

# the Weekend Card

*Marken Julian*

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# The Fixtures

## FRIDAY

WOLVERHAMPTON (AW)  
KEMPTON (AW)  
CURRAGH (IRE)  
NEWBURY

## SATURDAY

DONCASTER  
NEWBURY  
SANDOWN  
CURRAGH (IRE)  
LEICESTER

## SUNDAY

GOODWOOD  
DONCASTER  
NEWMARKET  
LEOPARDSTOWN (IRE)

## MONDAY

GOODWOOD  
PONTEFRAC  
FAIRYHOUSE (IRE)  
ROSCOMMON (IRE)  
KEMPTON (AW)  
CHEPSTOW

## TUESDAY

THIRSK  
ASCOT  
CHELMSFORD (AW)  
WINDSOR

## The Sleeper Section by Marten Julian

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

### Albert Edward (3yr Bay Gelding)

Brian Meehan's son of Zebedee caught my eye last season, notably on his debut in a 6f maiden stakes at Newbury in September. Steadily away he made late headway in the closing stages to finish a never-nearer sixth of 15 behind the impressive winner Theotherside. His next two runs came in warm novice contests at Newmarket, the third of them won by last weekend's impressive winner King Leonidas. An opening mark of 65 seemed very fair but he was outpaced throughout on his return in a 7f 0-65 at Chelmsford before making late headway. As a half-brother to five winners, all of them over a mile up to middle distances and hurdles and out of a mare by Bering, he is bred to stay beyond a mile so it's no surprise he was outpaced over seven furlongs. As anticipated last week he has dropped 11lb, from 65 to 64. He has been declared to run in a 7f 0-70 handicap at *Newmarket on Friday (2.00)*.

### Black Buble (6yr Bay Gelding) 4<sup>th</sup> 25/1, L 12/1, L 6/1

Black Buble, who did very well for us last season winning three times, was totally unsuited by the track when he ran at Fakenham on New Year's Day. They tend to kick on around the final bend there which doesn't suit horses that need to be held up for a late run. Black Buble was out of his ground for much of the race and got going far too late. He has dropped a pound, from

121 to 120, which now leaves him below the mark he won off at Ascot last season. Given his fondness for good ground I expect Tony Carroll will have him ready to appear soon after the resumption of jump racing in July.

### **Bullion Boss (3yr Bay Gelding) L 13/2, L 7/1**

Formerly with Michael Dods on the Flat, Bullion Boss ran five times at two, over seven furlongs and a mile, running second at Hamilton, before six appearances last season, shaping well when second in a 1m 4f Doncaster maiden and when third to Funny Man from a mark of 72 over the same course and distance in July. There is a strong fast-ground bias to his pedigree but he seemed to handle the mud well on his second start over hurdles at Wetherby, travelling sweetly throughout and allowed to come home on the bridle in fourth, just under 18 lengths behind the winner. He had been backed down to 9/4 favourite to win his first race over hurdles at Musselburgh in November but he didn't get home. He ran below form next time at Catterick, shuffled back to the rear early on and unable to improve thereafter, finishing 11<sup>th</sup> of 12. He was allotted a mark of 96 over hurdles and ran in his first handicap at Doncaster, but he was soon struggling from halfway and finished a long way back, beaten 42 lengths by the winner. He has been dropped 4lb to 92.

### **Sehayli (6yr Bay Gelding)**

Johnny Farrelly is one of that select group of trainers that gets just a handful of winners a season, but they are seldom unexpected. His horses have occasionally been the subject of strong market support, from long odds, and from what I have seen Sehayli is on the cusp of landing a touch. The son of Iffraaj has had an interesting past, having cost 110,000gns as a yearling in October, 2014, before joining William Haggas, for whom he ran five times as a three-year-old finishing second once, third three times and fourth once. He was sold that August to Lee Carter for £17,000 and bought on behalf of an Irish punter, running down the field five times and dropping from a mark of 67 to 60. He was then moved to Johnny Farrelly, for whom he has run nine times over hurdles without ever finishing nearer than fourth, but close observation of his runs, notably last time at Plumpton and at Uttoxeter in May, suggest he retains a level of ability. A slick jumper, he went past the line at Uttoxeter with plenty of running left in him and at Plumpton he was not given a hard time at any stage of the race. He has been dropped 7lb from 89 to 82, which is rather more than I would have expected. I should add that as a 22-race maiden there are risks attached, but the registered owner has enjoyed success with Lake Shore Drive back in May 2017 and this horse has a similar profile.

## **The Selections**

**Albert Edward (2.00 Newmarket Friday)**

## The Premier List Update by Marten Julian

My Premier List horses from the *Dark Horses Annual* appear below. I will write up about them next week.

