

# the Weekend Card



Marken Julian

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## The Fixtures

**Thursday 25th November** Lingfield Park, Taunton, Wolverhampton,  
Chelmsford City

**Friday 26th November** Lingfield park, Newbury, Doncaster,  
Chelmsford City

**Saturday 27th November** Newcastle, Doncaster, Newbury,  
Bangor-on-Dee, Wolverhampton

**Sunday 28th November** Carlisle, Leicester

**Monday 29th November** Kempton Park, Ayr, Wolverhampton

**Tuesday 30th November** Lingfield Park, Southwell, Newcastle

## The Sleeper Section by Marten Julian

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

### **Heartbreaker (4yr Bay Filly)**

Trainer Michael Bell has kindly informed me that Heartbreaker has been put away for the winter and will return in the spring for a campaign on the Flat. She will then be of great interest to us but, for the time being, she is removed from this section.

### **Pemberley (8yr Bay Gelding)**

Occasionally you see a horse who catches the eye, sometimes for no obvious reason, and this was the case when Pemberley ran in an extended 2m 7f 0-130 handicap chase at Lingfield.

Emma Lavelle's eight-year-old was having only his third start over fences, since running second at Huntingdon last December. A month before that he had finished third at Fontwell and on Tuesday he caught the eye with a highly promising return to action.

Travelling comfortably throughout the race, he lost his place turning for home before staying on strongly from the last fence to take second in the closing stages. Rated 112, to my surprise he has been dropped 2lbs to 110. He is sure to win from this mark in the not too distant future. He acts well on easy going.

### **Un Prophete (10yr Grey Gelding)**

This seasoned handicap chaser has been around for quite a while, but he showed enough on his return to action at Aintree to suggest that he will soon be winning again.

Successful in six of his 39 starts, three times over fences, he shaped better than his finishing position suggests in a 3m 1f 0-150 Veterans' Handicap Chase on his return to action at Aintree. The good ground would not have suited him as his best form is on an easy surface, but a 1lb drop from 119 to 118 will help, having won from a mark of 122.

In keeping with other horses trained by Venetia Williams, he is one to keep in mind for the midwinter period of racing.

He loves the mud.

### **Valshan Time (9yr Bay Gelding)**

The inclusion of the maiden nine-year-old in this section may come as a surprise to many of you.

Pulled up in his first three starts in point-to-points back in 2016, before running a distant third in December of that year, the son of Atrah has subsequently been beaten by substantial distances under Rules.

In the summer of 2017 he ran five times, beaten 104 lengths, 86 lengths, 85 lengths and a distance. On the other occasion he dislodged his rider three fences from home in a novice chase at Stratford in July.

The next time we saw him was in his first handicap at Exeter in April 2018 when, from a mark of 76 and blinkered for the first time, he was pulled up when well behind. Two months later he fell three fences from home in a handicap chase at Worcester before showing his first glimpse of form when third off a mark of 75 at Stratford in July. He failed to replicate the form two

weeks later and that was the last we were to see of him until, 1185 days later, he appeared in a handicap chase at Stratford.

Running from a mark 6lbs out of the handicap he travelled well for a long way until colliding with the rails after jumping the second last hurdle.

He was disappointing when finishing a long way behind in a 2m 5f novices' chase at Ffos Las and he didn't shape any better when he returned to hurdles at Hereford earlier today (Wednesday).

He has regressed from his first run at Stratford in October and is dropped from this section.

## The Premier List Update - Jumps by Marten Julian

*The Premier List qualifiers from the recently published Dark Horses Jumps Guide 2021/22 are as follows.*

**Bass Rock** (Sandy Thomson): Showed ability on his sole start in France as a three-year-old before appearing for these connections at Carlisle last October, staying on well to finish second. Filled the same spot over the course and distance the following month. Stepped up to an extended 2m 4f in heavy ground at Ayr in January, finishing third of nine, and subsequently had wind surgery. Reappeared at Ayr in March and ran second in a match before making a successful handicap debut at the same track in April, comfortably beating Leostar with more in hand than the margin reflects. Made a successful return last month at Carlisle, winning easily by five lengths from a mark of 123. Put up an improved effort when third of 12 in the valuable extended 3m handicap hurdle at Haydock last weekend. Looked the likely winner jumping the third last and kept on well to finish third, beaten four and a half lengths after weakening in the dying strides. Ran there off 130 and has been raised 2lbs to 132. Has now finished in the first three in all but one of his eight starts and has the profile to make a very useful novice chaser. He is one to stick with.

**Dusart** (Nicky Henderson): Made a successful hurdling debut at Newbury in November 2020, jumping the hurdles with air to spare and subsequently had time off until reappearing at Aintree in April in the Grade 1 Betway Top Novices' Hurdle. Led briefly two hurdles from home before a clumsy jump cost him momentum. Stayed on again on the run to the line to finish third, beaten two and a half lengths by County Handicap Hurdle winner Belfast

Banter. Jumped his hurdles in the manner of a chaser and expected to take high rank in that sphere this season. Has the pace to win over two miles but the pedigree to excel over further.

**Edwardstone** (Alan King): Has always shown ability and ran notably well when chasing home the useful Chantry House at Warwick in March 2019. Switched to hurdling the following November, made an immediate impact when winning a novice event at Wincanton and then when beating Harry Senior by a length in a better race at Aintree. Not disgraced next time out, when second in a Grade 2 novice contest at Haydock, before running on well to finish sixth of 15 to Shishkin in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle at Cheltenham in March. Returned to action last November in the competitive Greatwood Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham, catching the eye with a strong-finishing fifth to The Shunter. Unseated his rider on his chase debut at Doncaster in December and quickly returned to hurdling the following month when winning in heavy ground at Market Rasen from a mark of 141. Ran the best race of his career when third, beaten four and a half lengths, in the prestigious Betfair Hurdle at Newbury. Again shaped well when fifth of 25 to Belfast Banter in the County Hurdle at Cheltenham before ending the season with a good third in the Grade 3 Pertemps Network Handicap Hurdle at Aintree in April. Ended the season on a mark of 150 and unfortunate to be brought down on his return to chasing at Warwick. He earned compensation for that misfortune when putting in a fluent round of jumping back at the track last week. He got close to a couple of fences and may be suited to flat tracks. There was much to like about the manner in which he came away from the last and I expect him to progress to better things, possibly over a longer trip.

