

Marken Julian

JUMPS

SEASON 2018/19



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Marten Julian

The Perspective is **Free** to read online or through the post

The Perspective - Missed Opportunities

"I am in absolute awe of your depth of knowledge of the horses, season after season. I was very moved by your latest Perspective piece. It was very raw and very honest, and very humble at the same time. We all take our eye off the ball from time to time, and anyone could tell it had upset you to have missed an opportunity because of the deadlines and high standards that you set for yourself to prepare forthcoming publications. So, thank you for your dedicated hard work and for bringing so much fun and fascination in to my life."

"Just laid eyes on Marten's Missed Opportunities which is thought provoking and just what I need. I have faith in what you do regarding punting, suppose everyone has done their homework and at the last minute something takes you off track and then we know the rest of the story."

"Having followed your work since the early 80s, your Sunday Times years, the Perspective you have written here is one of the most enjoyable pieces of yours I have ever read. The fact my punting has often been guided by your thoughts and recommendations is one thing. To read something as personal as this is something else."

Dark Horses Jumps Guide 2018/19

Marten's *Dark Horses Jumps Guide* is packed with informed insights about recruits from France, the Irish point-to-point field and the bumper ranks together with news about unexposed and unraced horses that have the potential to progress through the ranks.

Marten's Dark Horses Jumps Guide is packed with almost 30,000 words including:

- *Marten's Premier List (his top ten horses to follow)*
- *Marten's Dark Horses (unraced and imports from Ireland and France)*
- *Marten's Dark Handicappers (unexposed horses poised to win)*
- *Jodie Standing's Top Twenty Point-to-Point Graduates*
- *Jodie Standing's Look Back*
- *Jodie Standing's Ten To Follow*
- *Marten's Champion Hurdle Preview*
- *Marten's Gold Cup Preview*
- *A Full Index*

£12.99



Gems hidden away in the latest Guide include:

- Champion Hurdle and Gold Cup advices at double-figure odds*
- An unexposed handicapper owned by JP McManus*
- A northern mudlark expected to take high rank over fences*
- One of the biggest eye-catchers in Ireland now with a top UK trainer*
- A lightly-raced six-year-old off the Flat expected to thrive for hurdling*
- One of the most exciting UK point-to-pointers now in a top yard*

To receive **regular updates** on these horses you can subscribe to our **Weekend Card**

'Insights into the Trainer's Mind'

Signed Copies

Strictly Classified offers readers a unique insight into the workings of a horseman's mind, notably in relation to their understanding of a racehorse's psyche, emotions and character.

Calling from his training in psychotherapy and other disciplines, Marten Julian sheds light on how those who work with horses try to unravel the innermost workings of a horse's mind. He has asked many of the world's top trainers and handlers how they identify and relate to a horse's individual personality and thereby encourage it to realise its full potential. Reference is made to how they address the potential effect of a racehorse's formative years, their integration into a yard, their emotional range of experiences, their spirit, their will to win and their end days. This is a book specifically about horse people, how they respond to a horse's character and psychological disposition and it is illustrated with examples of a few well-known horses with which they have been involved.

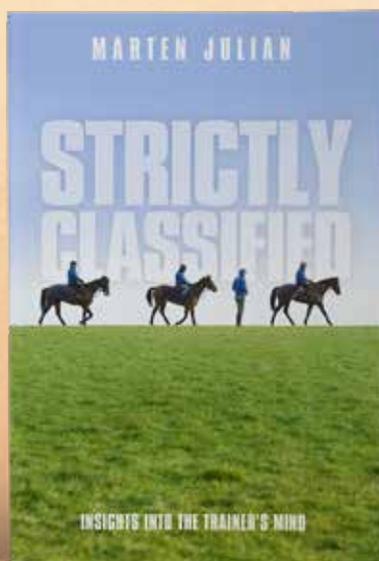
Client Reviews...

"If you like horse racing, you will love this book. Great read and insight into the sport."

"Really enjoyed this thoughtful insight into the world of horse psychology - definite read for all who love horses and racing."

"I loved it. A perfect book for anyone who loves horses and all that is involved in training and racing."

£15



Jodie Standing's

POINT-TO-POINT

Recruits 2018/19

The start of the Jumps season means there'll be a whole host of new potential stars about to break onto the racing scene, many of which will descend from the point-to-point ranks.

Irish point-to-points are vital nursery introductions and have paved the way for many of racing's biggest names including - Denman, Florida Pearl, Best Mate, War Of Attrition and Imperial Commander, whilst most recently One For Arthur, Native River and Samcro have been flying the flag

Jodie has trawled the length and breadths of the English and Irish point-to-point field and has unearthed many exciting recruits which are set to make their debuts under Rules in bumpers and novice hurdles for their new connections this season.

This book should prove an invaluable source of reference and has made a great start by highlighting an 8/1 winner and an 8/1 third placed horse (backed from 20/1) from three runners.

The Point-To-Point Recruits features:

An in-depth analysis of 77 lightly raced horses, including individuals with Paul Nicholls, Nicky Henderson, Willie Mullins, Gordon Elliott, Jamie Snowden, Tim Vaughan, Ben Pauling and Fergal O'Brien.

Of those names there are a hand-picked 20 with 'Star Potential' which Jodie believes will do especially well for their new connections.

A mare which is being aimed at Cheltenham's November Listed Bumper.

A Stowaway gelding who took three furlongs to pull up after winning impressively.

A Willie Mullins' trained gelding with the potential to develop into a leading bumper performer.

Client Feedback....

"This is really good book, hopefully a long-standing yearly read"

"A fabulous publication with lots of facts surrounding each recruit"

"Looking forward to studying this fantastic publication over the next few days. It's very well presented with some very interesting names to follow"

JUST £7.50!

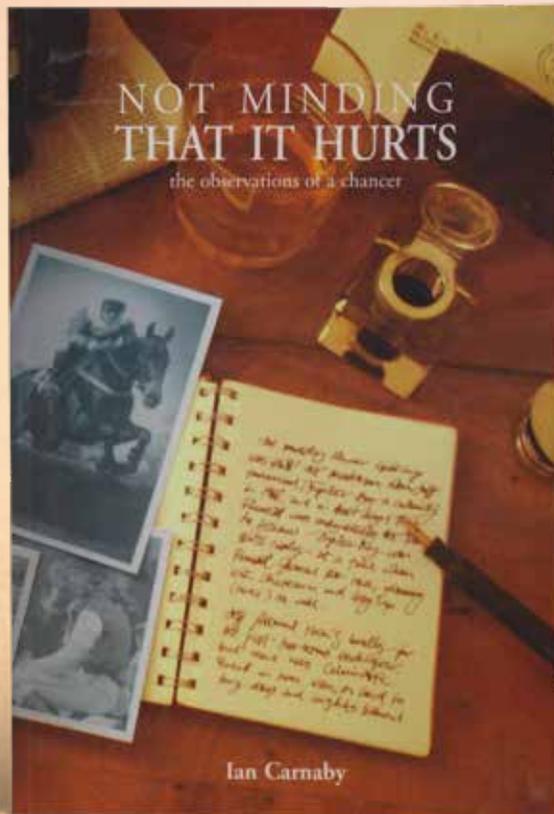
To receive **regular updates** on these horses you can subscribe to our **Weekend Card**

‘The observations of a chancer’

Ian Carnaby has been writing for Marten Julian for several years. He has also sold gin in Hounslow and instant lettering in Bolivia, finding one job a shade easier than the other. In between times, he has presented sports programmes for the BBC and SIS, as well as writing about racing for The Sporting Life, Irish Field and Racing Post.

A committed horse player for the better part of 50 years, he has never had a betting account closed. *Not Minding That It Hurts* is an engaging ramble through a risk-taker's life and may explain why.

£8.99



Cheltenham Festival Summary

For many years Cheltenham is the meeting that generates the most questions.

We offer a range of services to meet our clients' needs whether you have internet access or not. We are happy to discuss things over the phone if needs be.

Marten's *Bulletin Book* is the starting point. This 80-page publication, with index, features all the news and information Marten and his team have at time of writing. Marten writes it over a weekend to ensure it is up to date and it goes to print on 4 March. As soon as it has gone to print Steve our designer prepares the PDF version. This is uploaded to our website on 5 March for Cheltenham Package subscribers.

Our local printer turns the printing of the book round in just two days! We allow a buffer day in case of issues and advertise it as being posted on Thursday 7 March. Please note we post them out in the order orders are received so if we do take delivery on the Wednesday we get out as many as we can on that day which tends to be orders placed by December. Either way all orders are dispatched First Class by 5pm on Thursday 7 March.

If you have internet access you may want our *Cheltenham Package*. Subscribers receive an email each day from Marten as we approach the Festival. It may contain news or just discuss a breaking news story or Marten's current thoughts. As I mentioned above subscribers to this package receive early sight of the Bulletin Book in a PDF format.