**All You Wish** (Andrew Balding), **Boosala** (William Haggas), **Brentford Hope** (Richard Hughes), **Delta's Royalty** (Roger Varian), **Higher Kingdom** (Archie Watson), **Highest Ground** (Sir Michael Stoute), **HMS President** (Eve Johnson Houghton), **Hukum** (Owen Burrows), **Jaariyah** (Roger Varian), **Khaloosy** (Roger Varian), **Kipps** (Hughie Morrison), **Luncies** (Simon and Ed Crisford), **Mohican Heights** (David Simcock), **Oriental Mystique** (David Simcock), **Quorto** (Charlie Appleby), **Shandoz** (Roger Varian), **Starcats** (Hughie Morrison), **Thunderous** (Mark Johnston), **Waldkonig** (John Gosden), **Yes Always** (Karl Burke)

## The Ante-Post Agenda by Marten Julian

I still don't feel I'm in a position to pass on any ante-post news at this stage.

The 1000 Guineas winner Love is now very short for the Oaks, especially given the alternatives that may emerge at Royal Ascot and elsewhere, while I'm not convinced 2000 Guineas winner Kameko will stay the trip.

I may have something for Epsom next week after I have assessed the evidence from Royal Ascot and elsewhere.

## Under The Radar by Marten Julian

I hope to have a couple of horses for this feature next week.

## A Look Ahead by Marten Julian

I did not enjoy the first day of Royal Ascot at all.

The absence of the crowds left a hollow feel to the proceedings despite the earnest endeavours of the media, who were working in very difficult circumstances.

However the thing I have most missed is the rhythm and momentum leading up to the meeting. Through no fault of its own the programme has been a 'kick, bollock and scramble', to adopt the vernacular of the lower deck, with a plethora of meetings and runners and little recent form coming into the meeting.

Anyway it's my job to try and find you some winners and we can leave the two-year-old races alone because the majority of entries have run just once, with added imponderables from Ireland and Wesley Ward's US entries. The stop watch can be a guide but then we have to try and compare the turf figures with all-weather.

They have been covered in Dan Briden's excellent piece featured below.

Having said all that, I gather the two-year-old Wesley Ward most fancies from his raiding party is Golden Pal in the Norfolk Stakes (2.25 Friday).

The son of Uncle Mo was beaten into second in his debut at Gulf Stream in April but Kieren Fallon, who has been riding Wesley Ward's horses which are being housed at the National Stud, has apparently had good things to say about this colt.

I simply pass that one for your interest.

The Hardwicke Stakes has Derby winner Anthony Van Dyck at the head of the market (3.00 Friday).

He shaped very well when running second to Ghaiyyath on his return at Newmarket but he has the extra-tough Elarqam, trying the trip for the first time, to beat together with the progressive filly Fanny Logan.

The Queen's Vase has been a good race for me over the years but nothing leaps off the page this year (4.10 Friday). Sadly the same comment applies to the Duke Of Edinburgh Stakes, another that I like to target (4.40 Friday).

I respect Ian Carnaby's news for Open Wide in Saturday's Silver Wokingham Stakes (12.40 Saturday). The six-year-old caught the eye at Goodwood last week, but the one to take a look at is **Gunmetal**.

I have always liked this son of Clondovil since his early days with Charlie Hills. He is fairly treated on 93, having been as high as 104 a year ago, and I have long thought him capable of winning a competitive sprint handicap.

I take **Palace Pier** to beat the 2000 Guineas colts Pinatubo and Wichita in the St James's Palace Stakes (3.00 Saturday).

The colt is not easy to handle, but he comes here unbeaten having shown a smart turn of foot on each of his three runs, notably last time in a decent little handicap at Newcastle.

His BHA rating reflects the task he faces – 109 against 126 and 118 – but he has always worked like a Group 1 horse at home and I know that Frankie Dettori is very keen on his chance.

We don't yet know much about the Guineas form but the first two market leaders had hard races while Palace Pier won with loads in hand.

Threat is the one that I most respect.

He would have been my second best choice behind the winner at Newmarket but I'm concerned that he didn't come to hand in time for the race. This may still be too soon for him, for all the high esteem in which he is held by trainer Richard Hannon.

For those of you who receive this on time I suggest you keep a close yet on **Khaloosy** in the Britannia (4.10 Thursday).

I liked the way the grey won his novice at Wolverhampton last season and this straight mile should suit him. I gather he's not very big but I can assure you he's got a turn of foot. Of the others All You Wish, down the foot of the handicap, is better than his mark.