**Fakiera** (Gordon Elliott): Has proved a consistent performer over his three seasons, only twice finishing out of the first two from 10 starts. Won his first race on his seasonal return last November, keeping on strongly to beat Gabynako by a nose in a 2m maiden hurdle at Fairyhouse. Stepped up to 2m 4f later that month to win the Grade 3 Monksfield Novice Hurdle at Navan by half a length before returning to the track just under a month later to finish second over the same distance. Raised in class to a Grade 1 2m 6f novice hurdle at Leopardstown in February, equipped with sheepskins for the first time, plugged on in gritty fashion to finish fourth behind the useful Gaillard Du Mesnil. Went to post well fancied for the 3m Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle at Cheltenham, expected to appreciate the longer trip, and appeared to have every chance when moving smoothly two hurdles from

home only to weaken quickly before the last and finish 33 lengths behind the winner. Made his chasing debut at Fairyhouse and was not given a hard time. He will benefit from the run.

**Five O'Clock** (Willie Mullins): Shaped well in three starts in France in 2018, showing progressive form over hurdles, soundly beaten on his debut in April 2018 before showing a turn of foot to finish third just over one month later. Displayed tenacity on his next outing in June, putting in some sloppy jumps before almost being brought down at the flight before the turn for home. Recovered the ground quickly and again showed a turn of foot approaching the last, failing by just a short neck to win. Joined this yard later that year and made his debut for these connections in a 2m 5f hurdle at Tramore in December 2019. Finished second at short odds but won his next two starts at Limerick in January and then over 2m 5f at Thurles a month later. Final outing of the season came off 145 in the Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham, losing his position as the pace quickened leaving the back straight before recovering the ground on the final turn. Taken wide and still many lengths behind the leader approaching the final flight, he then stayed on very strongly to finish seventh – beaten four and three-quarter lengths. Missed last season but reported back to full fitness and either has the option of exploiting his mark over hurdles or embarking on a campaign over fences.

**Gerri Colombe** (Gordon Elliott): Was all out to win a modest point-to-point at Lingstown in March 2020 and bought for £240,000 shortly afterwards at Cheltenham. Made his debut under Rules for these connections in January, effortlessly winning a bumper at Fairyhouse in the heavy ground by 24 lengths. Reappeared just over a month later at Naas and beat Walter Grey by three and three-quarter lengths, with subsequent winner Forged In Fire five lengths further back in third. Half-brother to a 1m 6f winner in France out of a well-related daughter of Cadoudal. Very well regarded by his trainer and should take high rank in his new discipline.

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**Mighty Potter (Gordon Elliott):** Hard to assess from the evidence of his only run last season, but displayed a sparkling turn of foot to win a Punchestown bumper in March and should prove a useful recruit to hurdling. Half-brother to point-to-point and 2m 4f hurdle winner French Dynamite and 2m hurdle winner Indiana Jones out of a successful dual-purpose family. The form of his race did not hold up to inspection but he made a successful hurdling debut when winning by 29 lengths at Down Royal last month. He has a chance to show his class if he runs in the Grade 1 Royal Bond Novice Hurdle at Fairyhouse on Sunday (*1.05*). I am anticipating a bold show.

**Mister Coffey (Nicky Henderson):** Has consistently finished strongly in his races over hurdles, suggesting he should improve when stepped up to three miles. Won on his bumper debut for Harry Whittington at Huntingdon in April 2019 before changing hands for £340,000 at Doncaster the following month. Made a highly satisfactory debut over hurdles that December, beating useful performers Shakem Up'Arry and On To Victory, before running second at Huntingdon a month later. Returned last season with a success from a mark of 128 at Sandown, quickening impressively from the second last in the manner of a good horse to win by five lengths. Kept on to finish third over the same course and distance in December before again doing strong late work when seventh in the Betfair Hurdle at Newbury. Ran a similar race stepped up to 2m 4f at Aintree in April finishing fourth of 22. Will need to settle better in his races if he is to realise his potential but has already displayed a decent level of form and looks like developing into a useful novice chaser. Very consistent and blessed with a turn of foot. He has two entries at Newbury on Friday, the first over an extended two miles from a mark of 138 in a novices' handicap chase (*12.40*) and the second just over an hour later in a Class 1 novices' chase over 2m 4f (*1.50*). In the latter contest he has the lowest rating of the seven entries, 15lbs below the top. Neither race looks straightforward but the six-year-old has the scope and potential to make the grade. Watch the market carefully for clues to expectations.

**Red Lion Lad** (David Pipe): Intriguing son of Flemensfirth who appears to have been campaigned with handicap chases in mind. Beat subsequent bumper winner Thunder Rock by 10 lengths in a point-to-point at Ballyarthur in March 2020, and subsequently bought privately by these connections in July. Has hinted at better things to come in three starts over hurdles, despite not being the most fluent of jumpers, when third on his debut at Exeter in December then sixth of 12 at Ffos Las in February, before catching the eye when staying on again into third over an extended 2m 3f at Chepstow three weeks later. Dam's family traces back to high-class chaser Master Minded. Rated 115 over hurdles and could be placed to win from that mark, but his future is probably over fences. Has been given a wind operation during the summer and likely to prove an effective performer when stamina is at a premium.

## The Selections

**Mister Coffey (12.40 & 1.50 Newbury Friday), Mighty Potter (1.05 Fairyhouse Sunday)**

## The Ante-Post Agenda by Marten Julian

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## Under The Radar by Marten Julian

There are no immediate entries for **Baron Slick**, **Bon Retour** or **Top Billing**.