During Cheltenham week the evening before each day's racing subscribers can download a *Supplement* (same format as our Online Previews). We call it a *Supplement* because it supplements the book. On the off chance late news comes through after Marten has written the *Supplement* he will send a text message direct to your mobile phone.

Please read on to learn more or give us a call to talk through things.





The Cheltenham Bulletin Book

“The Cheltenham Festival epitomises and represents everything that is great about jump racing – an unbelievable occasion as the finest jockeys, horses, owners and trainers battle it out for racing’s highest honours. It doesn’t get any better than this.”

The *Cheltenham Bulletin Book* has long been recognised by both professionals and enthusiasts alike as the authoritative guide to the greatest jump meeting in the world.

The *Bulletin Book* is packed with an in-depth analysis of every race together with observations from Marten’s well-connected sources in Ireland and France.

It also includes Stat Attack – a statistical guide to the past runnings of each race.

The book is posted First Class the week before the Festival starts. In the office we love hearing from clients in the approach to this book being dispatched. It’s a joy to hear how so many people plan their weekend before the start of racing to incorporate reading this book!

For the first time daily text messages are now included as part of the *Cheltenham Bulletin Book*. This will enable Marten to let you know of any major changes since the book went to print.

Pre-Publication Price: £20 (normally £25)

Don’t forget to order **before 31 December** to benefit from our **20% pre-publication discount!**



The Cheltenham Package

“This is the service that has everything – emails, communiques, the Bulletin Book by post and online, late text messages, updates etc. Essential armoury for the serious Cheltenham Festival enthusiast.”

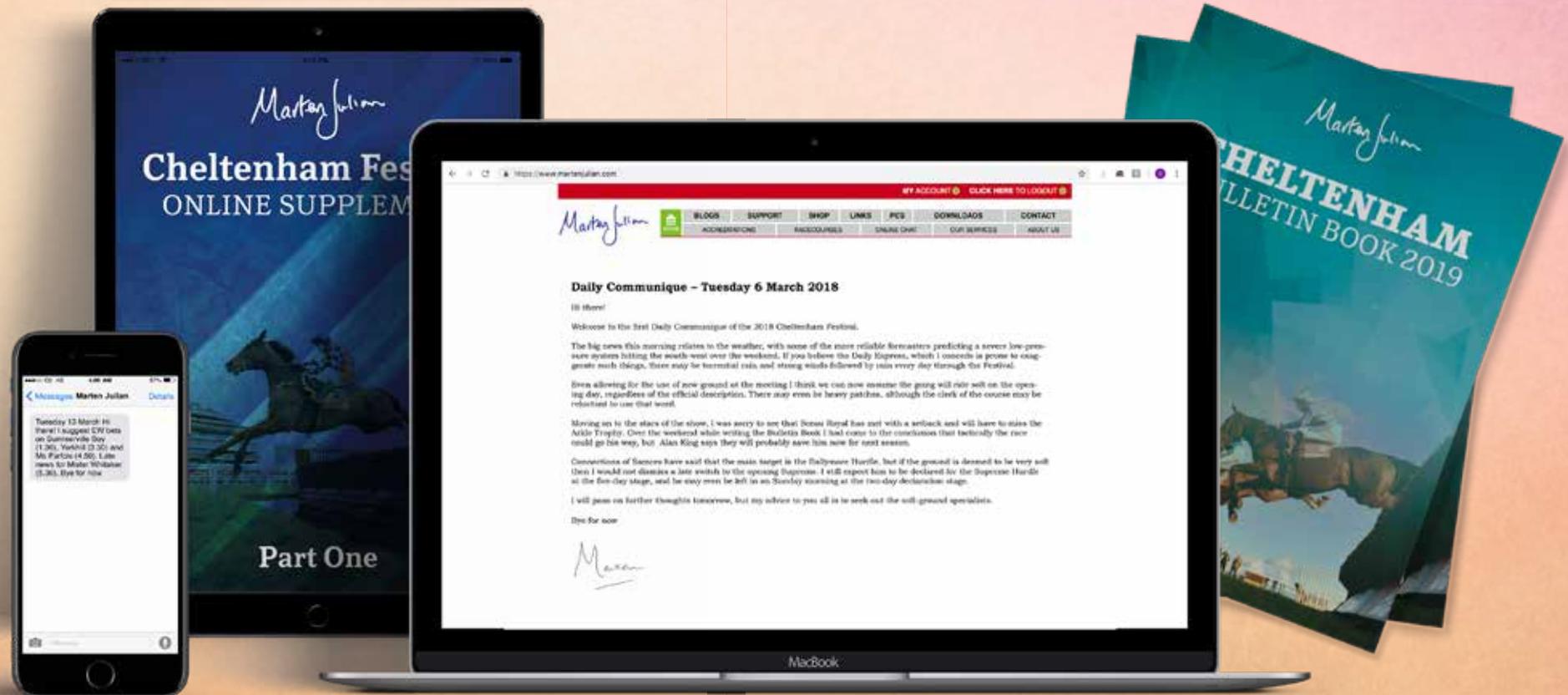
“It is very hard to get across in this brochure how much you actually receive as part of this package! Clients tell me this service enhances their enjoyment of Cheltenham and enables them to feel as informed as possible. We appreciate it’s the highlight of the season for so many people and over the past 40 years have always aimed to ensure Marten’s readers know everything they need to for this Festival!”

Rebecca

Subscribers to the Cheltenham Package receive:

- *The Bulletin Book to view online and download the day it goes to print on 5 March – a week before the start of the meeting*
- *The Bulletin Book by post – despatched first class on Thursday 7 March*
- *The Daily Communiques – receive a daily email from Marten and his team with updated news for the seven days leading up to the start of the meeting*
- *Online Supplements - available to download from 9.00pm the evening before each day’s racing (These are in the same format as our Online Previews)*
- *Text messages – Marten’s late news for each of the four days of the meeting sent direct each morning of Cheltenham*

The *Supplements* will be packed with latest news and going updates, running plans and jockey arrangements. As before Marten will specifically focus on horses that have been prepared for the handicaps, with special reference to likely market movers making this an invaluable guide for those who like to trade on the exchanges or take an early price.



The Weekend Card

Weekly racing news and views!

Published every Thursday and available through the post, via email or online!

One thing that has become clear is the importance of continuity in a service.

For example, when we select a horse we know that our clients would appreciate some feedback – whether it wins or loses. The *Weekend Card* prioritises this by providing weekly updates on Premier List qualifiers from the *Dark Horses Guide*.

'The weekend would not be the same without it ...' (R.W. Watford)

'First of all congratulations to the team...especially that jumps wizard Jodie...what a great informative service (second to none) they provide.' (K.W. Essex)

Marten's Weekend Action

Marten is very selective in the horses he advises for the days ahead, focusing on value and the strength of his news rather than be governed by the status of the meeting.

Marten updates readers every week with his thoughts and running plans for the horses he nominated for his Premier List for the season.

Marten also writes a retrospective article where he looks back at the previous week's selections and how they performed.

Marten Julian's Weekend Action last season gave Gonalston Cloud 14/1, Colin's Sister 10/1, Chapel Stile 10/1 and 6/1, Supasundae 8/1 and many more

The Sleeper Section

Marten pinpoints a handful of unexposed or unraced horses that have caught his eye.

The Sleeper Section last season gave Alwasmiya 8/1, Shamlan 6/1, Grapevine 4/1, Behind Time 3/1 etc

Ian Carnaby's Weekend News

Ian Carnaby has been a long-standing fixture in the team, enjoying a strong and loyal following over many years. His feature is always insightful and enlightening.

Our **Postal Version** is sent out first class every Thursday.

Jodie's Jottings

Marten's assistant Jodie Standing has made a tremendous impact since joining the team. Many of you will know her from the Point-to-Point section of the *Dark Horses Jumps Guide* (and now author of her own book entitled *Point-To-Point Recruits*), but she is just as astute about racing under Rules as her results show.

Jodie's Jottings last season gave Tanit River 16/1, Tacenda 10/1, Chooseyourweapon 9/1, Baywing 8/1, Doitforthevillage 13/2, Frodon 13/2, Delta Work 6/1, Topofthegame 11/2, Global Citizen 5/1 and many more

If you enjoy receiving and reading from a hard copy but would like to benefit from an early sight we suggest you buy the postal version with an email copy to accompany it.

If you do not use a computer you will receive access to a **free** Weekend Card telephone line which we record every Thursday morning. It lists all the selections so you don't miss out on Thursday entries or if your copy arrives late in the post.



The Weekend Card

Online

The *Weekend Card* is available to download through our website every week. Always available by 9am each Thursday and quite often on a Wednesday evening.

If you like e-publications this is the option for you.

