



Edition 19 – Wednesday 23 March 2016

Fahey worth waiting for

I had a very poor Cheltenham - the first for quite a few years - and I found myself thinking about balmy days at Goodwood and Brighton.

As analysis is ongoing in the racing press I shall not add many thoughts here. However, the die was cast for me when Yanworth was beaten in the Neptune on Wednesday. This was not Barry Geraghty's best ride and I know that Alan King was much more disappointed than he showed in interviews afterwards.

Having said that, Yorkhill also had problems in a moderately-run race and it seemed to me that he was always going just that bit better than the favourite and I'm not sure that we were all that unlucky. Interestingly, though Yanworth looked outstanding on trials day, not only was he beaten last week but the horse he beat previously, Shantou Village, ran no sort of race in the Albert Bartlett. The form is possibly not as smart as we thought.

Briefly, I have never seen Polly Peachum run as poorly as she did on the opening day, Seeyouatmidnight ran an honest race but was outclassed in the RSA, Join The Clan briefly raised hopes in the Pertemps Final and there was a small profit to be made on Quantitativeeasing in the cross country but only if you kept searching and searching for a bookmaker prepared to pay out on the first four in this non-handicap.

Other passing thoughts: The Old Guard form from the Greatwood stood up perfectly when Superb Story landed the County Hurdle and salvation was at hand in the Foxhunter, won by the best horse and the best rider, though 15/8 on the off was pretty skinny. I had no strong fancies (and therefore no regrets) where the Gold Cup was concerned, though Paddy Brennan has been given an easy ride in the press following his effort on Cue Card. What on earth he was doing, driving a horse with questionable stamina between rivals when there was still a long way to go is probably best put down to a rush of blood. Would Cue Card's supporters really have

wanted him making the best of his way home from there, had he landed safely and just in front? I don't think so. Personally I think Cue Card had very little chance of staying three and a quarter miles but that is not the point. His best chance of doing so was to stay precisely where he was, quietly tracking the leaders. It was a mess.

I never make excuses and there is ground to make up. However, I was not too disappointed with PINK GIN at Towcester on the Thursday of the festival. Jim Old has always said that the horse is taking a long time to learn the game again after a long absence and he clung on well until the final climb to the line.

The main reason I prefer the Flat to the jumps where betting is concerned is that the distances between horses are much more meaningful. Anyone looking at Pink Gin's finishing position without seeing the race would assume he ran poorly but in fact I think we should stay with him and a small handicap hurdle will come his way.

Stable-companion ALDEBURGH is very well and should oblige on the AW or in a two-mile hurdle at a reasonably easy track on good ground or better. He is in the mile and three-furlong handicap at Kempton on Saturday and this looks the right sort of task. The horse is officially trained by Nigel Twiston-Davies but is one of the handful Jim took with him to Naunton.

Moving across to the Flat generally, there is one point to make with Doncaster due to start things off on turf next week. Clearly, Richard Fahey is all set for a blistering start again; we know this because some of the horses have been running on the AW and he had a third in the Irish Cambridgeshire last Sunday.

Although I hesitate to recommend backing someone across the board, supporting all of his runners at Doncaster two years ago would have netted a 16 points' profit and twelve months ago it was ten. Sometimes there will be two in a race and sometimes you will simply not fancy something that seems highly tried. You may well be right, but the overall profit is still there and I feel that is the way we should start off in a few days' time.

More immediately, he may well run ALBEN STAR in the Unibet All-Weather Sprint Championships Conditions Stakes at Lingfield on Good Friday. Alben Star knows all about the game and takes plenty of getting ready these days. I doubt that he has been seriously trained until now and his runs over five furlongs are purely cosmetic. He needs six and that is the trip here. He won the race two years ago and, although he will no doubt look well and truly outpaced at some stage, he has a fair chance of making the frame again at a time when many pundits have written him off. The emphasis is strongly on the each-way aspect.

Horses should sometimes be forgiven a single poor run and that may be the way to view MAN OF HARLECH'S performance at this course just before Christmas. Then he finished a fair fourth at Wolverhampton but never looked happy in the race. Andrew Balding is very good at coaxing horses back to their best and Man Of Harlech - fourth in the Cambridgeshire, remember - can show he is much better than those efforts suggest. He is in both the mile and ten-furlong championship races and I think a small each-way investment is justified. As with Alben Star, the odds will probably be quite generous.

John Gosden seldom pits fillies against colts and geldings so the appearance of race-fit FURIA CRUZADA in the Magnolia Stakes at Kempton on Saturday would be highly significant.

The main fancies are: ALDEBURGH and FURIA CRUZADA on that card with smaller each-way bets on ALBEN STAR and MAN OF HARLECH at Lingfield on Friday. All of Richard Fahey's runners should be covered to small win stakes at Doncaster's opening meeting.

Ian