Earlier **HMS President** will have come on from his pipe-opener at Yarmouth (1.15 Thursday). He'll be a big price for this but he's a horse that I liked enough last season to put into the Premier List of the *Dark Horses*. He's a smooth travelling sort.

It seems a little harsh that he is set to carry the same weight as Starcat, who finished a good seventh in the 2000 Guineas, but I'm inclined to take on this year's Guineas apart from the winner, who can be rated superior to the bare form.

Keep an eye on newcomer Mark Of Gold in the 7f novice stakes at Newmarket on Friday (1.25). He is bred for further than this so probably best watched here but he shows nice form at home and will win races.

**Tommy Rock** is worth an interest on his handicap debut at Wolverhampton on Sunday (1.00). He is better than this mark of 68.

I suggest you take a close look at **Theheartneverlies** (4.25 Thursday Newmarket, 3.45 Sunday Redcar, 4.15 Sunday Redcar and 8.00 Monday Windsor).

The son of Oasis Dream has the profile we've come to associate with Sir Mark's three-year-old handicappers.

## The Selections

**HMS President (1.15 Royal Ascot Thursday), Khaloosy (4.10 Royal Ascot Thursday), Theheartneverlies (4.25 Newmarket Thursday, 3.45 and 4.15 Redcar Sunday and 8.00 Windsor Monday), Gunmetal E/W (12.40 Royal Ascot Saturday), Palace Pier (3.00 Royal Ascot Saturday), Tommy Rock (1.00 Wolverhampton Sunday)**

## The Retrospective by Marten Julian

*This piece is devoted to retrospective analysis of my selections from last week. If any of the noted horses have entries over the next few days my views will appear elsewhere.*

**Revolver** defied market weakness to get up close home and pip the well-supported My Girl Maggie by a neck at Pontefract on Monday, the two of them pulling 18 lengths clear of the third.

The thing to remember with Sir Mark Prescott's three-year-olds is that they are always doing their best on their handicap debuts, regardless of any market drift. They have spent their time at two getting handicapped so the job is done by the time they appear at three.

Revolver made hard work of winning but he was up against a horse that had run well behind Renaissance Queen at Newmarket in what may prove a good race.

The handicapper will be hard on Revolver for this so he may reappear on Sunday (4.15 Redcar) or Monday (8.00 Windsor). He won't be any sort of price, though, and having had a hard race I suggest we watch on. He is not being added to the list below.

**Dulas** has been kept on his mark of 83 despite fading out of contention on his seasonal return at Doncaster last Saturday. I think he is better than that with the easy ground possibly counting against him.

Let's keep him on the list.

**Grand Bazaar** ran a respectable race at Goodwood beaten by the tough Tulip Fields. It took some doing on my part to dig out a John Gosden loser last weekend and although he will win races he's nothing special so we'll not add him to the list.

## Previously Noted Horses

**Alioski, Dulas, Graceful Magic, Kipps, Motamayiz, Palamos, Passional, Shimmering, Waldkonig**

## The Two-Year-Old Scene by Daniel Briden

The two-year-old events during the latter half Royal Ascot week look packed full of potential, though deciphering which youngster will improve and to what degree certainly adds another piece to the puzzle.

The Chesham Stakes on Thursday afternoon (3.00) sees nine go to post, four of whom were debut winners.

Charlie Appleby's **Modern News** is a well-related son of Shamardal who made a winning debut in a 6f maiden at Newmarket on 1000 Guineas day, second both in the market and in the pecking order to expensive stablemate Noble Dynasty but first where it mattered.

For all some observers were quick to pick out the runner-up as the one to take from the race, this colt himself is hardly bred to shine early/over six furlongs, and he is open to above-average improvement now tackling a seventh furlong. It'd be no surprise to see this son of Shamardal give connections a follow up success after Pinatubo (by the same sire) landed this prize 12 months ago en route to Group 1 glory.

Andrew Balding's **Bright Devil** knew his job better than most and was well placed against the favoured stands' side rail when making a winning start over 6f at Newmarket. He may not have quite the same level of short-term improvement to come as one or two of these possess, though the step up in distance should suit him well.

The Charlie Fellowes-trained **First Prophet** is a son of New Bay who lived up to his trainer's high expectations when making a winning start at Newbury over seven furlongs last weekend. He travelled well and quickened smartly to put a seal on matters, although he did race rather awkwardly upon hitting the front. Hopefully that will prove to be inexperience and nothing more.

He has since been purchased privately by Shaikh Nasser Bin Hamad Al Khalifa who is also represented by the Roger Varian-trained **Concessions**, a daughter of Muhaarar who put away a couple of rivals in a 7f maiden at Chelmsford last week.