Our website offers total freedom. You can go online and buy a *Weekend Card* on the week you wish. You can pay in pounds or use one credit (if you don't know what credits are please refer to page 15).

'Having been a follower of the Weekend Card previously, it didn't take me long to appreciate the incisive comment and articles ...' (D. W. Norwich)



The Weekend Card

Festive Bumper Issue

We appreciate that our clients enjoy a festive read and following positive feedback on our bumper *Weekend Card* published in the summer we are producing one for Christmas.

There will be extra articles from both Marten and Ian Carnaby with a guest contributor looking over the Irish racing. Jodie Standing will be writing a Point-To-Point update.

It will be included in all subscriptions to the *Weekend Card* at no extra cost. This includes our Full Season Pass and all postal subscriptions. Clients who are not regular subscribers and choose to buy it as a one off will pay slightly more.

It will be published one day earlier than normal on **Wednesday 19 December** and will be uploaded to our website as well as posted and emailed to subscribers.

“Well done to all the team at Marten Julian for week on week producing a terrific publication. It's worth its weight in gold. Great stuff from you all.”

“It was wonderful to have such a diverse number of articles, encompassing the past, present and future. However, Ian's final piece really touched me. What you, Marten and the team seem to realise is that it's not just about tipping horses (an impossible task anyway) but that there are other avenues to interest readers.”





The New Option!

Since the launch of our new online shop we have noticed a number of clients are logging in every week and buying the *Weekend Card* with a credit which generates a lot of transactions for both us and clients plus costs clients more time.

With this in mind we have launched the Full Season Pass!

If you know you want to read the *Weekend Card* every week throughout the Jumps season online only then this is the option for you!

You benefit from placing just one order at a slightly reduced rate for the whole season. Every week we will upload the latest edition to your order in your online account so you can login and read/download it.

Please note if you have credits in your account they will remain there for your future use against any other books or services or if you have enough you can use your credits to buy this Pass (18 credits or £90).



What are credits?

Our website shop offers the option to pay with money or credits. The best way to think of credits is that they are similar to a gift voucher. Once you buy them they sit in your account waiting to be used against future purchases.

If you like to keep funds available in your account so you don't have to keep entering card details then credits are the best option. This can be useful if you buy things from your phone or iPad/tablet when you are out and about.

If you don't like ordering online with your Credit or Debit card you can order credits over the phone or through the post and we will then add them to your online account ready for your future use.

Please note if you order credits through our website they have to be ordered without anything else. Once you have checked out and they are in your account you can log back in to order services or publications and pay with your new credits or use money and save your credits for future use.

The order form enclosed with this brochure only shows the prices in pounds but the credits prices are shown in our online shop. For example Marten's Dark Horses Jumps Guide is £12.99 or 2.5 credits.



Cheltenham November Meeting Online Preview

Meeting dates: Friday 16th to Sunday 18th November

Published in two parts: Thursday 15th and Friday 16th November

Marten has always had good news for this meeting:

Four years ago Marten passed on strong messages for Caid Du Berlais 8/1, Katkeau 9/2, Bitofapuzzle 4/1 and his big gamble of the meeting was on Sunday with Unique De Cotte 7/2, ensuring a good profit to level stakes over the three days.

Three years ago Marten had information for A Hare Breath, backed from 20/1 overnight to 6/1, and news for Sausalito Sunrise 7/1, Leave At Dawn 7/2, Altior 2/1 and others, ensuring another profit to level stakes.

In 2016 Marten's winners included North Hill Harvey 6/1 (from 9/1), Behind Time 9/2 (from 6/1), O O Seven 9/2 (from 6/1), Astracad 0/30 (from 7/1) and Simply Ned each-way 2nd 16/1.

When you buy this service you also receive the *Postscript* which is a retrospective look back after the meeting. It features Marten's observations and information gleaned from the day's racing with pointers for the future. It follows within two weeks of the meeting.

Past samples of our *Online Previews* are available to view online.

£15



Aintree Online Preview

Meeting dates: Thursday 4th to Saturday 6th April

Published in one part: Wednesday 3rd with a possible update on Friday 5th April

This edition of the *Preview* is published in one part, covering the Grand National, the full programme of racing on Thursday and the key races and specific horses of interest for Friday and Saturday.

The 2017 edition yielded a profit to level stakes from just a handful of selections with One For Arthur 14/1, Double W's 8/1 and Traffic Fluide each-way 3rd 14/1.

The 2018 edition made a profit to level stakes with Identity Thief 14/1 and each-way advices.

When you buy this service you also receive the *Postscript* which is a retrospective look back after the meeting. It features Marten's observations and information gleaned from the day's racing with pointers for the future. It follows within two weeks of the meeting.

Please note this service **includes** the *Grand National Analysis*. Past samples of our *Online Previews* are available to view online. £15

The Grand National Analysis

Meeting date: Saturday 6th April **Published in one part:** Friday 5 April

For clients who don't want to follow the whole meeting you can buy Marten's *Grand National Analysis* in its own right which focuses on the world's greatest race!

For just £5 extra you can obtain Marten's news for all three days of this meeting and also receive the *Aintree Postscript*. £10



The Postscript

Having gone to various race meetings with Marten and observed him with clients I have seen how much people love to talk racing with him and how much they learn.

It is vital we market our services correctly. We are not and will never be a tipping service. Marten's ethos is all about analysis and knowledge and sharing his huge amount of experience.

With this in mind we launched The Postscript Service back in 2016.

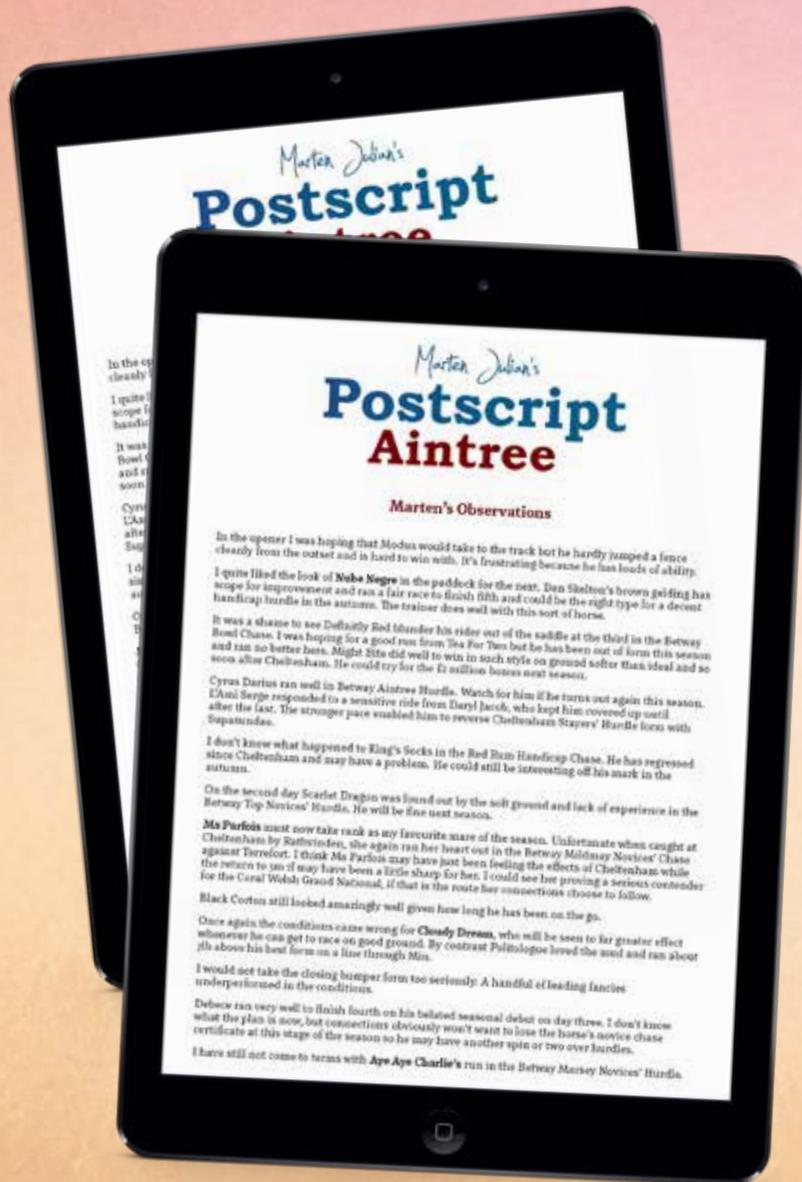
Everyone who orders an **Online Preview** (for a full meeting) or our **Cheltenham Package** automatically receives our Postscript Service after the race meeting for no additional charge.

This service is uploaded online for clients with Marten's observations and information gleaned from the day's racing with pointers for the future following the meeting.

This means if you buy a service you are not just receiving news and thoughts about the racing for that meeting. You are also going to receive a retrospective publication with long-term information in it as well.