## The Look Ahead by Marten Julian

The highlight of a busy weekend of action is the Ladbrokes Trophy Chase over 3m 2f at Newbury on Saturday (3.00).

The current favourite is Ontheropes, who showed a turn of foot when making a successful return to action from a mark of 141 at Limerick last month.

He was last seen before that chasing home Monkfish at Fairyhouse in November 2020.

The seven-year-old is unexposed and probably well treated on 153 but he could be suited by a drop of rain.

Paul Nicholls has high hopes for Enrilo, who was unlucky to be disqualified when beating Potterman and Kitty's Light at Sandown last April. He was troubled by a tooth problem last winter but is now reported to be in good health and he will appreciate the decent ground.

Irish trainer Henry De Bromhead can do little wrong at present and he is expected to run Eklat De Rire, who jumped well when winning in heavy ground at Wexford last month. He has won three of his completed starts over fences, having unseated his rider behind Monkfish at Cheltenham last March. Conditions may be a concern.

Fiddlerontheroof and Mister Malarky will represent the resurgent Colin Tizzard stable.

The former made a successful return to action over 2m 4f at Carlisle last month. That was the race that Many Clouds won before landing this prize in 2014.

Mister Malarky was tailed off when last seen at Ascot but he has a better chance than his odds of 33/1 reflect.

Copperhead, who gives Colin Tizzard a third string to his bow, is well treated on 148 but he has to put last season's disappointments behind him.

Kitty's Light deserves to win a big prize following some gallant efforts in decent company. Yet to finish out of the first three in nine starts over fences, he was the chief sufferer in the bet365 Gold Cup at Sandown last April. That was a race he deserved to win and, with winning form on good ground to his name, nobody would begrudge him success in this valuable contest.

Horses that race prominently have a good record in this race and Cloth Cap jumped well when making all to win this last season off 136. He hinted at a return to form from a 20lbs higher mark at Cheltenham last month and, with Jonjo O'Neill's yard in good fettle, another bold display is anticipated.

I have a great deal of time for Remastered. David Pipe's eight-year-old also likes to race prominently and he is consistent, having won three of his four starts over fences, but he is one of many here who would prefer softer ground.

As you would expect this is highly competitive race but the two I like, given the conditions, are **Demachine** and **Potterman**.

Demachine makes particular appeal.

Kerry Lee's seven-year-old ran second to Remastered when last seen at Ascot in February and now meets that horse on 4lbs better terms. His main asset is the ease with which he travels through a race and this will stand him in good stead in this exalted company. He has finished in the first three in his four starts over fences and has the profile you like to see in a potential winner of this race. He has an alternative entry at Newcastle, but this race is apparently the favoured option.

Potterman is more exposed, having run 15 times over fences, but he was travelling well when unseating his rider in this race last season and subsequently won the bet365 at Sandown following the disqualification of Enrilo. Trainer Alan King was delighted with the way he shaped on his return at Wincanton and he is not badly treated on a mark of 148, just 6lbs higher than last year.

Chris's Dream has failed to complete in his last two races but was travelling well until unseating his rider four fences from home in the Grand National. The ground may be a problem to him.

The Hollow Ginge, who was fourth in this race two years ago, shaped well on his seasonal reappearance at Cheltenham last month. He is more exposed than most and has a poor completion record.

Alan King expects Canelo, a faller in last season's Grand National, to outrun his odds while at the foot of the handicap Danny Whizzbang represents the in-form yard of Milton Harris. It would not be the greatest surprise in the world if he were to bely his lengthy odds.

I suggest Demachime and Potterman, both each-way at 14/1.

Earlier in the afternoon I suggest that you keep an eye on **Kapcorse** at Newbury (1.15).

The eight-year-old has been the subject of comment in this publication over the last two years but he was not seen out again after running in this same race 12 months ago.

The handicapper has dropped him 7lbs, from 138 to 131, and I am hoping that he can repeat his success in this race back in 2018.

Moving north, we need to watch the weather at Newcastle.

Much needed rain is expected over the course of Friday and Saturday, and this could have a bearing on the Fighting Fifth Hurdle (3.15). Paul Nicholls will not risk his unbeaten Monmiral unless conditions soften. He is currently second favourite at 3/1 to beat last year's winner Epatante, with Sceau Royal trying to atone for his defeat last year.

Not So Sleepy, who unseated his rider at the first hurdle here last season, went on to beat Buzz next time at Ascot before running fifth to Honeysuckle in the Champion Hurdle. He will have come on for his race on the Flat at Doncaster last month and despite the quality of this field he will not run unsupported at 16/1.

The admirable Silver Streak can never be left out of calculations but despite her short price I will be disappointed if **Epatante** doesn't win.

**Mr Glass** could develop into one of Paul Nicholls's best novice hurdlers this season. The penny started to drop during the course of his hurdling debut at Chepstow on October and he looks ready for the step up in grade at Newcastle on Saturday (12.55).

Nicky Henderson has charge of a similar type with the Queen's **Kincardine**.

The four-year-old son of Kayf Tara looked a stayer when winning a Southwell bumper in May and he would have run at Ascot last week had the ground not been as quick.

He receives weight from each of his five rivals in the extended 2m 4f novices' hurdle at Newbury on Friday (12.10).

We had a well-backed winner on the all-weather at Dundalk last week and there may be another if **Superior Council** makes the journey down to Kempton on Monday (12.15).

Yorkshire-based trainer Richard Fahey generally sends his better youngsters to compete in southern company and this son of Kodiak hinted there may be more to come when fourth of 15 on his debut at Redcar in October.

