

Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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Skewball

Skewball
(Steeleye Span)

You gallant sportsmen all, come listen to my story
Its of the bold Skewball, that noble racin' pony

Oh, the marvel was the man, who brought bold Skewball over
He's the diamond of the land and he rolls about in clover

The horses where brought out, with saddle whip and bridle
And the gentlemen did shout, when they saw the noble rider

And some did shout hooray, the air was thick with curses
And on the gray Griselda, the sportsmen laid their purses

The trumpet it did sound, they shot off like an arrow
They scarcely touched the ground, for the going it was narrow

Then Griselda passed him by, the gentlemen did holler
The gray will win the day, and Skewball he will follow

Then halfway round the course, up spoke the noble rider
I fell we must fall back for she's going like a tiger.

And when they did discourse, bold Skewball flew like lightning
They chased around the course, and the gray mare she was taken

Ride on my noble lord, for they have 200 guineas
The settle shall be of gold when we become the winners

Past the winning post bold Skewball drew quite handy
Horse and rider both ordered sherry wine and brandy

And then they drank the health of the gallant Miss Griselda
And all that lost their money on the sporting plains of Kildare

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Laws Q22

Recorded by Steeleye Span on Ten Man Mop, by Andy Irvine.

Note: The facts are that sometime about 1790 a race took place on the Curragh of Kildare (near Dublin) between a skewbald horse owned by Sir Arthur Marvel and "Miss Portly", a grey mare owned by Sir Ralph Gore. The race seemed to take the balladmakers' fancy and must have been

widely sung: an early printed version appeared in an American
song book dated 1829 MJ

...and Leadbelly recorded a version a hundred years later. RG

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