Rebecca

Our **Postscript** is **free** with our Online Previews & Cheltenham Package





Telephone & Text Service

This service features the same news that is available on Marten's *Premium Rate* line. If you call that line this service will save you money.

The service provides Marten's full analysis of the day's racing including a text direct from him to your mobile.

NEW!

During the Flat we made this service available on an 03 line. This means it is the same cost as calling any other landline and should be included in your mobile phone bundle.

Please note you can join this service for any period ranging from one week to a full season. Just get in touch for a bespoke quote. Online we offer various packages including access during major meetings.

Would you prefer a daily email to save calling a line? Then take a look at Marten's complete service.

Regular subscribers to this service receive a loyalty discount for each season they remain a subscriber (up to a maximum of 16%)

If you like the idea of asking Marten your racing queries, or just talking racing, then Marten's *Telephone & Text Service Personal Service* is the one for you.

For just £1 extra per day you are free to text, email or call Marten when it suits you. Read more below.

Telephone & Text Personal Service

Exactly the same as Marten's *Telephone & Text Service* but with direct access to Marten. You are free to email, call or text him with your racing queries, observations for feedback or advice. We have found that clients tend to establish a routine with Marten that works well. Some subscribers ring once a week, some just text observations for his feedback and others email.

Would you prefer a daily email to save calling a line and access to Marten? If yes please take a look at Marten's *Personal Consultancy Service*.

Regular subscribers to this service receive a loyalty discount for each season they remain a subscriber (up to a maximum of 16%)

Personal Consultancy Service

This service was started many years ago to enable clients to speak directly to Marten with their racing queries. As technology advanced clients can now email him for a direct response.

All communications are direct with Marten and we tend to see that a pattern is established where some clients like to talk once a week and then the odd email or just chat as and when.

We also offer occasional online chats where Marten opens our online chat room for him and up to three other subscribers. This tends to happen prior to a major race meeting.

Clients receive a daily email with Marten's analysis and a daily text message to enable them to keep up to date with the racing news and Marten's thoughts.

For days when clients can't access their emails subscribers are provided with access details for his daily telephone line.

If you join and pay up front for the whole season you will receive a free copy of his *Dark Horse Jumps Guide*.

Subscribers to this service receive:

Access to Marten's news through a low-cost phone line (03). This line costs the same as ringing a landline and is included in bundle of mobile phone minutes

Text message direct to your mobile phone

Your choice of membership period

15% loyalty discount from our publications for the duration of your subscription

Discounted renewal rates for past subscribers

The option to speak with Marten direct through the duration of your subscription with your racing queries, either through email or telephone

An email sent direct from Marten with his information and analysis of the day's racing

The opportunity to take part in online chats with Marten and other subscribers

Access to a private area of the website to view the day's information

Marten Julian Complete

For the first time ever you can choose to receive a daily email from Marten without being a member of his *Personal Consultancy Service*.

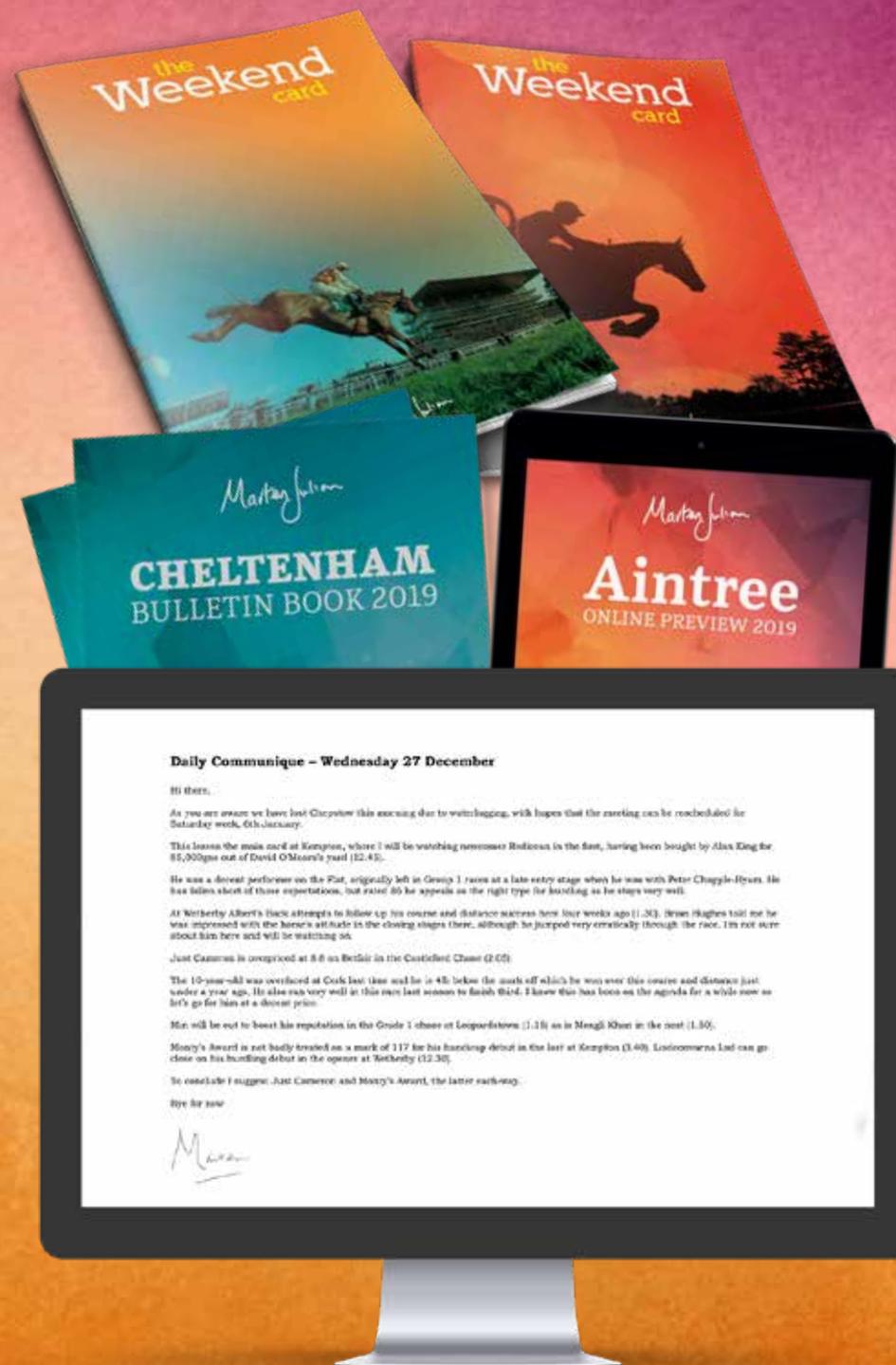
Marten Julian Complete members receive a daily email from Marten with his full analysis each morning and **EVERYTHING** he produces throughout the Jumps Season including the *Weekend Card*!

The price varies by month due to the services available. For example, November costs more as his *Dark Horses Jumps Guide* and *Cheltenham November Online Preview* are included. Marten's *Cheltenham Package* is included in the March subscription.

A saving can be made by paying up front for the whole season. If you join for the whole season you will receive a **free copy** of his *Dark Horse Jumps Guide*.

Examples of his daily email - the *Daily Communique* - are available online.

If you don't require all the publications but like the sound of receiving the daily email along with direct access to Marten then please refer to his *Personal Consultancy Service* (page 22). Subscribers to the *Personal Consultancy Service* receive a 15% discount from all services.



the Weekend card



Marten Julian

the
Weekend
card



Marten invites readers to ask questions about any of the views expressed in the Weekend Card or racing in general. Please email your query to marten@martenjulian.com

The Sleeper Section Marten Julian

Horses that have been added to the Sleeper Section this week are highlighted in blue.

Albert's Back (4yr Bay Gelding) L 25/1, L 12/1, W 18/1, W 5/4

There did not seem to be much confidence in Albert's Back in the market before his successful hurdling debut at Wetherby, drifting out to 18/1 from about 12/1. However, on speaking a few days later with his jockey Brian Hughes, I gather connections were hopeful of a good run. Brian told me that he liked the way the horse 'toughed it out' and he did the job with much more

ease over the same course and distance over Christmas. Now rated 143 over hurdles, he will look very interesting back on the Flat from a mark of 70. This is a very progressive individual. The Fred Winter Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham may be on the agenda.

Aye Aye Charlie (6yr Bay Gelding) L 4/1, 3rd 16/1

Aye Aye Charlie shaped better at Cheltenham last weekend, plugging on bravely to finish third, than he had over the same course and distance on New Year's Day. To be fair to the horse he would not have liked the testing ground, but he did at least confirm that he is all about stamina – just as his pedigree suggests. I still believe that we will see a different horse in the spring if he gets the chance to tackle three miles on good ground – possibly the Albert Bartlett at Cheltenham. Fergal O'Brien has already said that he doesn't want to forfeit the horse's novice ranking for a paltry sum, so I expect him to continue to aim high. Stay with him.