She was noticeably green throughout but got the idea approaching the final furlong and fairly forged clear to score close home. It is hard to quantify just what she achieved that day and though surely capable of better with that run under her belt, one or two others make greater appeal on this occasion.

Aidan O'Brien's sole representative is the well-bred **Battleground**, a son of War Front who is the first foal of Arc winner Found.

He unsurprisingly found it happening all too quickly on his debut in a 6f maiden at Naas last Monday, also running green throughout the first half of the race, but the finishing effort he produced to come home in fifth suggested there would be significant improvement forthcoming for this step up to seven furlongs. It is interesting and not to mention noteworthy that he is the only one of the Ballydoyle entries to take up this engagement.

Mark Johnston sends out a pair of once-raced maidens in **Golden Flame** and **March Law**, both of whom debuted in the same 7f maiden at Haydock last week.

Golden Flame went down by just half a length to Devious Company in a protracted duel, looking one of the sharpest members of his family for some time in the process despite being a son of Golden Horn. For all he was beaten, he achieved just as much as some of the previous winners in this race, and he shouldn't be underestimated by any means.

March Law is a full brother to the yard's smart performer Dookus and was far greener than his stablemate last week, unable to land in a telling blow from off the pace as he came home in fourth. He will undoubtedly improve for that experience and win races, but this is probably beyond him.

The Albany Stakes on Friday (1.50) looks a typically open renewal.

Wesley Ward's **Flying Aletha** is a daughter of Tiznow who is sure to prove popular following her all-the-way success on debut in a 5f event at Gulfstream, soon in command and coming clear inside the final furlong to score by 5½ lengths. However, there did look to be more to that debut success than mere good preparation, doing it easily and coming readily clear once asked. She also has the pedigree of one that will prove best over this additional furlong.

Aidan O'Brien's **Mother Earth** is a daughter of Zoffany who caught the eye running on well into second behind the speedy Frenetic in a 6f maiden at Naas last weekend, having to switch to obtain a clear run but the winner already well beyond recall. It was a very promising debut effort, and this stiff six furlongs should suit well given she is bred to shine over 7f+ and shaped as such first time.

Mark Johnston's **Ventura Vision** and John Gosden's **Willabell** also found one too good on debut and are sure to improve, but Roger Varian's **Setarhe** had no such problems when overcoming track and positional bias to make a winning start over 6f at Newmarket a couple of weeks ago.

The daughter of Footstepsinthesand was slowly away and still had plenty on over two furlongs out, but she picked up in most striking fashion approaching the final furlong and won going away by ¾ length. The bare form needs improving upon, but this filly looks more than capable of stepping up on that debut effort quite significantly.

Saturday sees both the Queen Mary Stakes (1.15) and Coventry Stakes (1.50) take place.

In the Queen Mary, Wes Ward's **Campanelle** was an impressive debut winner at Gulfstream and commands respect, but Aidan O'Brien's **More Beautiful** looked something out of the ordinary herself when landing a 5f event at Naas last week.

Tanking along close up, the daughter of War Front quickly asserted once asked entering the final furlong to run out a most impressive 3 ½ lengths winner over Roses Blue. The stiff finish should suit and, for it's unoriginal to say, she rates as the one to beat.

A couple of others worthy of a mention are the William Haggas-trained **Sacred**, who impressed when winning the first two-year-old race back on turf at Newmarket a couple of weeks ago, quickening smartly to seal matters and looking a smart filly.

Mark Johnston's **Sands Of Time** is from a very successful Lanwades Stud line and looked both speedy and professional when landing a 5f event at Lingfield by five lengths, forging clear inside the final 300 yards. Her dam was similarly precocious and very quick with it, winning twice before finishing a good second in the 2007 renewal of this race.

The Coventry Stakes is perhaps the most intriguing two-year-old contest of the entire week, bringing together a few that have already crossed swords, and it may well be that the form of those races isn't confirmed with several open to greater improvement than others.

Aidan O'Brien again relies on just one in the shape of the sizeable Kingman colt **Admiral Nelson**, who created such a deep impression when making a winning start in a 5f maiden at the Curragh last Sunday.

Travelling strongly in midfield, he moved through stylishly to challenge approaching the final furlong and soon quickened clear to score by a length from better-fancied stablemate Merchants Quay. It is hard to believe he won't play a leading role here, with the additional furlong nigh on certain to bring about even further improvement on top of natural progression from his debut run.

Charlie Appleby's **Creative Force** accounted for the re-opposing **Saeiqa** and **Dark Lion** in a 6f event at Newmarket a couple of weeks ago.

Creative Force certainly knew his job, soon leading and never looking likely to get overhauled once asked for his effort over a furlong out, driven out to score by 1 ¼ lengths from Imperial Force. For all his relative professionalism played a part, it is unwise to underestimate that performance, not least as he is related to horses that improve with racing.