## The Selections

**Kincardine (12.10 Newbury Friday), Mr Glass (12.55 Newcastle Saturday), Kapcourse E/W (1.15 Newbury Saturday), Demachine E/W (2.05 Newcastle & 3.00 Newbury), Potterman E/W (3.00 Newbury Saturday), Epatante (3.15 Newcastle Saturday), Superior Council (12.15 Kempton Monday)**

## The Retrospective by Marten Julian

**Sonning** made easy work of winning a juvenile hurdle at Catterick last week, despite racing keenly in the early stages.

The son of The Gurkha will always be suited to flat easy tracks and trainer Alan King will try and find another race for him there in the next few weeks.

For our purposes he is unlikely to scale great heights so we'll not add him to the list.

**Show Of Stars** was heavily backed from as big as 4 on Betfair to a starting price of 8/13 for the maiden at Dundalk last week. She responded well when asked to win her race in the final furlong.

The daughter of Showcasing is definitely black type material for next season so we will keep her on our side.

**Waiting Patiently** was ominously weak in the morning and on-course market before running no sort of race in the Betfair Chase.

The 10-year-old ran a similar race on his final start at Aintree last season, having put in a stormer to chase home Frodon on his return in the King George and then again when third to First Flow in a Grade 1 at Ascot.

Christian Williams has a deft touch with fragile horses so I am sure he will leave no stone unturned in an effort to identify the problem.

There was strong market support for **Royal Arcade** before his chasing debut at Ayr on Monday, but his rider seemed keen to hold him up off the pace and, despite travelling well, for the first mile he dropped back leaving the back straight and was allowed to come home in his own time.

He did not run nearly as badly as this sixteen-and-a-half lengths' defeat reflects, rallying from the last to finish fifth of the six runners.

To my eyes this amounted to a school round and I suggest we keep him on side for his next few runs. Rated here on 122 for his handicap chase debut, he will drop a couple of pounds for this.

## Previously Noted Horses

**Art Approval, Dayman, Designer, Good Time Jonny, Ingra Tor, Mercurio Rock, Olivetti, Royal Arcade, Secret Box, Shaaher, Show Of Stars, Superior Council, Tritonic, Umax**

## Jodie's Jottings by Jodie Standing

Captain Morgs finally came good for us at Ascot on Friday under Nico De Boinville. Despite being confident that he'd be doing all his best work late on, victory still looked unlikely approaching the last where he had a few lengths to find with the eventual second, but a fantastic leap saw him land almost upsides before staying on willingly and repelling a renewed effort from Garry Clermont to win by three parts of a length. The 6lbs rise to a mark of 131 looks a little harsh.

On Saturday, Eclair Mag was very well backed once again for Richard Bandey but he could only manage a one-paced fifth. His trouble seems to come in the middle part of the race where he hits a flat spot before plugging on again at the finish. A further 2lbs ease could make life interesting,

especially when encountering his preferred soft ground. We'll keep him in mind.

Later, Orbys Legend didn't appear to get home on his first try at an extended three miles. I was never happy with him at any stage during the race as he kept fiddling over his flights and didn't enjoy the smoothest of passages. He tried to raise an effort turning for home but ultimately wasn't good enough.

On Sunday, punters were taking any price they could about Gaia Du Gouet, who was backed from around 6/4 into 8/11 on her first start for Dan Skelton, having won a point-to-point for Paul Pierce in Ireland. Sent to the front by Harry, she jumped cleanly and proved head and shoulders above her opposition as she extended her advantage down the home straight without barely turning a hair, eventually crossing the line with 11 yawning lengths back to Walk In Clover. She's very good and already looks a Graded prospect.

The other two selections on the day were disappointing with Bucko's Boy folding tamely having tried to make all. Then, down at Exeter, Killer Kane was easily swept aside in the novices' handicap chase from a mark of 126. That was disappointing as I was confident that he'd build on his chase debut at Carlisle.

Over in Ireland at Navan, Hollow Games extended his unbeaten record to five with a comfortable two-and-a-quarter lengths victory over Lunar Display in the Grade 3 Monksfield Novice Hurdle over 2m 4f and afterwards Davy Russell said "he's not as slow as you'd think" – not exactly what you want to hear having nominated him for the Albert Bartlett. His next assignment looks likely to be the Grade 1 Lawlor's Novice Hurdle at Naas in January – won last year by Bob Olinger.

Obviously, a lot has to happen between now and March, and I guess plenty will depend on how Ginto fares in his races, with their owner wanting to keep the two apart at the Festival. As it stands, Hollow Games can still be backed at 25/1 with Paddy Power and Betfair Sportsbook for the Ballymore, whilst he's 8/1 clear favourite for the Albert Bartlett. I am slightly worried, though, especially after Davy's comments that they are leaning to the Ballymore.

On Monday, Hidden Commander rightly raised plenty of eyebrows before, during and after his race. Having opened 13/8 the night before, he drifted on the exchanges to 20s before the off and was never asked for a real effort

by Tommy Dowson despite travelling notably well throughout and still appearing to have something to give down the straight. Once victory was out the question, he stayed on well on the run-in and pulled over six lengths clear of Globetrotter and a half-length ahead of the fast-finishing Countermind, despite the three jumping the final flight together. As I said last week, the betting will always tell the story regarding connections' expectations.

Finally, Dreams Of Home returned to winning ways with a fleet-of-foot round of jumping in the novices' handicap chase. That was a good performance under topweight and he can continue to climb the ladder one rung at a time.

## **Saturday**

The lack of rain is causing a real problem at the moment, not least with the small field sizes but it's also hard to make selections with any real confidence given the absence of reliable winter form and for that reason, I'm sorry to say, I have no view on the card at Newbury.

Elsewhere though, there are bits of interest, starting with David Pipe's **Gericault Roque** at Bangor, although he will probably require rain to ensure his participation in the handicap chase. If he does turn up his chance must be respected (1.22).

I felt he shaped better than the bare result suggests when plugging on into third on his chasing debut at Wetherby last month. David Noonan never seemed in any real hurry to be competitive, instead allowing his mount to measure his fences before edging him closer to the pace turning for home. Asked for an effort between fences down the straight, the gelding responded but the ride left me with the feeling that the exercise was to educate the horse for another day.

