



Gamble

Felix Francis

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At the Grand National races, Nicholas "Foxy" Foxton sees friend and coworker Herb murdered in front of him and 60K witnesses. both were financial advisers at Lyall & Black, an extreme-risk investment firm. Foxy questions the case of mistaken identity, from how well he knew his friend to how much he understands about his employer - everything.

Gamble Details

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From Reader Review Gamble for online ebook

Jane Debano says

Dick Francis, former steeplechase jockey turned thriller writer, has always been one of my favorite reads. I started devouring his books in the '60s and have read everyone since then (43 in all) and own most of them. They are like old friends, whom I visit from time to time. I was stricken by his death in 2010 but glad to know that his son Felix, who had collaborated with him on his last four books, was taking up the reins (or PC) to continue his father's legacy. You know a Francis hero will be strong, compassionate and a decent man. He will undergo some physical trial and will come out of it bruised, battered but eventually triumphant.

Gamble is Felix's first solo effort. He has been working as a researcher for his father's books for years and did both of the writing on the last four. I loved Gamble. It opens with a murder at a racecourse in full view of 60,000 Grand National fans. Our hero is Nicholas (Foxy) Foxton, a successful steeplechase jockey who quit racing after a career ending broken neck. He's now an independent financial advisor for a firm that specializes in high-risk investments and the murder victim was his friend and co-worker Herb Kovak. He's surprised to be named executor and beneficiary of Herb's estate and especially because he finds huge balances on multiple credit cards in Herb's home office. It turns out that Herb was involved in Internet gambling. All of a sudden, big thuggish men are trying to kill Foxy and somehow manage to track him down all over the country. A racehorse owner and client of Foxy's with a question about his investment in Bulgarian real estate also turn up dead. The pace quickens as he tries to stay one step ahead of the bad guys and find the cause of all the mayhem.

All the Francis novels involve racing or horses to some extent. Like a horse race, they provide thrills and a galloping pace to the finish. Try Gamble. Felix Francis has firmly taken the reins of the franchise with capable hands.

Kathy says

I did read the Dick Francis books faithfully and have a rather large stack of paperbacks stashed somewhere. I admit to not liking his son's writing to the same degree, but thought I would try one for old time's sake. This has a former jockey working as a financial advisor and he finds himself in the spotlight without asking for it. Wrong place, wrong time, wrong friends, wrong associates. The vice is gambling but not his and he is lucky to escape.

Jeffrey says

As many of his fans know, Dick Francis passed away in February 2010. He was a force in mystery novels all set in some way in the English horse riding community publishing one novel a year until his wife's death in 2000. She helped him research his novels. In his obituary, the New York Times reported that Dick Francis thought he would never write another book again, but in 2006 he came out with a new Sid Halley novel, in which his son Felix Francis helped with the research. Thereafter Dick and Felix collaborated on several novels. Last year's dual Francis offering - Crossfire - published after Dick Francis's death was also a

collaborative entry.

Although Dick Francis's early novels were firmly set in the horse riding world of England, his later novels, while set in that world, were often about other topics. Nevertheless, they all had an innate feel of that horse riding world and the villains were also part of that world. When you opened a Francis novel, the hero usually was in some awful predicament and you felt it in your gut. There was a ratcheting up of suspense. Time was always ticking and eventually the main character had to overcome his foes, usually with wit and force of arms. In the prior collaborative efforts, the novels did not seem to have that same feel for the horse track or that suspense.

This new novel, *Gamble*, is Felix Francis first solo effort in the mystery genre that his father so skillfully charted. Although Francis still lacks that Dick Francis touch around the track, it's a solid overall effort and does have a lot more suspense.

Foxy Foxton, now known as Nick Foxton, was a former jockey, who has gone into financial advising. He works, with Herb Kovak, at Lyall & Black, a financial advising firm. He is standing next to Herb Kovak at the track, when an unknown gunman kills Kovak in cold blood. Surprisingly appointed as Kovak's executor, Foxton soon learns that Kovak was involved in some kind of internet scam involving gambling.

