



FIVE LIVE MAN LOOKS FORWARD TO BIG RACE

Luke's happy to be back on home turf

RADIO Five Live racing correspondent Luke Harvey is looking forward to returning "home" for this afternoon's big race meeting at Exeter.

The 39-year-old, who was born and brought up in Bampton, near Tiverton, is best-known as the cheeky voice of Five Live's racing coverage.

Not bad for someone who left the local comp like "Godber off Porridge" with a lonely O-level in English.

But before he even picked up a microphone, Luke was a successful jockey — partnering more than 250 winners in a career spanning 16 years.

The jocular 39-year-old

BY DAMIEN MILLS

graduated from Westcountry point-to-points to a job with Grand National-winning trainer Captain Tim Forster.

Today, Luke lives in the Berkshire village of Lambourn, getting up at 5.30am, six days a week, to prepare for his early morning slots on Five Live. His mother, Susan, still lives in Bampton while his father, John, is the landlord of the Staple Cross Inn in Hockworthy, near Tiverton.

Luke readily concedes he's been "lucky".

"All I ever wanted to do was be a jockey and then to go into broadcasting," he said. "Not everybody likes my style, but I've never made any secret of the fact that I enjoy myself. Too many people take themselves too seriously."

While Haldon might not be the country's most glamorous race-



UNDER STARTER'S ORDERS: Racing into the sunset on Haldon Hill

course, it will always be high in Luke's affections.

"It's a lovely course to ride around," says Luke. "And I rode my first winner as a professional at Exeter — a 33-1 shot called Bickleigh Bridge."

"What's more, the crowds in the Westcountry are huge in comparison to lots of other places and I love coming down."

Luke says he'd love to see Best

Mate win this afternoon's big race but recognises the three-times Cheltenham Gold Cup winner faces a huge task on his comeback from injury and recommends a small wager on Ashley Brook, an exciting young chaser from Kevin Bishop's small Somerset yard.

Whatever the outcome, there's one thing Luke is sure of — "it'll be bleeding cold at Haldon. It always is!"

TALKING SPORT: Five Live racing pundit Luke Harvey will be back in Devon for today's Haldon Gold Cup

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