He's been dropped 11lb for his troubles to a mark of 123, which, on both his last run and on hurdle form, looks well within his grasp. The step up to three miles should help too, especially now he's learnt to settle.

Later, keep an eye on Dan Skelton's mare **She's So Lovely** in the handicap hurdle (3.07 – also entered 3.30 Leicester Sunday).

The daughter of Mahler has been beaten an aggregate distance just shy of 83 lengths on her three starts over hurdles since joining current connections, having finished fourth and then a good second in point-to-points for Colin Bowe last winter.

On her most recent start at Plumpton, I liked the way she travelled and jumped up with the pace and Bridget Andrews didn't give her an overly hard time when off the bridle as she eventually weakened into fifth, eight and three-quarter lengths behind Fergal O'Brien's winner, Blue Bikini.

She's bred to stay well, being a half-sister to the Welsh National winner Emperor's Choice, Milvale who stayed 2m 6f and Shellys Creek who won over 3m, so it's unsurprising to see her upped in distance on her handicap bow. She'll find life easier in this sphere and has winning potential from a mark of 92.

Up at Newcastle, **Scene Not Herd** can follow up on his excellent winning chase debut at Hereford at the start of the month (*12.20 – also entered 12.55 Southwell Tuesday*) on his first start for almost a year. However, he jumped from pillar to post like he'd been doing the job for a while, crossing the line with nine lengths to spare over Mille Sussurri from a mark of 112.

That fine display earned him a 7lbs rise from the handicapper, but with the anticipated good ground in his favour he should be hard to peg back if he puts in the same clean round of jumping.

In 'The French Furze' Novices' Hurdle, Captain Quint commands respect for Rose Dobbin, although I do worry this may come too soon after his victory at Hexham last Wednesday.

He'll be much better suited to this trip and it's all credit to his natural ability that he was able to win over the two miles, but given his physical immaturity the race can take more out of a horse than is first expected.

The horse I'm more interested in is Jimmy Moffatt's **One Fine Man**.

The lightly-raced six-year-old was last seen winning around the trainer's beloved Cartmel back in May where he collared Gladiatorial in the shadows of the post to win by half a length with something in hand. That form has worked out well with the runner-up winning by nine lengths on a revisit to Cartmel whilst the fourth, Geromino, is unbeaten in three subsequent starts and is now rated on a mark of 131.

One Fine Man is progressive and won despite the tight turns of Cartmel. Here, he'll be able to use his stride and travel in his comfort zone before using his pace down the straight. I can see him going well and he may be overlooked in the betting.

At Doncaster, I'm pleased to see **Dooyork** entered over an extended 2m 3f

for her hurdling debut (1.08). The daughter of Shantou shaped well when fifth on her Rules debut for these connections in a decent bumper at Uttoxeter last month, before failing to get involved in another bumper at Musselburgh where the speed test wouldn't have been to her liking.

A full sister to Zero Ten and Do The Floss – a family which progressed with time – I'm sure there's plenty more to come from her and this trip could see her start to realise some of that potential. She jumped cleanly in her point-to-point and there was plenty to like about the way she travelled on her first bumper run before becoming outpaced in the latter stages. The long home straight at Doncaster should be to her liking.

Over at Fairyhouse, there are a number of horses entered from *The Point-To-Point Recruits* but the one I'm most interested in is **Western Flyer** in the bumper (2.46).

I was a little disappointed with his third-placed effort at Wexford at the end of October, and the form hasn't worked out great, but I'm inclined to believe the heavy ground there wouldn't have been to his advantage. He still travelled well and dug deep to chase the two ahead of him, but lacked the turn of foot that was so impressive when winning his point-to-point at Tipperary in April.

That was on good to yielding ground where he beat a horse called Gredin, who has since come out and won a strongly contested novices' hurdle at Carlisle for Donald McCain. The third also won his next start between the flags and now resides at Rose Dobbin's.

Let's give Western Flyer another try in the hope that the livelier ground will see him in a better light.

Earlier on the card, Gars De Sceaux sits near the top of the tree when it comes to exciting novice chase prospects, but with very little rain in the air his participation is slim (11.30).

## **Sunday**

At Carlisle, I hope to see **Famous Bridge** step-up from his eye-catching debut at this course at the end of last month (1.15 or 1.40 Ayr Monday).

The Fame And Glory gelding shaped with plenty of promise when third in a bumper at Punchestown for Damian Murphy back in March and was well supported on his first start for Nicky Richards. I was encouraged by how well he travelled during that race despite showing definite signs of greenness before a few niggly jumping errors crept in late on.

He was eventually beaten four and a half lengths into second, although he probably would've been third had Brayhill not run out at the last, but he looked sure to learn from the experience both physically and mentally.

At first glance, this field doesn't look as competitive as the one he faced on his hurdling debut and I hope he takes all the beating.

## **Monday**

At Ayr, Nick Alexander's Donny Boy could make his hurdling debut in the opening novices' hurdle, having returned the very impressive 14-length winner of a bumper at Kelso at the start of the month (12.30).

He may not have beaten a great deal in that race but it was the way he travelled before bursting clear in a matter of strides that was so impressive and certainly indicative of an above-average performer. If the likes of Nells Son, Sauce Of Life, Corrigeen Rock or Chase Outlaw don't turn up he won't be much of a price, but he'll take some stopping even against the aforementioned quartet.

In the concluding bumper, a name to note is **Gege Ville** for Nicky Richards, although Mark Galligan is already jocked up on stable companion River Meadow, which suggests he's the intended runner (3.20).

Gege Ville is a bull of a horse and I was very taken with him when I saw him in the yard recently. He's bred for this sort of test being out of a dam who won over 1m 4f on the AW and also over 1m 6f in an AQPS Flat race.