Later he goes to the track to meet with Bobby Searle, a client of the firm, who demands to have his financial portfolio sold immediately to pay off a 100,000 pound debt. When Foxton cannot convert the investments into hard currency fast enough, Searle is nearly killed by a hit and run driver.

Later yet, Foxton is approached by Colonel Jolyon Roberts, a client of the firm, to investigate a Bulgarian investment his family trust has made in the amount of 5,000,000 pounds. It seems that Roberts nephew visited the site where houses and a factory were supposed to be built and found nothing there. When Foxton finds out that something is fishy about that investment and conveys the information to Roberts and tells Roberts to talk to Lyall & Black, Roberts also ends up dead under suspicious circumstances. Suspicious to Foxton.

Soon Foxton finds himself running for his life from the hired gunman who killed Kovak, and like all good Francis heroes he resorts to his wit and fists to defeat this villain and the ones who hired him. He eventually puts the pieces together as to who wanted Kovak dead and solves the mystery of the real bad guys.

Francis only miscue, if it is one, is that when his hero rides a horse in one scene, there is no connection between rider and horse as we would have found in a Dick Francis novel. It's a minor issue in an overall good effort.

David Evans says

Listened to the audio book version which had me hooked for a week while running and driving. I hadn't read any Dick Francis for years and was always a little sceptical of likelihood of former jockeys turning detective. When an injured former jockey and financial adviser Nick Foxton's work colleague is shot dead next to him at The Grand National race meeting, a series of events follow that ensure that Nick becomes the next target of the assassin. While sometimes straying into absurdity and containing any number of excruciating female characters the excitement rarely lets up. It might have been a better book without any of the stereotypical

women in it at all or they should at least remain silent! Perhaps they read better than they sound. Foxton is occasionally inspired but daft enough to continually ignore THE obvious clue which might hold the key to the mystery and is very careful to make sure the bad people know exactly where he is so that they can come and shoot at him.

Felix Francis is a worthy successor to his father.

Ellen says

This is definitely in the mold of a typical Dick Francis book, but something isn't quite right for me. Felix Francis has the plot structure right and even the conversations are similar to those his father wrote. Maybe there is one thing that I can identify. Like the protagonists in Dick's books, Felix's protagonist here is uncharacteristically daring and smarter than the police. However, it seems that he's MUCH smarter than the police. Some things are over-the-top unrealistic for me. The police don't see obvious connections as clues and they let this guy hang out there on his own when it's obvious he's a target. Even a nurse in the book was reluctant to bring a blanket to a shivering post-op patient. It was as if only the protagonist could see the obvious and respond appropriately. Overall, still good fun!

Dindy says

I miss Dick Francis. I have been a fan of his for a long time. Yes, he essentially writes the same hero over and over again, although he usually gives the guy a different name and occupation in each book. Yes, his mysteries have a sameness to them-- at some point in the book, the hero is going to be unjustly accused of something. Either the hero or his love interest is going to have some kind of infirmity or disability. The hero will come from a flawed family and in some way, shape or form, the hero will be involved with the sport of horse racing. At the end, the hero will triumph in a satisfactory manner, and the bad guy will be suitably punished.

However, there is often comfort in knowing exactly what you are going to read, and that is what Dick Francis novels have always been for me. I count at least two of his books among my favorite mystery novels ever, and he has been one of my "must read" authors in the thirty years I have been reading his novels. Last year I paid a visit to a horse track for the first time, in large part because of interest created by reading these novels.

So I have been very nervous about his son, Felix, taking over the family franchise. Kids don't always do such a great job of taking over their parents' job. I'm happy to say, however, that with *Gamble*, Felix makes a smooth transition, one that I would rate on a par with his father's work.

We have the unjustly accused hero, Nick (Foxy) Foxton, who is attending the races with his friend and co-worker, Herb Kovac when Kovac is shot to death while standing right beside Foxton. At various points during the book Foxton is accused of murder and securities fraud. The hero is a recovering addict, a former jockey who was injured in a race and whose head is now barely attached to his neck. In addition, his girlfriend is diagnosed with cancer during the book.

