

Lords Go a Leaping in Parliamentary Pancake Race



Pictured above: Lord Redesdale chases BBC political correspondent, Nick Robinson, to the finish line.

THERE WAS A PALPABLE SENSE OF EXCITEMENT in Westminster the morning of Shrove Tuesday on February 24th last for the annual Rehab Parliamentary Pancake Race, sponsored by British Lion Eggs.

The talk of the chattering classes was of the call by the Prince of Wales for new measures to protect the albatross, the unveiling of a new statue of the Queen Mum and the hacking of Jack Straw's email account. But not even these important matters of State could detract from the focus of those taking part in this year's race and that annual battle of nerves between teams of MPs, Lords and, their common sworn enemy, the media.

The race is organised every year by Rehab to widen awareness of its work with people with brain injury and

to raise funds for its services. Teams from the House of Lords, the House of Commons and the Parliamentary Press Gallery make their way to Victoria Tower Gardens, next to the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, to take part in the race and, hopefully, to take their place in the history books. With considerable media interest in the event and reporters from CNN, ITN and the BBC there to immortalise proceedings, the stakes could not be higher.

There were some mumblings that ITV newscaster Mary Nightingale, who was the official starter for the race, might give the media team an unfair advantage, but in the event, such concerns were unnecessary. Lord Redesdale pipped the media team's Nick Robinson from the BBC to the post and romped home past the finish line to grab the Parliamentary Pancake Race Magnificent Tin Cup for the Lords team. After a promising start, the MPs team endured a crushing defeat and finished in a disappointing third place.

Mary Nightingale presented the winning team with their medals. Speaking to *Rehab News*, she said, "It was a real delight to see politicians, and indeed the media, get out of their comfort zone and lend their support to this very worthy cause. Of course, it's all just a bit of fun and the real winner must be Rehab and awareness of the really valuable work that it does for people with brain injury."

Ian Welsh, Director of UK Services, says, "It is estimated that more than 135,000 people leave hospital in the UK every year having sustained a serious head injury. Brain injury can have a devastating impact not only on the person with the injury but also on their wider family and friends; often it can have life-long implications in terms of disability, quality of life and economic impact.

"Of course, thanks to medical advances, more and more people are living with an acquired brain injury, and that is very good news indeed. However, to meet this growing need, we also need to ensure that we have the funds and resources in place to develop our rehabilitation services simultaneously." ■