## **The Selections**

**Gericault Roque (1.22 Bangor Saturday), Scene Not Herd (12.20 Newcastle Saturday or 12.55 Southwell Tuesday), One Fine Man EW (12.55 Newcastle Saturday), Dooyork (1.08 Doncaster Saturday), She's So Lovely (3.07 Bangor Saturday or 3.30 Leicester Sunday), Western Flyer (2.46 Fairyhouse Saturday), Famous Bridge (1.15 Carlisle Sunday or 1.40 Ayr Monday), Donny Boy (12.30 Ayr Monday) & Gege Ville (3.20 Ayr Monday)**

This section has been removed as it contains long-term information.

## The Irish Perspective by Ronan Groome

Similarly to the Paddy Power Gold Cup, the Ladbrokes Trophy and previously the Hennessy, hasn't enticed many Irish trainers over the years.

Three of the last five years saw no Irish runners. But interestingly, given his preference to keep his horses at home at this early stage of the season, Willie Mullins has taken a liking to the Newbury three-miler, winning the race in 2001 with Be My Royal (later disqualified when a banned substance was found in his sample) and more recently with Total Recall in 2018, with plenty of runners in between.

Mullins has three engaged in the race this season, most notably Ontheropes, who has a similar profile to Total Recall as a Munster National winner. The Closutton trio look set to be joined by Henry De Bromhead's exciting Eklat De Rire and Chris's Dream.

In general the race looks intriguing as ever and is just one staple of a really brilliant weekend of racing. The Fighting Fifth takes centre stage at Newcastle and on home shores, Sunday's triple Grade 1 card at Fairyhouse looks a real treat. Below I've selected eight races over the weekend I feel most strongly about at this early stage.

### Saturday

#### *Fairyhouse*

#### **12.30 EasyFix Equine Handicap Chase (Grade B)**

It goes without saying that Gordon Elliott runners are worth monitoring very closely at Fairyhouse's Winter Festival this weekend. The Meath venue is another home track for Elliott whose horses continue in good form. He has a good record in this extended 2m handicap chase and could run as many as four on Saturday.

**Andy Dufresne** is the most interesting. He's been a talk-up horse for his novice hurdle and novice chase campaigns, but still remains very lightly raced. He started off his season promisingly when second to Captain Guinness, conceding him 7lbs, in the 2m Poplar Square Chase at Naas. He only got a 2lbs rise for that, despite finishing nine lengths clear of his stablemate Felix Desjy, officially rated 4lbs higher than him but only conceding him 2lbs. That would suggest to me that the Elliott camp may see Andy Dufresne as nicely treated off his current mark of 151 so if he is declared for this, I think he'll be the one to beat.

If he isn't declared, one of Elliott's other runners is next in line for me. Buddy Rich has reasonably strong novice chase form on similar ground that he'll encounter on Saturday and that will count for a lot with plenty of his potential rivals better off on a softer surface. He's had just the five runs over fences, so has the scope to improve further as well.

### *Newbury*

#### **12.40 Ladbrokes John Francome Novices' Chase (Grade 2)**

This is an excellent option for a good novice chaser as you could easily end up coming back here for the Ladbrokes Trophy on the same card 12 months later.

Ahoy Senor jumped well against more experienced rivals on his chase debut in the Colin Parker Memorial at Carlisle but it still wasn't ideal he unseated late on. This trip will suit him and I'd expect a big run but I find it very interesting Henry De Bromhead is looking to run **Mr Incredible**. For some reason, this five-year-old wasn't given an entry in the Sunday's Drinmore Novice Chase (previewed later) and perhaps that is a sign of his trainer's belief he needs this longer trip. That seemed to be very much the case when he came from a near impossible position to win on his chase debut over 2m 3f at Naas. He looks like a surefire improver now coming up to this trip, just short of 3m, and in general, I love his profile as a five-year-old chaser. He's only had three racecourse starts so has major scope to improve further.

#### **3.00 Ladbrokes Trophy Chase (Grade 3)**

It's easy to see why the two main Irish hopes are towards the top of the market.

Ontheropes and Eklat De Rire are two lightly-raced chasers with loads of scope to improve and represent two of the biggest yards around. That said, neither of them matches the form of **Fiddlerontheroof** and I'm really sweet

on the Tizzard chaser. During a wretched time for his stable last term he was a real shining light, never finishing outside the first three, and produced his best performance when staying on into second behind Monkfish in the Brown Advisory Chase at Cheltenham. His comeback win in the Colin Parker Memorial was really pleasing as he travelled and jumped well before fighting off Pay The Piper late in the final furlong. The handicapper only gave him 2lbs for that win, which you could argue is plenty lenient considering the 160-rated Espoir De Romay was back in third. Put it this way, if beforehand you had asked the Tizzards to pay 2lbs for the benefit of race fitness coming into this race, they'd have taken your hand off.

Fiddlerontheroof is coming back up in trip, which looks sure to suit given that aforementioned run at Cheltenham, and he looks well handicapped when you consider he'll receive 3lbs off Ontheropes and 4lbs off Eklat De Rire, but has much the better form.

I always think it's worth chancing something at a big price in this race and I'd like to add **The Hollow Ginge** to the slip.

This eight-year-old doesn't have the sexy second-season chaser profile but he was a staying-on fourth in this race last year, when the race was dominated by those he raced up front. He's 2lbs lower now and in contrast to last season, when he came here after unseating his rider first time out at Kelso, he ran a brilliant race to be a gutsy second to Definite Plan at Cheltenham. Prices of 33/1 look very generous with Nigel Twiston-Davies' horses continuing to be in top form.

## *Newcastle*

### **3.15 Betfair Fighting Fifth Hurdle (Grade 1)**

Nicky Henderson is hopeful he has Epatante back to her best but until you see it, you can't fully believe it, and she'll need to be to regain her Fighting Fifth title as the handicapper thinks she has regressed by 8lbs since this time last year.