The book certainly fits the Dick Francis formula. In fact, this book has everything I expect to read when I pick up a Dick Francis novel. If it hadn't had Felix's name on the cover, I would have thought it was written

by Dick Francis, himself-- which is the highest compliment I could possibly pay to this book. It will be a joy if Felix continues to write novels such as this, so I can continue to enjoy Dick/Felix Francis novels for another thirty years.

Goesta says

Read a while ago.

What I long to return to, time and again, that "Dick Francis fix", is above all, apart from the horses, the profound integrity of the reluctant hero; reading these books, I feel somehow clean, and encouraged to strive for such clarity within myself. This is something else than the author taking the moral high ground, I can't quite put my finger on it right now. In any case, Felix Francis does not disappoint.

Felix Francis hits his stride as a solo author while expertly channeling his father's literary spirit. Gone is any previous awkwardness and the protagonist is as comfortable to spend time with as in any vintage Francis, while the supporting characters are duly updated into the digital era. While not exceedingly memorable or innovative in plot, the mystery itself was up to par and the sum of the parts certainly added up to more than a mere effort "in the style of"; this is almost uncannily "Francis" through and through.

I remember having three main thoughts after:

1. The legacy is alive and kicking, I need not fear (having read all but 2 or 3 of the oeuvre) that I may never again get that Francis fix.
2. Felix's name ought to be writ large on the cover. Regardless of his artistic debt to his father, this is his book.
3. I hope that in the future Felix (as Dick did from time to time) finds the freedom to explore other themes and settings, to evolve the spirit of the legacy in new, unexpected directions. I for one would happily follow him there.

Jerry B says

We had a hunch that the first solo effort by son Felix to write a "Dick Francis" novel would turn out OK, given that undoubtedly he bore the lion's share of the work on the last several official collaborations with his dad. And like the whole world, we could hardly wait to see if "Gamble" would hold up to the unusual scrutiny so often applied to the next book in a series not written by the original author. To us, it's a very commendable job!

A retired jockey, Nick Foxton, now a financial advisor at an investment firm, has taken a colleague to the horse races – and as he stands aside him, his friend is murdered in broad daylight, with none of the thousands nearby seeing the shooter. Nick takes it upon himself to look into the how and why, and soon discovers a potentially serious scam in which one of his firm's partners might well be involved that was probably a motive in the killing of his co-worker. While looking into his friend's effects (after he learns he's the executor of the estate), he eventually starts to unravel some sort of internet gambling scheme. Soon enough, it's Nick who becomes the target of violence when his snooping starts getting too close to the bone. His mother, fiancé, and several of his friends are nearly involved before the bad guys come to light – but who

will get who first?

To be direct, we enjoyed this story and would be hard-pressed to even quibble over aspects that might or might not fit into the old Francis mode. In Nick Foxton, we have the type of protagonist nearly all these books feature – basically a nice smart guy we'd all like to emulate, in a suspenseful enough tale that made us want to race to the end. Plenty good enough for us – bring on some more!

Dlora says

Felix is still not as good a writer as his father, although his plot and action scenes are well done. It's his development of admirable characters and relationships that I find lacking. He is getting better at it, but he hasn't got the heart of his father. There are very few characters I *like* in the book.

I did like how the title of the book was woven into the story. Nicholas Foxton gambled with his life as a jump jockey every day, but when he had a bad fall and broke the vertebrae of his neck, the doctors won't certify him to race anymore--too much of a gamble. Instead he goes back to school and becomes a certified financial investor, gambling with other people's money in investments. (And this setting of the world of financial investments was interestingly explored.) Of course, life itself is a gamble, as Nicholas is shockingly made aware when his coworker standing next to him is murdered at the races. With Nicholas's racing connections, many of his clients are connected to the racing world so he frequently comes to the races to meet with them. At one such meeting, jockey Billy Searle informs Foxton that he wants his money back immediately, and although Foxton informs him that it takes time to liquidate investments, Billy is hysterical about getting the money the next day or he'll be dead. And indeed when Billy is hit by a car and badly injured, Nicholas wonders if Billy's need for money is perhaps about a bad gambling debt. The topic of gambling in many forms was a nice thread throughout the book.

Another repeated theme--that Nicholas and his job was boring, and compared to being a jump jockey, it was dry and dusty.