However, both John Gosden's Saeiqa and especially the Roger Varian-trained Dark Lion are open to significant improvement. Dark Lion was strongly fancied that day but wasn't able to show his true worth, taking a while to get to grips with both the track and his own inexperience, finishing to good effect to take fourth. The mere fact he is here at all speaks volumes about the level of improvement expected from him.

John Gosden also saddles the smartly-bred **Existent** here.

He is a son of Kingman from an excellent Cheveley Park family, and he contested the opening division of the 6f maiden at Newmarket. He raced in behind the pacesetters and moved through to look a threat approaching the final furlong, but greenness soon got the better of him and he hung right, eventually having to settle for third. There is little doubt he will improve plenty for that initial experience, but whether he is quite ready to land a race of this nature so early on in his development remains to be seen.

The Mark Johnston-trained **Qaader** is a son of Night Of Thunder who looked an excellent prospect when landing a 6f contest at Newbury last Sunday evening.

Always travelling smoothly close up, he forged clear inside the final furlong, drifting left as he did so but coming home four lengths to the good over Running Back. The third has already won since and, so long as his drift left under pressure was down to inexperience and nothing more, he could have a big say here.

One other worth a mention is Alan King's **Painless Potter**.

This son of Camacho caught the eye with his finishing effort when third in a 6f event at Kempton a couple of weeks ago. That marked him down as a banker for a similar event, but the form of that debut race hasn't worked out so far and this is certainly a much tougher assignment. Whatever happens here, he is one to keep an eye on.

Away from Ascot, there is an interesting 7f novice event at Newmarket tomorrow afternoon (1.30 Thursday).

The Ralph Beckett-trained **William Bligh** is a son of Territories who debuted in the same 6f event at Kempton as the aforementioned Painless Potter, looking a threat on the inner two furlongs out but unable to sustain his challenge and fading inside the final furlong. He is bred to do much better in time, and this step up to seven furlongs is bound to see him in a much better light.

However, he faces a couple of typically well-bred newcomers from the Charlie Appleby yard, the pick of which is **Yibir**.

A son of Dubawi, he is a full brother to triple Group 1 winner Wild Illusion and a half-brother to 1m 2yo Listed winner Really Special and 7f 2yo debut winner Ceratonia, all of whom won first time out at two. He wears on hood on debut, but that didn't prevent Ceratonia from making a winning start, and it would be a little disappointing if this colt couldn't follow suit.

## My Notebook Horses

**Existent (John Gosden), Gussy Mac (Roger Teal), Painless Potter (Alan King), Risk Of Thunder (James Tate), Tactical (Andrew Balding), Time Scale (Ralph Beckett)**

## Jodie's Jottings by Jodie Standing

It feels like a very long time ago since I was tapping away at the keyboard to write my piece for the *Weekend Card*. It came as second nature three months ago, but I have to say, with the lack of match practice, I have been a little daunted by it this week. Hopefully I will come on for the run.

I'd be lying if I said I have completely immersed myself in the racing since its resumption almost three weeks ago.

I have flicked on to Racing TV and Sky Sports Racing on the odd occasion, especially this week with it being Royal Ascot, but it's taking me longer than I anticipated to fully get a grasp of the action. Having said that, there have been a few performances which have impressed me, especially from the two-year-olds. I will come to those later.

As regular readers of my articles will be aware, I am far more at home with the National Hunt scene and I am very much looking forward to the summer jumpers getting underway at the beginning of July. Many trainers were preparing their horses for a spring campaign after such a torrid, wet winter, but with the early curtailment of the jumps season proper many of those horses never got a run.

Such a situation could make for a competitive summer of jumping from the drop of the flag. With meetings at a premium and field sizes limited to 12 runners (for now), I hope we will be treated to some good quality racing.

I have looked through this week's racing, but I am not going to pretend to hold a strong view on the vast majority of races, other than the few two-year-olds I mentioned earlier which are declared to run on Thursday and Friday. I will be following them closely in their respective races.

The first juvenile is **First Prophet** in the Chesham Stakes at Royal Ascot on Thursday (3.00).

The Charlie Fellowes-trained son of first season sire New Bay made a very stylish winning debut at Newbury last Friday, breaking well and travelling strongly on the heels of the leaders before overcoming greenness inside the final furlong to win comfortably by a length and a half from the favourite Al Watan.

First Prophet was fractious in the paddock beforehand, making plenty of noise and proving quite a handful for his handlers. With this in mind, it says a great deal about his natural ability that he was able to produce a strong performance, despite his mind maybe not being one hundred percent concentrated on the job.