King Crimson (6yr Chestnut Gelding)

I will monitor the entries for King Crimson but, for now, let's remove him from the list.

Paris Protocol (5yr Bay Gelding)

This son of Champs Elysees has proved something of an underachiever on the Flat, having initially impressed me when winning as a two-year-old Salisbury in September, 2015. Rated on 93 as a three-year-old, he disappointed in four outings at three and then again last season, failing to win from eight starts. Now with Mark Walford from Richard Hannon, he has run twice over hurdles at Doncaster and last time at Catterick. I like the way he jumped on his most recent run, travelling well up with the pace for a long way until fading in the heavy ground on the turn for home. That extended 2m 3f in the ground may have been a shade too far, but I have seen enough to believe he can win a novice hurdle or, perhaps following one more qualifying run, a novices' handicap.

**Shamlan (6yr Brown Gelding)
L 6/1, 2nd 33/1, L 14/1, 3rd 11/4**

Shamlan is starting to look a little quirky. He appeared to be unlucky when baulked in his run at Wolverhampton in December, where he had been very weak in the market, before being ridden contrary to his optimum requirements over an extended nine furlongs – a trip beyond his best – back there earlier this month. He then ran back at seven furlongs at Chelmsford and was again stopped in his run, this time when starting to make headway from arrears at the home turn. He stays on a mark of 59.

**The Premier List Update
Marten Julian**



Here are the dozen Premier List horses from my 2017-18 edition of the Dark Horses Jumps Guide.

Debece, Just Minded, Lastbutnotleast, Lough Derg Spirit, Mount Mews, Not That Fuisse, Potterman, Ravenhill Road, Sam Brown, Samcro, Tea For Two, Waiting Patiently

Debece: Off injured at present having banged a knee, but the trainer is hopeful he can get him back soon to go novice chasing. If not, he will either stick to hurdles or miss the rest of the season.

Just Minded: Appeared to loathe the testing ground at Hexham, never jumping with any fluency and struggling from a long way out, but ran a better race on unfavourable terms next time at Catterick, beaten into third by horses rated 16lb and 20lb superior on official figures.

Lastbutnotleast: Unfortunately, she had to be pulled up at Carlisle after breaking a blood vessel but she then battled very bravely in bottomless ground to win a 2m 3f novices' chase at Haydock. That race may have left its mark judging by her display last time at Leicester, where she finished last of three. Never looking happy she was later found to have twisted a right-hand shoe. She is better than that and will be back, possibly after a little break.

Lough Derg Spirit: Has been raised 1lb, from 137 to 138, following his encouraging second to the ill-fated London

Prize in the Elite Hurdle at Wincanton. Jumped as well as ever there and can land a decent prize if he can be found any good ground. He has been given an advance entry for the *Betfair Hurdle* at *Newbury* on *Saturday 10th February* and could be an interesting runner off a mark of 138. He is currently priced at around 11/1, but I would not advise stepping in until we know the conditions as he has a preference for good ground.

Mount Mews: Made a perfect start to his chasing career at Doncaster, looking a natural under Brian Hughes. He turned out again there last weekend and ran well, getting caught close home by Wotzizname. There were no more than a couple of pounds between them on figures and afterwards Brian Hughes seemed happy to attribute the defeat to the ground, which was unusually testing for Doncaster. The best will be seen of Mount Mews when he is back racing on better going in the spring.

Not That Fuisse: Ran an eye-catching race at Doncaster in a competitive extended 2m novices' hurdle, travelling well and staying on steadily towards the finish having been given a

patient ride. The way he has finished his last two races suggests a step up in trip may suit, a view endorsed by his pedigree. He could prove very effective in handicaps from his opening mark of 120.

Potterman: Shaped well when a close third to Mister Malarky in a novices' hurdle at Kempton, travelling well before fluffing the last flight of hurdles and losing momentum, and ran another sound race when second to Pacific De Baune at Newbury. Bred to stay well so may benefit from a step up to two and a half miles. Not badly treated on an opening mark of 128.

Ravenhill Road: Brian Hughes spoke very highly of this seven-year-old when I interviewed him for the *Winter Guide*, saying that connections were not going to ask too much of the horse this season. His unbeaten record came to an end at Doncaster last time out when he had to settle for third place having been sent off a shade of odds-on. Still on the bridle when produced to challenge at the second from home, he shifted left once taking the hurdle and found less than expected when push came to shove. The soft ground

was far from ideal and possibly accounted for the defeat. In the light of the trainer's remarks I am surprised to see him entered for races at *Musselburgh on Sunday (2.35)* and *Sedgefield on Tuesday (3.50)*. The first of them is over three miles, where he is rated 6lb behind Mr Whipped but is in receipt of 3lb. We need to stay with him for the time being.

Sam Brown: Disappointed on his hurdling debut at Wincanton but made amends when making all to beat New To This Town by seven lengths at Plumpton in December. His rider Aidan Coleman spoke very highly of him afterwards and I expect him to thrive in a higher grade. He has been rated on 135, which could be very fair.

Samcro: The son of Germany has a chance to boost his glowing reputation this weekend when he has a choice of three entries at Leopardstown – the *Grade 1 Novice Hurdle over 2m 6f (1.10)* and the *Irish Champion Hurdle over two miles (3.30)* and the *Grade 1 Deloitte Novice Hurdle over two miles on Sunday (1.50)*. You never know these days where horses will eventually run but one of the novice races looks the more

likely, for which he will be odds-on in either.

Tea For Two: Tea For Two is a hard horse to get right and he was eventually pulled up last weekend in the heavy ground at Cheltenham. He will bounce back on better going in the spring and I will still want to keep him on our side in the Gold Cup subject to suitable conditions.

Waiting Patiently: Waiting Patiently always had things under control at Carlisle in November, tracking his main rival until asked to go on and win his race between the last two fences. I was reliably informed that he missed his target at Cheltenham before Christmas due to a minor setback, but he showed no ill effects last time at Kempton when taking a big step forward to win a competitive Listed contest in the most impressive fashion, beating proven Graded winners in the process. Brian Hughes anchored his mount in arrears before making smooth progress on the turn for home. The manner with which he distanced himself from his rivals in a matter of strides was quite special and he is now as low as 5/1 for the Ryanair Chase at the Cheltenham

Festival in March. Malcolm Jefferson has hinted at the possibility of dropping back to 2m for the Game Spirit Chase at Ascot in February with a view to running in the Champion Chase although ground conditions would dictate any decisions. He has been raised from a mark of 156 to 164.

Selections

Samcro (1.10 and 3.30 Leopardstown Saturday and 1.50 Leopardstown Sunday), Ravenhill Road (2.35 Musselburgh Sunday and 3.50 Sedgefield Tuesday)

The Ante-Post Agenda Marten Julian

I think the time is now right to move in with a bet on **Supasundae** at 6/1, non-runner no bet, for the Stayers' Hurdle at Cheltenham.

I like the way Jessica Harrington is campaigning this eight-year-old. Successful in the Coral Cup from a mark of 148 in last year's Festival, he then stepped up to an extended three miles for the Grade 1 Stayers' Liverpool Hurdle at Aintree, running Yanworth to a length at level weights despite

being rated 8lb inferior.

This season he has run third to Apple's Jade over 2m 4f at Fairyhouse and then ran that winner to half a length stepped up to three miles for the Grade 1 Christmas Hurdle at Leopardstown. That was a gutsy effort, trying to give the winner 7lb.

Jessica Harrington has decided to run Supasundae in the Irish Champion Hurdle back over two miles on Saturday in the hope that the race will "sharpen him up." The trainer says the race should leave him spot on for the Stayers' Hurdle and then Aintree, when he should get his favoured good ground.

Supasundae has a progressive profile – this time a year ago he was rated 13lb lower than he is now – and although the ground will be against him this weekend, a good run could see his price tighten a little. The horse is generally 6/1 with the NRNB concession but a little bigger elsewhere without it.

Ante-Post Selections

Supasundae EW 6/1
(Stayers' Hurdle Cheltenham)

Sacred Life 33/1
(2,000 Guineas)

The Pentagon 10/1
(Epsom Derby)

Under The Radar Marten Julian

Evanescient was caught in the last stride at Lingfield where the high draw probably made the difference. A 2lb rise, from 52 to 54, does not help but the nine-year-old is poised to win again so we'll stay with him.

There are no immediate entries for **Lucky Ellen**, **Air De Rock** or **The Plan Man**.

The Weekend Action Marten Julian

This promises to be a very informative weekend, probably better suited to watching and learning than backing.

One horse away from the main action that interests me is **Gonalston Cloud**, who is entered for the *4m 1f Edinburgh National Handicap Chase* at

Musselburgh on Saturday (3.15).

