

the Weekend Card



Marken Julian

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The Fixtures

Thursday Southwell, Wincanton, Fakenham, Chelmsford City

Friday Catterick Bridge, Lingfield Park, Chepstow, Newcastle

Saturday Lingfield Park, Sandown Park, Wetherby,
Musselburgh, Kempton Park

Sunday Musselburgh, Hereford

Monday Fontwell Park, Carlisle, Wolverhampton

Tuesday Southwell, Market Rasen, Taunton, Wolverhampton

Enhanced Odds and Concessions

Since the arrival of the Exchanges, notably Betfair, bookmakers have introduced a variety of concessions and benefits to backers, both on their Internet betting sites and in their high street shops. They offer a wide range of introductory enticements to new account applicants, some up to £50 – refer to Freebets.co.uk - while visitors to Betfred shops can opt for their Lucky 15/31/63 offer of twice the odds on a single winner on a Lucky 15, four times the odds on a single winner on a Lucky 31 and five times the odds on a single winner on a Lucky 63.

The major firms also give enhanced place options, sometimes extending to the first 10 in big fields at major meetings. A few firms offer you the chance to extend the place market at reduced odds, while Betfair Exchange also has an independent market for enhanced place terms.

Mention will occasionally be made of these enhancements and concessions where and when we feel they will benefit readers of the *Weekend Card*.

The Sleeper Section by Marten Julian

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

Ribeye (8yr Bay Gelding)

Peter Atkinson

This relatively moderate and apparently exposed eight-year-old would not be a typical candidate for inclusion in this section, but he has more ability than his mark of 87 reflects and I expect him to pop up when he encounters his ideal conditions in a few weeks' time. Ribeye has only won once from 16 starts, but he is an ideal horse for those of you who like to trade in running because he travels supremely well through a race and is invariably matched at a relatively shorter price than his SP in the closing stages. Ribeye is best suited to around three miles on good ground, so his two starts this season on soft going – at Newcastle in November and Catterick on New Year's Day – were not right for him. They have, though, seen his mark drop 4lb from 91 to 87 which leaves him just 3lb higher than he won off by four and a half lengths at Newcastle in April. I have long had a soft spot for this son of Lucarno. He shaped well on his belated chasing debut at Catterick, jumping fluently but finding little off the bridle. Let's stay with him for a while longer. He has an entry for a 3m novices' handicap chase at Market Rasen on Tuesday (4.15).

The Selection

Ribeye (4.15 Market Rasen Tuesday)

The Premier List Update - Jumps by Marten Julian

Here are the Premier List qualifiers from the Dark Horses Jumps booklet.

American Mike (Gordon Elliott)

1/112-312

One of last season's best bumper performers, having won a point-to-point by 20 lengths at Cork. Won his first race under Rules at Down Royal in October and then won a Listed contest at Navan in December by 17 lengths from a strong field. Didn't look the same horse when beaten by Facile Vega in heavy

ground at Cheltenham and disappointed again when found to be wrong at Punchestown. Made a successful hurdling debut over an extended 2m 6f at Down Royal in November but was beaten at odds of 2/7 in a Grade 3 novice at Navan. He will be trying to redeem his reputation at Leopardstown this weekend, when he is entered for the 2m 6f Grade 1 on Saturday (1.20) and the 2m Grade 1 on Sunday (3.40). The longer race looks the better option.

Dusart (Nicky Henderson)

13/1151 – 6P

Grew in confidence through the season, showing great tenacity when winning in his final start at Ayr in April. Made hard work of winning an extended 2m 6f novices' chase at Leicester in January, jumping left at many of the fences. Again jumped left over 3m next time at Exeter before plugging on to finish fifth in the Brown Advisory Novices' Chase at Cheltenham. Jumped much better when beating Sounds Russian in tenacious fashion on his final start over 3m at Ayr, rallying gamely to regain the lead after the last. Gets 3m well and missed the Many Clouds at Aintree to run over hurdles in a 3m Class 2 at Cheltenham, up there just off the pace before tiring at the last (usual second last). He was pulled up after a poor round of jumping in the Cotswold Chase at Cheltenham on Saturday.