I would normally be worried about an occasion such as Royal Ascot tipping a horse like him over the edge, but in this current climate he's unlikely to notice much difference to Newbury. At 10/1 I'm happy to back him each-way with only eight runners in the field.

Another two-year-old which caught my eye was Michael Bell's **Mr Ryder**, who made a very promising debut at Newcastle on June 6 and is declared to run at Redcar on Thursday (4.20).

The colt by Pearl Secret looked very green in the early part of the race and found everything happening a little too quickly for him. Needing encouragement from the saddle, including a crack of the whip at the halfway point, the penny slowly dropped and he came home nicely to finish third.

With Diktat on his dam's side he's unlikely to stay much beyond seven furlongs, but this step up from five furlongs to six looks a good move. I would hope he can improve sufficiently from his first run to oblige.

Friday looks a very tricky day but I will be siding with **The Lir Jet** in the Norfolk Stakes (2.25).

Two-year-olds can improve at a rapid rate of knots from first run to second but The Lir Jet looked plenty forward enough when breaking the all-age track record at Yarmouth on his debut on June 3 and has subsequently been snapped up by Sheikh Fahad Al Thani of Qatar Racing.

A tall, strong colt by Prince Of Lir, who himself won the Norfolk Stakes in 2016, he broke smartly and travelled well within his comfort zone up with the pace before quickening and putting the race to bed in good style, crossing the line two-and-three-quarter lengths to the good over Steadman with the 6/4 favourite just over a further length behind in third.

The colt has a lovely, smooth action. He expends very little energy and glides effortlessly over the ground. Providing Ascot's slower surface does not dampen his speed, he should be hard to beat.

Also watch out for an improved performance from Richard Hughes' Nelson Gay who is best- priced 25/1 with four places available. There was plenty of market support for him at Yarmouth when finishing third to The Lir Jet. He missed the break that day but came home nicely and may have more to offer if he can make a good start.

I don't want to get drawn into any of the other races. I have had a good look through the jumps card at Limerick on Monday, but with an overwhelming amount of entries it's far too difficult to decipher at this early stage.

## The Selections

**First Prophet (3.00 Ascot Thursday), Mr Ryder (4.20 Redcar Thursday), The Lir Jet (2.25 Ascot Friday)**

## The Irish Perspective by Ronan Groome

The Irish challenge has basically been that of Aidan O'Brien this week at Ascot but as always, the Ballydoyle output has been potent and one imagines they will strike at least once more this week.

On Friday, O'Brien sends four for the Commonwealth Cup (3.35), most notably **Lope Y Fernandez**, who will be reappearing just seven days after finishing third in the Irish 2,000 Guineas. If the proximity of that race has no bearing on his performance, he is the one to beat, given he has the best piece of 2020 form in the race and has a fitness edge over some of his main rivals.

Ridden by Seamie Heffernan, who appears to be getting first pick at Ballydoyle with Ryan Moore basing himself in Britain until protocols relax, this son of Lope De Vega was really well supported in the Irish 2,000 market and came with a sweeping run to hit the front inside the two-furlong pole at the Curragh. He tightened up from there, finishing third, and either didn't stay the mile trip or race fitness was an issue. It could be a mixture of both but his form improved for moving back to six furlongs last season and given the vibes from Ballydoyle have been so strong, he has to be a big player back in trip in what doesn't look like the strongest Group 1.

I was previously a big fan of Mill Reef winner Pierre Lapin as I think he could have a big year in the sprinting division but Lope Y Fernandez looks to have a stronger profile at this point and therefore looks value at 6/1.

O'Brien's other horses in the race look up against it and the other Irish runner, Millisle for Jessica Harrington, also has a bit to prove now after her disappointing 1000 Guineas effort - which I don't think can be put down solely to the pre-race concerns of her stamina over that mile trip.

Another O'Brien horse I'm backing on Friday is **Nobel Prize** in the Queen's Vase (4.10).

Ryan Moore rides Santiago, the other Ballydoyle declaration here, but there couldn't have been much in the decision and Frankie Dettori is a fairly able replacement for this son of Galileo. Nobel Prize took a while to get going last season but he is a brother Highland Reel and Idaho who, really progressed through their careers and produced some of their career best performances at Ascot.

Elsewhere on Friday, O'Brien has another big chance in the Hardwicke (3.00) through last year's Derby winner Anthony Van Dyck. He was initially a little disappointing after his Epsom heroics but got back on track with some good efforts in defeat - a third to Magical in the Irish Champion Stakes and a third to Bricks And Mortar in the Breeders' Cup Turf.