This race was her only win last term, when she ran out a smooth winner from **Sceau Royal** but she was very lucky the way things worked out that day - Not So Sleepy unseating at the first and then taking out Silver Streak at the second. That deprived the race of its pace angle and left Sceau Royal in front and basically a sitting duck for Epatante who could take aim and fire in the straight.

With Silver Steak and Not So Sleepy back again, there should be solid pace

on here and Sceau Royal, race fit and looking as good as ever when winning his first two starts this season, will surely have a more suitably run race, coming from further back in the field. It's no surprise to see the money come for Alan King's reliable performer in the last couple of days and he looks the most dangerous to Epatante, with the four-year-old Monmiral facing a tough assignment on his first start in open company.

## Sunday

### *Fairyhouse*

#### **1.05 Baroneracing.com Royal Bond Novice Hurdle (Grade 1)**

My Mate Mozzie and Mighty Potter dominate the early betting for this 2m Grade 1 after impressive performances on their previous starts. The former, Gavin Cromwell's horse, posted a smart time at Navan and will be tough to beat. That said, it's hard to be really confident given the collective potential of this whole field.

At a much bigger price, Crowns Major caught the eye.

Trained by Emmet Mullins, he has a similar profile to his stablemate Cape Gentleman, who proved himself a good novice hurdler last season after a smart flat campaign. **Crowns Major** won the big 12-furlong handicap at Galway before progressing to a mark of 97 on the level during the summer and he may well be about to transfer a good chunk of that ability over to hurdles now. He was a smooth winner of his maiden hurdle at Cork, picking up really well in soft ground after the last and posting a smart time in the process. Given his prowess on the Flat, the likely good ground will suit him more than most of his potential rivals and it wouldn't be a surprise at all if he gave a bold show.

#### **1.35 Baroneracing.com Drinmore Novice Chase (Grade 1)**

This could turn out to be an excellent contest if the majority of the 12 entries stand their ground.

Lifetime Ambition looks an obvious favourite given the way he jumped at Down Royal when accounting for Beacon Edge and subsequent Grade 2 scorer Vanillier. However both of those runners may well be better over further so the form may not be as strong as it looks. Gabynako is second favourite and I'd prefer him slightly. He jumped brilliantly at this track for his beginners chase win earlier in the month and like Lifetime Ambition, saw off two of his potential Sunday rivals - Fury Road and Midnight Run - without much fuss. However, given the shape of the race could change significantly at the declaration stage, this is a no-bet contest for me at the moment.

### 3.10 Baroneracing.com Hatton's Grace Hurdle (Grade 1)

All eyes on Honeysuckle, who should preserve her unbeaten record.

Some will want to take her on given she nearly got beaten in this race last year but that was probably as much to do with how that contest developed - slowly run and a sprint finish - more than a fitness issue and she showed at Punchestown that she can win when not at 100%. With **Stormy Ireland** likely to take her chance in the race on Sunday, there should be a solid pace to aim at.

That said, the Willie Mullins-trained mare shouldn't be underestimated and appeals from a pace angle. She should get her own way in front and won nicely over this course and distance on similar ground last April, before going on to win the Grade 1 Mares Champion Hurdle at Punchestown. She has a good record fresh, has two wins from two runs at the course and may well get her own way out in front so makes plenty appeal each-way at 20/1.

## The Selections

**Andy Dufresne (12.30 Fairyhouse Saturday), Mr Incredible (12.40 Newbury Saturday), Fiddlerontheroof (3.15 Newbury Saturday), The Hollow Ginge E/W (3.00 Newbury Saturday), Sceau Royal (3.15 Newcastle Saturday), Crowns Major (1.05 Fairyhouse Sunday), Stormy Ireland E/W (2.40 Fairyhouse Sunday)**

## The Weekend News by Ian Carnaby

Although the SP of even money was short, Buzz looked a good thing in last Saturday's Grade 2 Coral Hurdle at Ascot and won pretty tidily.

Given that he'd finished an excellent second in the Grade 1 Aintree Hurdle and brushed off a long absence with ease in the Cesarewitch he was the one to beat here and went clear on the run-in after briefly being nudged along by Nico de Boinville on the home turn. Buzz is a real class act and would not be out of place in the Champion Hurdle, though he probably needs two and a half miles at least and Nicky Henderson has other options, of course.

I wondered if A Plus Tard would be at his very best before the Betfair Chase and I still think that 11/10 was a worryingly short price with that possibility in mind. In the event he won very easily, opening up a 22 lengths' gap in the closing stages and, if all goes well in the interim, he will be strongly fancied

to improve on this year's second in the Cheltenham Gold Cup when the showpiece event comes around again in March.

Many people will be hoping Rachael Blackmore can add the Gold Cup to her Grand National triumph and that will affect the starting price, needless to say. Always bear in mind that the Cheltenham Gold Cup is one of the few races to attract people from outside the racing fraternity when it comes to viewing and betting.

I'll be in a small minority in suggesting that last week's result didn't tell us a great deal we didn't already know.

Runner-up Royale Pagaille remains of interest in top-class chases while third home Chatham Street Lad had underlined his ability in Grade 3 novice company at Limerick but was well and truly upped in class here. Like Royale Pagaille, he suffered a knock in running during last week's race and should not be lightly dismissed next time. But Clondaw Castle was outclassed, Betfair specialist Bristol De Mai needed much softer ground and was not on a 'going' day anyway and the support for Waiting Patiently was a little hard to understand on recent form, apart from a better effort in the King George at Kempton. The Sunbury track bears little or no resemblance to Haydock, as we know.

This weekend sees the latest running of the Ladbrokes Trophy at Newbury and I imagine the 'magic sign' is happy enough that not too many people still refer to it as the Hennessy - a fate suffered by several sponsors of the former Mackeson Gold Cup at Cheltenham. There were some good jokes, though. When shirt company Thomas Pink took over, one wag suggested that instead of drinking the sponsor's product we'd be able to lose it.

