

Review of Marten Julian's Dark Horses Jumps Guide from the Racing Post 19 November 2017

It is with a degree of pleasure that I can reveal Marten Julian's Dark Horses for this jumps season is very much like those that preceded it. Why change a successful formula when it has worked for many years, the book having unearthed plenty of winners thanks to Julian's painstaking research?

For those unfamiliar with the format, there are five main sections: the premier horses – a select dozen Julian expects will pay to follow this season – the dark horses (a longer list and self-explanatory), the dark handicappers, Jodie Standing's analysis of point-to-point recruits and Julian's comprehensive preview of the Champion Hurdle and the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Last year he recommended Buveur D'Air for the Champion at 25-1.

How you utilise the book depends on your punting strategies, but there is plenty here for those who take a selective approach to betting. The requirements needed for each horse to show his or her best are clearly defined, so ideally it's a case of waiting until everything is right before getting on.

I was particularly intrigued by the two horses in the dark handicappers section with just duck eggs by their names and hailing from a northern yard, while the long-range suggestion for the Betfair Hurdle is ingenious. Julian is lukewarm about Thistlecrack's Gold Cup prospects, instead opting for a "thoroughly safe pair of hands".

Standing's point-to-point section is comprehensive with 40 horses – the type who fetch around £150,000 after winning once in a field in Ireland – selected, with a shortlist of five she is particularly keen on. The section takes up 45 of the book's 160 pages.

Julian is in his fifth decade as a racing writer and one of the main hallmarks of his publications is the professionalism of his research, and the toil of his labour shines through in Dark Horses. It will be a constant companion right through until next spring.

Daniel Hill