There was plenty to like about his staying-on second to Ghaiyyath in the Coronation Cup, which is more evidence that a strongly-run mile and a half brings out his optimum. He should get that sort of test here and providing the ground isn't too soft, he is surely the one to beat but is priced accordingly.

O'Brien's juveniles on Friday, Mother Earth (in the Albany) and Lippizanner (Norfolk) don't look especially strong but that can't be said for More Beautiful who will take her chance in the Queen Mary (1.15) and Admiral Nelson who goes for the Coventry (1.50) on Saturday.

The latter has a quick turnaround from his debut win but that is less the case for **More Beautiful**.

I thought it was significant she was chosen to run in the opening maiden when Irish racing resumed at Naas, which suggests that O'Brien thought she would be an Ascot filly and wanted to give her as much time as possible. She well and truly delivered, sprinting three and a half lengths away from a big field and clocked a good time in the process.

She is by War Front and out of Maybe, who was a superstar two-year-old, and though she faces likely tough opposition here in the shape of Wesley Ward's Kodiak filly Campanelle, I think she can lay down a marker for the rest of the season with a big performance.

The three Group 1s on Saturday really are a fine way to finish out the meeting, particularly the two three-year-old mile races.

The St James's Palace Stakes (3.00) looks a watch-only for me, with Guineas second and third, Wichita and Pinatubo, locking horns again. It's too early to write off the Godolphin horse while Wichita deserves a lot of credit for racing closer to the searing pace at Newmarket.

I've made no secret of my hopes for **Alpine Star** and I'm sticking with her in the Coronation Stakes (2.25).

Quadrilateral is the favourite there but she is surely going to be better over further and I'd fear the American filly Sharing significantly more. She won the Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf (beat Daahyeh and Albigna there) and is an intriguing runner for Graham Motion who has booked Oisín Murphy.

That said, Alpine Star had Love behind her in the Debutante Stakes last season and would have been her stable's main contender for the Marcel Boussac, which Albigna won, bar a late injury.

It looks a shrewd move to come here, considering her absolute top class half-sister Alpha Centauri was a five-length winner of this race and while she will be having her first run of the season, she will also be fresher than Quadrilateral who may well have had a hard race at Newmarket.

Finally, Sceptical will carry the hopes of many in the Diamond Jubilee (3.35).

This is a brilliant story for Tipperary trainer Denis Hogan who picked up this Godolphin cast-off for just £2,800 in a horses-in-training sale last year. He has been a wide-margin winner of

all of his starts for Hogan since but I just worry about him over the six furlongs here. He looks all speed and could be vulnerable to a late surge from one of the more established six-furlong horses.

## The Selections

**Lope Y Fernandez 6/1 (3.35 Friday), Nobel Prize 11/2 Royal Ascot (4.10 Friday),  
More Beautiful 2/1 (1.15 Saturday), Alpine Star 5/1 (2.25 Saturday)**

## The Weekend News by Ian Carnaby

It was good to keep the winning run going last week when El Astronaute, a very tough and genuine sprinter, made all the running at Doncaster. John Quinn has always been a very gifted trainer and knows how to get horses ready first time up, as both El Astronaute and Liberty Beach have shown.

Liberty Beach followed her Haydock victory with a highly creditable third in the King's Stand at Royal Ascot on Tuesday. There was no betting value in this race although, having said that, if you were ever going to take a very short price about Battaash at Ascot, this was the time to do it, with no crowds to fire him up.

In fairness to this brilliantly speedy individual, had Blue Point not caught him close home in consecutive runnings of the King's Stand, people would have been saying that Battaash handled the course perfectly well.

Charlie Hills, responsible for the first two home this week, made the point in his own quietly authoritative way before his sprinting star coasted home. I still think there is much better value around if you work hard enough, but I readily concede that Battaash is quite something on his day - or days.

As you know, one of my closest racing friends is George Materna, who is a great supporter of Goodwood and has horses with Amanda Perrett and Mick Channon.

The enigmatic Open Wide has been very good to him overall, though he is not the most straightforward and there has been no sign in his two runs to date that he is close to the form that carried him into second place in the Stewards' Cup last year. Of course, a return to big fields and a guaranteed flat-out gallop would help.

As things stand, Open Wide would need a couple to drop out to make the line-up for the Wokingham itself (4.10 Royal Ascot Saturday) but there is a 'consolation' race, the Silver Wokingham Handicap (12.40 Royal Ascot Saturday), where he would be giving weight to most of them. Roger Charlton has entered Blue Mist, who would be dropping back in trip, but the two I like are Count D'orsay and, especially, William Haggas' Aplomb.

Not at his best after winning at Nottingham and Leicester last year, **Aplomb** returned with a fair fifth at Newmarket first time up, looking as if six furlongs would suit him much better than five.