The 11-year-old is now in the veteran stage, but he has been a thoroughly likeable staying chaser in his time and he ran a good second in this contest last season from a 5lb higher mark than he carries here. He has not shown much in his two runs this season but they came on ground that was probably too soft for him.

I have no doubt that Gonalston Cloud has been tuned up again for this race and I hope he represents a little bit of each-way value.

I have to say a few words about **Kayf Blanco** (1.35 Wetherby Saturday). The nine-year-old has tested me to the limit, and I would not blame you for suggesting he has become an obsession, but he has been running more consistently this season and this is a track he likes. He is rated 7lb lower over fences than hurdles and I have always said that he would benefit from this longer trip.

I hope the ground dries up from it's forecast heavy. He warrants an each-way interest.

Elsewhere I hope to see **Supasundae** run well in the

Irish Champion Hurdle (3.30 Leopardstown Saturday). This is all about getting ready for the Stayers' Hurdle, for which I have suggested backing him at 6/1 each-way. He is, though, effective at two miles and with the ground putting the emphasis on stamina he could outrun his odds.

The bookmakers are offering 16/1 each-way first two places, which is just sufficient to tempt me.

Selections

Kayf Blanco EW (1.35 Wetherby Saturday), Supasundae EW (3.30 Leopardstown Saturday), Gonalston Cloud EW (3.15 Musselburgh Saturday)

The Weekend Selections Retrospective Marten Julian

This piece is devoted to retrospective analysis of Marten's selections from last week. If any of the horses that are featured in this section are entered and deemed worthy of selection then they will be found in my Weekend Action feature.

Colin's Sister ran a respectable race at Cheltenham last weekend, back up to three miles on testing ground. It did, though, suggest this is the limit of her progress and leaves her a few pounds adrift of the best stayers of her generation. I don't see any point in retaining her on the list at this time.

Tea For Two will be back on song at Cheltenham in March, where the likelihood of better ground will be in his favour. I want us to stay with him for the spring.

That's Life looks destined for staying handicap hurdles. He is not quick enough to win a bumper and evidently requires more experience over hurdles. We should keep an eye on him because I know how much trainer Nicky Richards likes him, but he is beginning to look like one for the handicappers section of next season's *Dark Horses Guide*.

Un Noble was quietly supported at Ayr today (Wednesday) but again ran a lifeless race. Having said that he was not given a hard time at any stage so perhaps this was being treated as a confidence booster having had problems with his back and ulcers. Let's keep an

eye on him. He is in again at *Sedgefield next Tuesday (3.15)*.

Previously Noted Horses

Better Getalong, Chapel Stile, Cloudy Dream, Giant's Treasure, Mia's Storm, Quixote, Sooda, Stubbytuesday, Tea For Two, That's Life, Tocco D'Amore, Un Noble

The Irish Angle Stuart Williams

For the second weekend in succession that much sought-after winner proved elusive, with two seconds, two thirds and a fifth achieved from five selections who made it to the racetrack.

Stowaway Forever's near miss was undoubtedly the most frustrating result, coming home a fast-finishing second after getting stuck behind a wall of horses approaching the final flight of hurdles. Available at 16/1 on Saturday night, I am sure that the manner of his defeat will not go unnoticed by the bookmakers, who will price him up accordingly next time. He should lose his maiden tag soon.

The trio of Heroesandvillains, The Holy One and Whisperinthebreeze should all come on for their first outing over hurdles. While Gordon Elliott confirmed that Jury Duty, who will have burnt the fingers of many in-play bettors, will be aimed at the National Hunt Chase come March.

This weekend we can look forward to the Dublin Racing Festival, with two action-packed days of top class action encompassing the Irish Champion Hurdle and Irish Gold Cup a truly mouth-watering prospect.

€1.5 million in prize money and seven Grade 1 contests have attracted the biggest names that Irish racing has to offer, with Faugheen looking for redemption in the Irish Champion Hurdle, Our Duke putting his Cheltenham Gold Cup credentials to the test in the Irish equivalent and the super-exciting Samcro, whom Davy Russell recently remarked was the epitome of a racehorse, out to further enhance his already lofty reputation.

On Monday Willie Mullins stated that Faugheen still needs to pass 'one or two tests' before being given the green light to contest the two-mile showpiece, where he would clash with last season's dominant Triumph Hurdle hero Defi Du Seuil, who will be hoping to get his career back on track following a disappointing return to action in November (scoped badly).

However, a more surprising clash will take place earlier on the card, as the master of Closutton has confirmed that Min and Yorkhill will cross swords in the Grade 2 Dublin Chase over 2m 1f.

It is undecided who Paul Townsend will get the leg-up on, but Mullins did reveal that it is a case of last chance saloon for Yorkhill over fences, and a return to hurdling will follow if last season's JLT Novice Chase winner fails to impress.

Footpad versus **Petit Mouchoir** (2.20 *Leopardstown Saturday*) looks another hugely informative clash. Footpad is already a very short price for the Arkle Chase at Cheltenham. However, the scopey six-year-old has failed to get the better of Petit Mouchoir on all three of their previous encounters.

I was very taken with Henry De Bromhead's Irish Champion Hurdle winner on his fencing debut at Punchestown, where he attacked his fences with enthusiasm and won with his head in his chest. While he concedes both chasing experience and race-fitness to his younger rival, he will provide the Simon Munir and Isaac Souede owned gelding with his first real test in this sphere, and it wouldn't surprise me if Petit Mouchoir's class and natural ability pulled him through.

The Coral Hurdle is always a tricky puzzle to solve. However, I do have my eye on two experienced campaigners at double-figure prices.

Highland Fling (4.05 *Leopardstown Saturday*) will represent the shrewd operation of Gavin Cromwell, and could easily get involved if rediscovering the form that saw him run out an easy winner at Listowel in September.

That victory came over half a mile further, but the likely strong pace will ensure that the six-year-old's extra stamina will come into play.

The second name on my shortlist is **Tudor City** (4.05 *Leopardstown Saturday*), who finished second in this contest off a 5lb lower mark 12 months ago.

Tony Martin's son of Yeats appears to save his best efforts for Leopardstown, having also finished second in competitive handicap company over this course and distance in December 2016. If tuned up by his canny trainer, he could easily outrun his generous looking price.

In the concluding contest I am looking forward to seeing **Brace Yourself** (4.40 *Leopardstown Saturday*) take on Gordon Elliott's latest bumper machine Rapid Escape.

Having caught my eye at the Cheltenham Sales in November, I was pleasantly surprised by the manner of his debut victory at Down Royal, as I considered him to be something of a slow burner. However, he more than warrants a crack at this valuable prize and could easily give the Gigginstown House Stud inmate the most to think about.

It is no surprise to see Espoir D'Allen a short-priced favourite for the Spring Juvenile Hurdle given his unbeaten status and Grade 2 victory over course and distance in December, where he beat the Gordon Elliott trained **Farclas** (1.15 *Leopardstown Sunday*) by a comfortable one-and-a-quarter lengths.

However, I would expect the Gigginstown House Stud owned runner to give Espoir D'Allen much more to think about this weekend on the back of that hugely promising debut effort, where he ran all the way to the line and claimed second place from stablemate Mitchouka, who franked the form on his only subsequent start.

Natural progression both mentally and physically would put Farclas right in the mix. And Gordon Elliott's recent praise is encouraging.

Whilst I hold no strong opinions on the Deloitte Novices Hurdle, I certainly haven't given up on Real Steel (1.50 *Leopardstown Sunday*), whose somewhat strange performance over Christmas mirrored many of his stablemates.

Highly thought of prior to that contest, he may give stablemate Sharjah, who would have won had he stayed upright, the most to think about. Therefore, he warrants a second chance.

Both Dortmund Park (2.25 *Leopardstown Sunday*) and Moyross (2.25 *Leopardstown Sunday*) are entered in the opening Grade 1 contest on Saturday and William Fry Handicap Hurdle on Sunday. With just three starts over hurdles apiece, it will be interesting to see whether Gordon Elliott and Noel Meade elect to pitch their talented youngsters into competitive handicap company.

The former scored impressively last time out and could easily be well treated off a mark of 142, while the latter arrives here following a disappointing display in Grade 1 novice company. However, his mark of 133 could significantly underestimate his potential. They could both run well in whichever engagement they take up.

Monalee (3.00 Leopardstown Sunday) will be given a real test in the Floglas Novice Chase but I am hopeful that he will pass it with flying colours.

Invitation Only and Sutton Place represent strong opposition. However, Monalee would be much shorter in the betting had he stood up at Christmas and should be effective over this reduced distance (2-3 over intermediate trips). Hopefully he can put his festive faux pas behind him.