My last word (nearly) on Hennessy is that if I live to be 107 and carry on with the Brighton race I shall take over from the cognac firm as Britain's longest continuous race sponsor. I believe some 100/30 is available. When I was working in the drinks trade we at Gilbey's were agents for Hennessy and one year there was a lunch at Newbury for all the surviving owners, trainers and jockeys of winners going all the way back to 1957. Public relations man Arthur Hopkins and I managed to locate all bar three and a good time was had by all, even Arthur (sadly gone now), who used to moonlight as a football reporter and was at Tottenham when the main course was served. Happy days.

It should be mentioned in passing that Ladbrokes put on quite a show, with Friday rivalling Saturday for sheer quality.

The Long Distance Hurdle on the first day (3.00) sees some very familiar names lining up and many racegoers will want to see Paisley Park returning to something like his best. They include this scribbler, who napped and backed him a couple of times when he was at his peak, though the head

says he is no longer capable of that level of form. Indefatigable has never been entirely reliable but she had him back in third when they reappeared at Wetherby, with Thomas Darby fourth.

The more I look at Friday's race, the more I think there are two or three with their best days behind them.

I also think that the key piece of form may be found in the Grade 1 Ryanair Stayers' Hurdle, the old Liverpool Hurdle, back in April. Nicky Henderson's pair Call Me Lord and On The Blind Side, neither of them true Grade 1 class, had Lisnagar Oscar behind that day but Thomas Darby finished in front of all three. He was receiving 7lbs from Paisley Park when fourth in the Wetherby race and I suppose you could argue that the former champion will have his best chance of the season this week, because they meet at levels, but maybe **Thomas Darby** is the only one capable of further improvement. I wish there were two or three more runners but he is the each-way choice at a quarter the odds a place first and second.

Various things put me off when it comes to betting. Wind operations - far more frequent and, I must say, far more successful than used to be the case fall into that category. Therefore, when assessing the big one on Saturday, the Grade 3 Ladbrokes Trophy Chase, I'd take some convincing that the late Trevor Hemmings' horse Cloth Cap (what a story it would be) can follow up last year's victory off an 18lbs higher mark (*3.00 Newbury*). He ran no race in the Grand National, of course, prompting the operation, but his fourth at Cheltenham the other day did little to satisfy the doubters.

Looking back at last year's renewal, **The Hollow Ginge** ran a blinder in fourth, trying to concede Cloth Cap 8lbs. On Saturday he is set to receive 12lbs and had Cloth Cap well behind when beaten inches in the Cheltenham race mentioned above.

Of course, racing is never as easy as that and The Hollow Ginge has failed to complete in his other three races since Newbury last year. But they included the Scottish National and at both Ayr and Warwick he was racing over extreme distances. He can be only a small each-way bet but Nigel Twiston-Davies has a fine record in big handicaps at Newbury and it's quite uncanny how often a major disappointment (Bristol De Mai last week) is followed by a more than handy compensation. Without knowing the strength of the Irish challenge - Willie Mullins in particular - one cannot be dogmatic but each-way terms on the first five might well reward those looking for a similar run to last year's.

## The Selections

**Thomas Darby E/W (3.00 Newbury Friday) & The Hollow Ginge  
E/W (3.00 Newbury Saturday)**

# Reference Sheet

*Please be reminded, at the point of publication, the timings for each selection are correct. However, races can split into two divisions and this will alter things slightly. We advise you to check very carefully for selections in both divisions when this happens.*

## Friday

Kincardine	The Look Ahead (MJ)	12.10 Newbury
Mister Coffey	The Premier List	1.50 N'bury
Thomas Darby (EW)	The Weekend News (IC)	3.00 Newbury

## Saturday

Scene Not Herd*	Jodie's Jottings	12.20 Newcastle
Andy Dufresne	Ronan Groome	12.30 Fairyhouse
Mr Incredible	Ronan Groome	12.40 Newbury
One Fine Man (EW)	Jodie's Jottings	12.55 Newcastle
Mr Glass	The Look Ahead (MJ)	12.55 Newcastle
Dooyork	Jodie's Jottings	1.08 Doncaster
Kapcorse (EW)	The Look Ahead (MJ)	1.15 Newbury
Gericault Roque	Jodie's Jottings	1.22 Bangor
Western Flyer	Jodie's Jottings	2.46 Fairyhouse
Demachine (EW)*	The Look Ahead (MJ)	2.05 Newcastle
Demachine (EW)*	The Look Ahead (MJ)	3.00 Newbury
Potterman (EW)	The Look Ahead (MJ)	3.00 Newbury
Fiddlerontheroof	Ronan Groome	3.00 Newbury
The Hollow Ginge (EW)	Ronan Groome	3.00 Newbury
The Hollow Ginge (EW)	The Weekend News (IC)	3.00 Newbury
She's So Lovely*	Jodie's Jottings	3.07 Bangor
Epatante	The Look Ahead (MJ)	3.15 Newcastle
Sceau Royale	Ronan Groome	3.15 Newcastle

# Reference Sheet Continued

## Sunday

Superior Council	The Look Ahead (MJ)	12.15 Kempton
Mighty Potter	The Premier List	1.05 Fairyhouse
Crowns Major	Ronan Groome	1.05 Fairyhouse
Famous Bridge*	Jodie's Jottings	1.15 Carlisle
Stormy Ireland (EW)	Ronan Groome	2.40 Fairyhouse
She's So Lovely*	Jodie's Jottings	3.30 Leicester

## Monday

Donny Boy	Jodie's Jottings	12.30 Ayr
Famous Bridge*	Jodie's Jottings	1.40 Ayr
Gege Ville	Jodie's Jottings	3.20 Ayr

## Tuesday

Scene Not Herd*	Jodie's Jottings	12.55 Southwell
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\*Horse has another entry

This section has been removed as it contains long-term information.

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