Count D'orsay was a couple of places in front of him and will be only a pound worse off but I think Aplomb is the likely improver. Haggas is just about to hit top form and should be closely watched from now on.

Just to tidy up the Wokingham, Amanda Perrett will use a 5lb lad to offset Tinto's stiffer task following the 40/1 victory at Newmarket (stable-companion Open Wide down the field, needing the run), while one would have considerable respect for Sir Michael Stoute's Mubakker, with owner Hamdan Al Maktoum in cracking form.

However, to small stakes I'm going out on a limb with Tony Carroll's **Recon Mission** (4.10 Royal Ascot Saturday), who showed terrific pace to win at York around this time last year and had a quiet introduction behind Tinto the other day.

Carroll has better ammunition in the yard these days and, although I am committed to working out handicap sprints in a strictly 'weights and measures' way, I always want something with early speed on my side in a Wokingham and I can imagine Recon Mission and Hollie Doyle leading these. Shop around for a firm paying each-way on the first six. He is 33/1 as I write these notes.

Considering the prestige and very handsome prize-money, the Commonwealth Cup (3.35 Royal Ascot Friday) looks a very good sprint but not a great one.

It could possibly go to France via Wootton Bassett's son Wooded, who beat Khalid Abullah's consistent Alocasia at Chantilly last time. Pulling the British and French form together is a tricky business but three lengths plus is a fair margin in a Group 3 sprint and the runner-up had kept good Group 2 company before that.

From the sublime to the cor blimey, and just for the change in your pocket, you might have a look at top-weight Muatadel in the Class 6 Play 4 To Win At Betway Handicap (7.05 Lingfield Friday).

The old plodder has been round the yards - Mark Johnston when owned by Sheikh Hamdan, then Ed Dunlop and Roger Fell and now John Wainwright - but retains a modicum of ability. Wainwright is quite shrewd when it comes to AW races a long way south and has booked Kevin Stott, who has ridden Muatadel before. There is little encouragement to be taken from an unplaced effort first time up but this is a weak race and I know this stable of old.

The modest Richard Fahey handicapper that I'm going to keep on backing to small stakes is **Society Red** (8.10 Ripon Saturday), who is dropping to a handy mark.

Now on 81, he travelled easily off 83 at Newcastle first time up, only to weaken into fifth in the final furlong. He contests warm 10f handicaps without success but is now 5lb lower than for his last turf victory in June 2018. I wanted him to end up in a Class 4 and this is a Class 3 but he is well and there is no shrewder operator in the country.

## The Selections

**Aplomb (12.40 Royal Ascot Saturday), Recon Mission E/W (4.10 Royal Ascot Saturday), Society Red E/W (8.10 Ripon Saturday)**

# Weekend Card Selections

## Thursday 18th June

HMS President	The Look Ahead (MJ)	1.15 Royal Ascot
First Prophet (EW)	Jodie's Jottings	3.00 Royal Ascot
Khaloosy	The Look Ahead (MJ)	4.10 Royal Ascot
Mr Ryder	Jodie's Jottings	4.20 Redcar
Theheartneverlies*	The Look Ahead (MJ)	4.25 Newmarket

## Friday 19th June

Albert Edward	The Sleeper Section	2.00 Newmarket
The Lir Jet	Jodie's Jottings	2.25 Royal Ascot
Lope Y Fernandez	Ronan Groome	3.35 Royal Ascot
Nobel Prize	Ronan Groome	4.10 Royal Ascot

## Saturday 20th June

Gunmetal (EW)	The Looks Ahead (MJ)	12.40 Royal Ascot
Aplomb	The Weekend News (IC)	12.40 Royal Ascot
More Beautiful	Ronan Groome	1.15 Royal Ascot
Alpine Star	Ronan Groome	2.25 Royal Ascot
Palace Pier	The Looks Ahead (MJ)	3.00 Royal Ascot
Recon Mission (EW)	The Weekend News (IC)	4.10 Royal Ascot
Society Red (EW)	The Weekend News (IC)	8.10 Ripon

## Sunday 21st June

Tommy Rock	The Looks Ahead (MJ)	1.00 Wolves
Theheartneverlies*	The Look Ahead (MJ)	3.45/4.15 Redcar

## Monday 22nd June

Theheartneverlies*	The Look Ahead (MJ)	8.00 Windsor
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\*Horse has another entry

## Dan Briden's Notebook Horses

Existent (John Gosden), Gussy Mac (Roger Teal), Painless Potter (Alan King), Risk Of Thunder (James Tate), Tactical (Andrew Balding), Time Scale (Ralph Beckett)



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