I am very much looking forward to seeing Our Duke (3.35 Leopardstown Sunday), who accounted for the classy pair Coney Island and Disko in a Grade 1 novice chase over this course and distance in December 2016, back on the track following issues that

led to a hugely disappointing reappearance at Down Royal in November.

Last year's brilliant Irish Grand National winner has enjoyed both a racecourse gallop and schooling session at Punchestown in preparation for this Grade 1 prize, which will hopefully set the eight-year-old up for a crack at the blue riband contest come March.

Recent reports have been encouraging and Our Duke has already displayed the ability to go well fresh. Hopefully Jessica Harrington's imposing gelding can get his season back on track.

Selections

Petit Mouchoir (2.20 Leopardstown Saturday),
Tudor City (4.05 Leopardstown Saturday),
Brace Yourself (4.40 Leopardstown Saturday),
Farclas (1.15 Leopardstown Sunday),
Monalee (3.00 Leopardstown Sunday)

Jodie's Jottings

Jodie Standing

It was a mixed bag last week.

Perfect Harmony was disappointing despite finishing second at Doncaster on Friday. He looked woefully one-paced but it later transpired that he received a nasty cut when he clipped heels with another horse. He will be fine and Sandown's EBF Final is the target, when maybe he will be more effective on spring ground.

On Saturday, Cheltenham's ground did indeed become very testing which I thought would have suited the Nigel Twiston-Davies-trained Ballyhill, but as with Ballyandy in the previous race he ran flat and a short-lived effort down the back straight quickly petered out as the tempo increased.

By contrast, Frodon bounced back to winning ways under Bryony Frost who again excelled in the saddle with a confident and tactically astute ride. The six-year-old was racing from a career high mark of 154, but when taking Bryony's 5lb claim into account he was effectively racing from the same rating as when he won the Caspian

Caviar Gold Cup last season. I imagine, following a 10lb rise, handicaps will now be out of the question and the Ryanair could be the target.

The horse to take from Cheltenham was perhaps Santini.

When I wrote my piece last week he was a 7/4 chance but the combination of heavy ground teamed with Nico De Boinville appearing to choose Pacific De Baune put people off and as a result he returned odds of 4/1. It was a better performance than the winning margin would suggest. He coped with the ground rather than enjoyed it and he stayed on extremely well up the hill. He's a robust unit and despite already appearing to possess plenty of class, it's exciting to think what he may mature into next season. He will be given an Albert Bartlett entry at Cheltenham but it may be a year too soon. He is some novice chasing prospect for next term.

Over at Doncaster Calett Mad was another of Nigel Twiston-Davies' inmates to run a little flat. He was warm beforehand, but that's nothing unusual. He made the running from the

drop of the flag but had only a limited response once off the bridle. I have since noticed he had a wind operation after his previous run and he may still be struggling with that, although Nigel's horses are all running a little below par at the moment, as are Fergal O'Brien's who trains next door.

Calett Mad is entered at Musselburgh on Sunday in the Pertemps Handicap Hurdle Qualifier (3.10). I'd be surprised if he made the journey.

Moving on to this week and for me one of the most interesting runners on Saturday at Sandown is Jonjo O'Neill's **Palmer's Hill** (4.10 Sandown Saturday).

He had a lofty reputation when making his stable debut having won impressively between the flags and he duly obliged with a thoroughly professional performance. However, the bubble was slightly burst last time when appearing to not stay the extended 2m 5f trip at Ascot despite being one of the last off the bridle and still right there at the penultimate flight.

At the time Jonjo's horses were woefully out of form and I believe that had more to do with Palmer's Hill's performance than him being a non-stayer. He has been allocated - what could be - a very lenient handicap mark of 124 and I will be absolutely amazed if he cannot take advantage of it. He was entered in a Grade 2 at Cheltenham's Open Meeting which indicates he is rated highly.

The current heavy ground would be a slight concern but having won on soft ground it's clear he can cope with such conditions. If today is not his day, it certainly will be soon.

I also want to give **Topofthegame** another chance (3.00 Sandown Saturday).

He ran well in the Lanzarote Hurdle following a couple of months break having fallen on his chasing bow. He was one of the first off the bridle but kept himself in contention with many good leaps and he stayed on all the way to the line, albeit at the one pace.

Kempton is more of a speed track which perhaps did not play to the gelding's strength, whereas a stiff track like Sandown and a couple of furlongs extra may be exactly what he needs.

Up at Wetherby I'll be keeping close tabs on **Captain Chaos** who has had the Grade 2 Towton Novices' Chase as his target since his victory at Aintree (2.40 Wetherby Saturday). He has turned a corner with the application of blinkers and is very effective on heavy ground. Dan Skelton targets his horses well and this one must be in the shake-up.

I will also be watching Luccombe Down closely if he takes up his engagement in a handicap hurdle at Musselburgh on Sunday (3.10). He disappointed me last time when trailing home in ninth at Cheltenham at the December meeting, but I was taken with what I saw at the Showcase meeting in October and believe he'll be winning from this mark on spring ground. As I said before, Fergal O'Brien's stable are going through a quiet patch at the moment so I'll be watching on this time.

Further north, at Musselburgh, I want to stay on the right side of **Silsol** (3.15 Musselburgh Saturday).

I hinted at him catching my eye in last week's piece when Bryony Frost rode him to finish fifth in the Welsh National.

That was his first chase start since January 2016 and only the eighth of his career. A mark of 143 leaves him 9lb inferior of his hurdles rating and he looked to me as if he is on the cusp of winning over fences.

Bryony did the business for us last weekend, so let's hope she steps into the plate again. At around 10/1 he's an each-way play.

Over in Ireland for the Dublin Racing Festival at Leopardstown the main horse for me to follow is **Blackbow** (4.40 Leopardstown Saturday).

He showed a determined attitude to pull away from his rivals on his stable debut at this track on Boxing Day despite being headed in the final furlong. The runner-up, The Holy One, has since let the form down, but Blackbow

is sure to improve for the run given his stout pedigree and huge stature.

In an interview last week Willie Mullins said he may also run Minella Encore, but I also see Carefully Selected is on the advanced entries. He impressed me immensely when winning over the Christmas period, but that was in a 2m 4f bumper and this could be a bit sharp for him.

It's a big ask for Blackbow to improve enough to get the better of the likes of Felix Desjy or Rapid Escape, but those horses have shown their 'A game' to a certain degree, whereas Blackbow can only build on what he has done.

On Sunday, **Outlander** at 12/1 looks overpriced for the Gold Cup (3.35 Leopardstown Sunday).

The current favourite is Our Duke at 7/2, but I believe his price is down to reputation and potential. He also has to prove his wellbeing having tailed off on his seasonal reappearance at Down Royal in November.

Road To Respect is an extremely reliable type but Outlander had his measure earlier in the season, and although that form was reversed last time in the Leopardstown Christmas Chase, Outlander's record at this track reads 31111, opposed to Road to Respect's 133.

Obviously, it's a very close-knit affair and the Gigginstown horses appear to take it in turns at winning these big races but Outlander clearly saves his best for this track and thrives on soft ground. The one who could spoil the party is Coney Island.

Selections

Palmers Hill (4.10 Sandown Saturday), Topofthegame (3.00 Sandown Saturday), Captain Chaos (2.40 Wetherby Saturday), Silsol EW (3.15 Musselburgh Saturday), Blackbow (4.40 Leopardstown Saturday), Outlander (3.35 Leopardstown Sunday)

The Weekend News

Ian Carnaby

Whether last week's Trials Day at Cheltenham will prove as informative as the upcoming Leopardstown meeting where the festival is concerned seems rather doubtful but there were one or two very good performances and several talking points.

I was a little surprised that bookmakers went 25/1 about Definitely Red for the Gold Cup following his clear-cut victory in the Grade 2 Cotswold Chase. Of course, top-class races are still priced up with the leading stables holding sway and even these days a Gold Cup winner trained in Yorkshire would be regarded as 'unfashionable'.

This is silly, of course, as Michael Dickinson and Peter Easterby demonstrated many years ago. Definitely Red's trainer Brian Ellison will not be worried about the odds and I must say I think 25/1 is generous with each-way in mind.

The horse has gone on improving, as we can see from his form with The Last Samuri. Receiving 12lb in the Grimthorpe Chase at Doncaster

last year, Definitely Red beat him very easily (by 14 lengths). On Saturday he was conceding 6lb but still had him well back in fourth. The Last Samuri would have caught Bristol De Mai for third in a couple more strides but is very one-paced and the Grand National is clearly his race.

That may well be the target for Bristol De Mai, as well. Banter (the old-fashioned, harmless kind) in the racing press lightens the coverage and Nigel Twiston-Davies clearly has little time for some of the comments where his most talented inmates are concerned. However, I think those of us who see Bristol De Mai as a stayer suited by testing conditions have quite a lot going for us after last week's effort. As in the King George, he could not go on when the emphasis was on pace and coverage of his wide-margin win in a bog at Haydock was more than generous.