And one other writer technique repeated all through the book was less appealing--short sentences at the end of a section to foreshadow events or for shock value. "Maybe it was better being boring and alive than flamboyant and dead." "Don't worry about it," Patrick said. 'It'll all blow over in a couple of days.' I wish he'd been right." "But my luck was about to run out." "Little did I realize at the time how Herb Kovak's legacy would turn out to be a poisoned chalice." "It was as if we had left all out troubles behind in London. But they were about to come looking for us." Good when used sparingly but used too much, it became annoying to me. I was starting to count them!

Overall a good story that I enjoyed reading. I've got to stop comparing him to his father; however, I could do that more easily if he (or his publishers) would stop titling his books using his dad's name: *Dick Francis's Gamble*.

Beth says

Felix Francis has now picked up the writing mantle of his father and his mother. Apparently, as his mother assisted his father in writing the novels, Felix assisted his father after his mother's death. GAMBLE is the first book that bears only Felix's name.

I am pretty certain that I have read all the mysteries that Dick Francis and family have written. The books have likable heroes who have a connection to horse racing in some capacity or another. That gives the authors the opportunity to create a world in each book that they know intimately. They know it so well that the world of thoroughbreds and the humans who take care of them becomes real to readers who know absolutely nothing about the animals or the gambling that arises from the swiftness of their four feet. The closest I come to the racing world, and horses, is watching the Kentucky Derby each year with my niece and her daughters. The girls arrive wearing fancy dresses and hats for our "ladies' lunch" and tea party. Generally, by the time the race starts, they are bored and have moved on to other things.

Perhaps it is because I know so little about the world of Dick Francis and his family that I enjoy the books so much. There is always mayhem and threats and the hero generally gets beaten by thugs by the middle of the book. There is usually understated romance between the hero and a woman who is also part of the racing world but, in all the books, far more attention is paid to horse flesh than to the human variety.

Francis found the key that prevents his books from becoming stale. A jockey who rode exclusively for the Queen Mother for a number of years, he was fascinated by the occupations held by people outside the racing world. His protagonists include a George Clooney level actor, a glassblower, an architect, an inventor of toys, a meteorologist, and a chef. The research into the careers of the heroes is meticulous so the reader learns about interesting occupations and professions and horses and horse racing while enjoying a good mystery, too.

The latest book, GAMBLE, is written by Felix Francis although his father's name is also on the cover. Nicholas Foxton was a world class jockey until his career was ended by a fall that broke his neck. Nick has been warned that another fall or an accident would likely kill him so he had to give up the racing life and take on the role of independent financial adviser, a job that has made him far wealthier than he would be if he had continued to race.

A day at the races had to suffice until the day "I was standing right next to Herb Kovak when he was murdered. Executed would have been a better word. Shot three times from close range, twice in the heart and once in the face, he was almost certainly dead before he hit the ground, and definitely before the gunman had turned away and disappeared into the Grand National race-day crowd." Herb and Nick were colleagues. They had joined the investment firm of Lyall and Black in the City of London on the same day.

Nick becomes curious about the files Herb was working on just before he died. When Nick comes across information about a billion euro swindle, he realizes he now has the information that got Herb killed.

As with all books from the Francis stable, GAMBLE is worth reading. It is entertaining, teaches a bit about a few things, and ends with the hero still in one piece. Obviously, they have found a winning formula (in the best sense). There are forty-six books available and after reading one, the reader is likely to aim to read them all.

An Odd1 says

Murder mystery mixes with boring lessons, such as well-known (unsolved) public assassinations. When ex-jockey Foxy yearns, despite broken neck, to be back in the saddle for hundreds of pages, fair bet he'll get there before the end. I probably read this before, because twists were not surprises.

Financial advisor Nicholas Foxton stands next to colleague from U.S. for 5 years, extravagant well-liked non-gambler Herb Kovak, at Grand National Race, when assassin suddenly shoots Kovak dead. Nick, heir and executor, finds threatening note, unreasonably high gambling bills, and solitary key. Wouldn't you use key as soon as a lock was reported? (view spoiler)

Interspersed lessons drag rather than add realism. Internet gambling legal in UK not in US. Money transfer companies encourage criminals requiring no id to exchange cash. Ovarian cancer and operation are unpleasant.

