at meetings as an odd mixture of messenger boys for the Stewards and the industry's private police. It was they who, if they thought there had been an infringement of the rules, brought it to the notice of the Stewards of the meeting concerned, and advised them to hold an Enquiry.

As in any other job, some Stipendiaries were reasonable men and some were not. The Stipe who had been acting at Oxford on Lemonfizz day was notoriously the most difficult of them all.

Cranfield and I were to sit facing the Stewards' table,

but several feet from it. For us, too, there were the same luxurious armchairs. Very civilized. Not a hatchet in sight. We sat down, and Cranfield casually crossed his legs, looking confident and relaxed.

We were far from soul mates, Cranfield and I. He had inherited a fortune from his father, an ex-soap manufacturer who had somehow failed to acquire a coveted peerage in spite of donating madly to every fashionable cause in sight, and the combination of wealth and disappointed social ambition had turned Cranfield *filis* into a roaring snob. To him, since he employed me, I was a servant; and he didn't know how to treat servants.

He was, however, a pretty good trainer. Better still, he had rich friends who could afford good horses. I had ridden for him semi-regularly for nearly eight years, and although at first I had resented his snobbish little ways, I had eventually grown up enough to find them amusing. We operated strictly as a business team, even after all that time. Not a flicker of friendship. He would have been outraged at the very idea, and I didn't like him enough to think it a pity.

He was twenty years older than I, a tallish thin Anglo-Saxon type with thin fine mousy hair, grayish-blue eyes with short fair lashes, a well-developed straight nose, and aggressively perfect teeth. His bone structure was of the type acceptable to the social circle in which he tried to move, but the lines his outlook on life had etched in his skin were a warning to anyone looking for tolerance or generosity. Cranfield was mean-minded by habit and open-handed only to those who could lug him upward. In all his dealings with those he considered his inferiors, he left behind a turbulent wake of dislike and resentment. He was

charming to his friends and polite in public to his wife. His three teen-age children echoed his delusions of superiority with pitiful faithfulness.

Cranfield had remarked to me some days before the Enquiry that the Oxford Stewards were all good chaps and that two of them had personally apologized to him for having to send the case on to the Disciplinary Committee. I nodded without answering. Cranfield must have known as well as I did that all three of the Oxford Stewards had been elected for social reasons only; that one of them couldn't read a number board at five paces, that another had inherited his late uncle's string of race horses but not his expert knowledge, and that the third had been heard to ask his trainer which his own horse was, during the course of a race. Not one of the three could read a race at anything approaching the standard of a racecourse commentator. Good chaps they might well be, but as judges frightening.

"We will show the film of the race," Lord Gowery said.

They showed it, projecting from the back of the room onto a screen on the wall behind Cranfield and me. We turned our armchairs round to watch it. The Stipendiary Steward from Oxford, a fat pompous bully, stood by the screen, pointing out Squelch with a long baton.

"This is the horse in question," he said as the horses lined up for the start. I reflected mildly that if the Stewards knew their job they would have seen the film several times already, and would know which was Squelch without needing to have him pointed out.

The Stipe more or less indicated Squelch all the way round. It was an unremarkable race, run to a well-tried pattern: hold back at the start, letting someone else make