American seemed to surprise Harry Fry with his good run in second. It was certainly a big improvement on his reappearance at Newbury and he still looks the part - a powerful, long-striding horse who can carry weight. That may

be just as well if he falls short of Gold Cup class because he would inevitably shoulder a hefty burden in something like the Midlands Grand National.

Naturally I was pleased with Agrapart, who made it a good winning day for us in the Cleeve Hurdle. To her great credit, Lizzie Kelly matched Daryl Jacob stride for stride on the run-in and the winner forged clear close home. This was his first win over three miles and he would not be disgraced in the Stayers' Hurdle but was not entered because he must have soft ground. I doubt very much that we saw the winner last week and I still feel The New One will be the one to beat if Sam Twiston-Davies can get him tucked away for most of the race.

Maria's Benefit is a bonny mare and was another winner for us at Doncaster at Grade 2 level but she will need a long rest now. She led and went clear but Irish Roe joined her at the last, looking the winner. She then stuck her head out and would not be denied but both of them need a lengthy spell on the sidelines. It's cracking form but caution next time is advised.

We have been a shade unfortunate not to catch Sophie Leech's Man Of Plenty, who keeps running well without quite making the frame in valuable handicap hurdles. The trouble is that it may keep on happening because the handicapper has no reason to drop him and races like the bet365 Scottish County Hurdle (2.05 Musselburgh Saturday) and the Grade 3 Betfred Heroes Handicap Hurdle (3.00 Sandown Saturday) still look a shade too tough.

In the latter event I quite like the look of Philip Hobbs' **Westend Story**, who was one of four winners for Richard Johnson at Wetherby recently.

Still a little on the 'dark' side, Westend Story was a good bumper horse - good enough to finish fifth in the Champion Bumper at Cheltenham - but took a while to get things together over hurdles before Christmas when the Hobbs stable was not quite firing. In handicap company last time, he ran out a ready winner, giving a couple of pounds to Rose Dobbin's Shanelough (well held in third), who prevailed under twelve stones at Doncaster on

Saturday. Westend Story likes soft ground and will appreciate the 2m 7f+ trip on Saturday. I feel there is more to come from him and he can be backed each-way.

Bringing a good novice chaser back to non-handicaps is always a problem because they have a penalty to carry if already successful in one. Hobbs' **Rolling Dylan**, who has the size and scope to end up in better company, is entered for the Best Odds Guaranteed At 188Bet Novices' Chase (1.40 Chepstow Friday) but must give at least 6lb all round by virtue of his success in a Worcester handicap chase back in November.

I'm not at all sure Worcester form (I always associate the venue with summer jumping) translates all that well anywhere else but one must rid oneself of prejudice and Rolling Dylan has certainly shown he does not need summer ground. Maybe, with the stable having been under a cloud, Philip thinks it important to get another race into him. He has more scope than anything lining up against him here.

The near-fifty thousand pounds guaranteed prize-money for the Listed Betway Cleves Stakes (2.00 Lingfield Saturday) reminds us that some very familiar sprinters are getting ready for Championships Day as well as the start of the turf season.

Boom The Groom isn't quite as good as before and both Caspian Prince and Kachy are better at five furlongs than six. So, this is something of a nightmare but you might keep an eye on Fahey's Kimberella with the final in mind, while the enigmatic (where enigmatic means unreliable) Harry Hurricane will be 20/1 plus when finally deciding to have a going day, though he is highly tried here.

Selections

Rolling Dylan (1.40 Chepstow Friday), Westend Story each-way (3.00 Sandown Saturday)

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About Marten

Marten Julian has been involved with horse racing for over forty years, founding the Professional Sporting Bureau – one of the country's first independent racing advisory services – back in 1972 while studying at King's College, London for a degree in theology.

Upon graduating, Marten was invited by the Sunday Times and their horse-racing feature writer Brough Scott to create a column which would look ahead to the week's forthcoming races. 'Warm Up', as the article became known, quickly attracted a strong following thanks to a steady stream of big-priced winners.

Marten soon acquired a reputation as a specialist in unraced and less-exposed horses and his first Dark Horses Annual, which focused on emerging talent in the equine world, was written in 1976. He has since produced hundreds of publications including the National Hunt Guide, a companion to Dark Horses, Bulletin Books and Weekend Cards, garnering praise from industry professionals and the racing public alike.

With the growth of the internet Marten now writes a regular blog on his website and distributes his work in a variety of formats while still publishing through more traditional means. This enables him to acquire new clients while still ensuring contact with his long-standing followers.

Marten has also been successfully involved with ownership since 1980, when he established the country's first racing club, and acts for Dark Horse Racing as their consultant in racehorse acquisition and management. He has purchased the winners of over 50 races since that time – the majority acquired for relatively little money.

Marten has contributed to numerous specialist publications including the Racing Post and has worked in an advisory capacity in the film industry and on television. He is happily married and settled in the Lake District, where his interests include music and tennis.

Get In Touch

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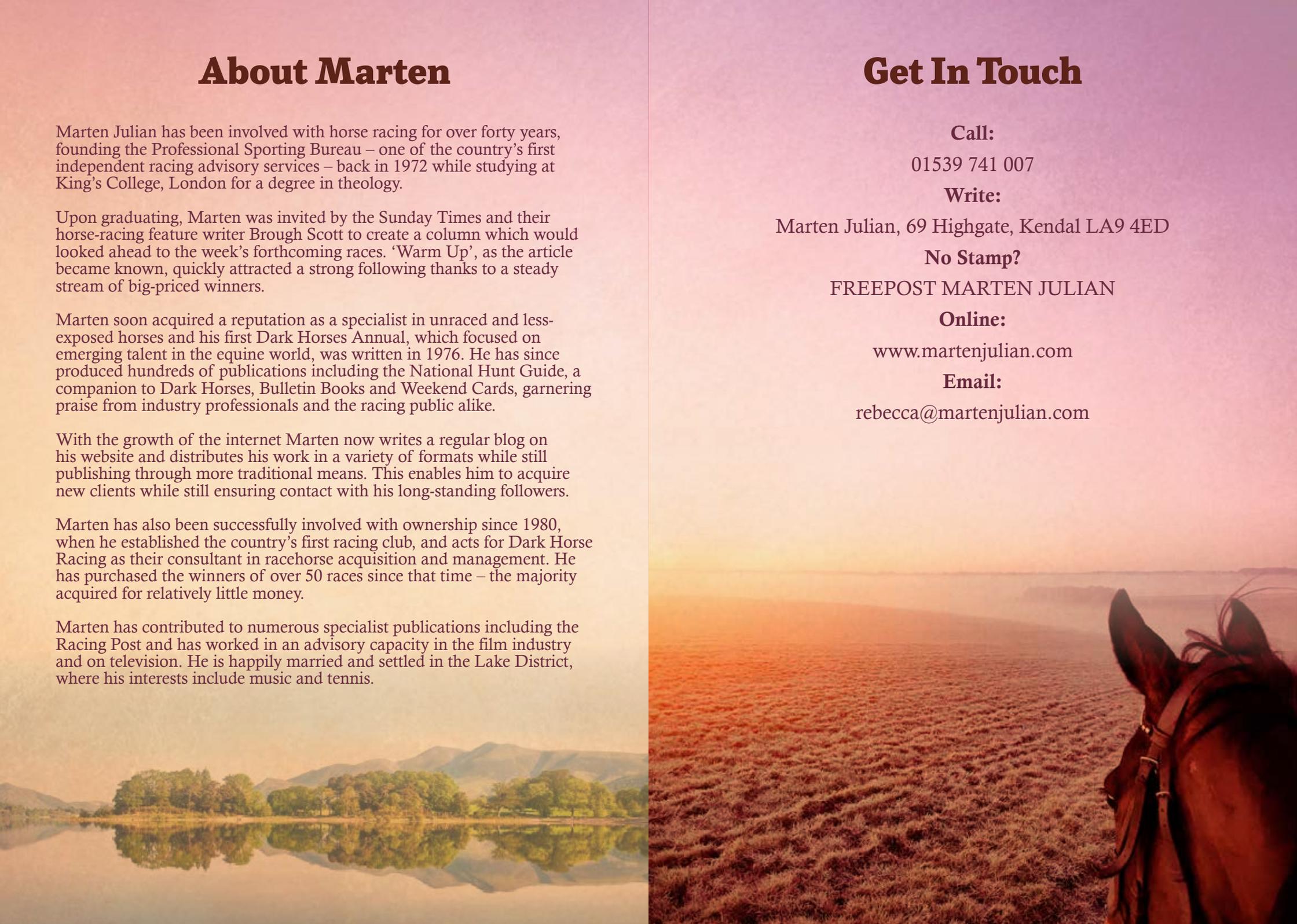
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