If you had been shot at, knew your new location was known, phone and electricity were cut, wouldn't you warn your family and scoot? Hoo-rah for girl-friend Claudia's timely aid, although she does take on food duties, and calls stop to Nick saving their lives, propagating notion females are idiots.

Most frustrating is, when few pages left, (like many Grafton and other authors), the hero walks straight into danger, without contacting backup. I do not have sympathy for those who create their own hazards.

Carol says

Gamble is the latest Dick Francis novel and the first solo novel by Felix Francis. Nick Foxton once won the Grand National, but a terrible accident cut his racing career short. Years later, he is returning to Aintree - as a spectator - when he once more finds himself the centre of attention. Minutes before the big race, Nick's colleague, financial adviser Herb Kovak, is shot dead and the gunman vanishes into the crowd. The police want answers but Nick can't explain why anyone would want Herb dead. Yet when he finds a threatening message crumpled in Herb's coat, Nick begins questioning all he knows about his friend. And on learning that he is the benefactor of Herb's will, Nick is certain that something is not right. A fact confirmed when Nick discovers he's next in the killer's firing line. From Felix Francis, the bestselling co-author (with Dick Francis) of Dead Heat and Even Money comes Gamble, the latest Dick Francis novel. Set in the cut-throat world of horse racing, Gamble is an enthralling thriller packed full of suspense, mystery and intrigue. Packed with all the hair-raising suspense and excitement readers know and love from Dick Francis, Gamble is Felix Francis's most heart-pounding thriller yet.

Praise for the Dick Francis novels: 'The Francis flair is clear for all to see' Daily Mail 'Spare, efficient and unflashy . . . inexorably draws you in' Daily Telegraph 'The master of suspense and intrigue' Country Life 'Still the master' Racing Post Felix Francis is the younger son of thriller-writing legend, Dick Francis, with whom he co-wrote the four most recent Dick Francis Novels, Dead Heat, Silks, Even Money and Crossfire (favorites of mine for sure), with Felix taking an increasingly greater role in the writing. Sadly Dick died in February 2010 but his work will live on through Felix. Gamble is Felix's first solo Dick Francis Novel. Felix trained as a physicist and spent seventeen years teaching A level physics before taking on the role as manager to his father, and then as author. He lives in Oxfordshire. This isn't his best work, but for a first one coming out of the shoot, pretty good. RECOMMEND.

Gail Morris says

awesome tale of who done it! and quite a few close calls with death for the main character.

Teotakuu says

I discovered the Dick Francis novels sometime in the 1960's and gave them as Fathers Day and Christmas presents to my grandfather and stepfather while collecting them for myself.

When I lost all my books in a house fire the Dick Francis thrillers were amongst the first books that I hunted down to refill my bookshelves. They are the old friends that I turn to when unwell or lonely so I am delighted that Felix Francis is continuing the work of his father and mother.

I bought this book at Borders, Riccarton on 30th December, quite possibly the last time I will shop there before it closes in January.

I delighted in the touches of the familiar - ex jockey in a profession that allows him to continue haunting the racecourses, carefully concealed deus ex machina and enough red herrings to delight Mesdames Sayers, Christie and Marsh.

Suffice it to say that once started I read straight through until two in the morning so that I might know 'who did it', truly the highest compliment I can pay to any book.

Keep them coming Mr Felix Francis. I am a fan

Sue says

This is a wonderful read. I am ecstatic that this is so good - the pacing, the protagonist's inner reflection, the plot twists - all were vintage Dick Francis. Some of the choppiness in the co-authored books has smoothed out a lot.

Some criticisms: Too much foreshadowing. We know that calm and serene isn't going to last long. :) And it seems that Felix was a little heavy-handed with the current news events sprinkled in (to make sure we knew the book was written recently and not 5 years ago? I guess Detective Chief Inspector Tomlinson's not the only one with a suspicious mind.)

The characters were quite likable, and the story interesting. I had to force myself to put the book and get some sleep; in my younger days I could have easily read it in one sitting. This book really reminded me of why I love Dick Francis's books for so long. I'm hoping for many more from Felix in the future.