Empire Steel (Sandy Thomson)

4/3313/121P/2FP12 – 0

Consistent and likeable staying chaser, with the potential to progress up the ranks. Returned to action in an extended 3m 1f 0-145 handicap chase at Haydock last November chasing home Strictlyadancer. Travelled well until falling four from home in the Rowland Meyrick and pulled up next time in the Peter Marsh Chase before beating Clan Legend down in trip to 2m 5f in heavy ground at Ayr off 139. Runner-up to the useful Potterman back there on his final start in March. Shaped well over an inadequate 2m 4f in the 0-145 handicap chase at Aintree, doing steady late work in the closing stages. Has dropped 2lb, from 145 to 143, and must be kept on side for a staying handicap chase. Entered for the 3m Class 2 handicap chase at Sandown on Saturday (3.30). Trainer has the Grand National in mind.

Gaelic Warrior (Willie Mullins)

6/332 – 11

Still unexposed, having run three times in France and just once for these connections last season when a short-head second to Brazil in the Boodles Juvenile Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham. Quietly ridden sixth on his debut in a Listed race at Auteuil in April, 2021. Stayed on into third next time in May before again finishing third behind Sans Bruit in June. Form held up to the closest scrutiny. Looked well treated on 129 for his stable debut at

Cheltenham and would have won had he not forfeited ground by jumping right. Jumped far better when hacking up by 86 lengths at odds of 1/12 on his seasonal return over 2m at Tramore and followed up over an extended 2m beating Blue Sari by 15 lengths at Clonmel. Ran to a high figure through the fourth, rated on 125 and beaten just over 43 lengths, and likely to have the Ballymore as his Cheltenham target. We will learn more when he runs this weekend, entered for a Grade 1 2m novice hurdle (3.40) and a 2m handicap hurdle (4.10) at Leopardstown on Sunday.

Gelino Bello (Paul Nicholls)

13/122411 – 11FP

Very consistent half-brother to three winners. Made a winning debut in a 2m 4f maiden hurdle at Aintree in October, showing a turn of foot to win by six lengths. Found the talented Blazing Khal too strong for him next time at Cheltenham then fourth in the 2m 5f Lanzarote Hurdle, staying on dourly, before making all to win a 2m 4f novices' hurdle at Newbury. Stepped up in class for a Grade 1 next time at Aintree, digging deep to win by four and a half lengths from Gentleman At Arms. Returned in good style with a winning debut over fences over 3m at Wetherby and shaped better next time when beating sole rival City Chief at Sandown. Came down four fences from home in the Kauto Star Novices' Chase at Kempton, looking likely to have gone well given the way the race was run. Out of contention when pulled up before the last in the Cleeve Hurdle at Cheltenham last weekend. Entered for an extended 2m 7f Class 1 handicap hurdle at Sandown on Saturday (2.55).

I Like To Move It (Nigel Twiston-Davies)

1120/111520 - 10

Made a good start to hurdling last season, winning a novice contest at Worcester and then beating Tritonic by three and a quarter lengths at Cheltenham in October. Returned there in November to beat Washington by two lengths, responding bravely to firm driving. Wasn't suited to the tactics next time at Ascot but back to his best in the Betfair Hurdle, finishing second off 138. Not given a hard time once beaten in the County Hurdle. Won the Greatwood Hurdle at Cheltenham under top weight of 12 stone. Raised 10lb, from 142 to 152, but struggled in the soft ground stepped up to an extended 2m 4f for the Grade 2 Relkeel Hurdle at Cheltenham. The ground was probably as much to blame as the longer trip.

Jacamar (Milton Harris)

06613/34103540/053144100/0322155142 – 40001

Not an obvious candidate for this section, but appeals as the type to win a decent staying handicap chase at some point. Won four times over hurdles and was kept busy switched to fences last season, beating Mister Coffey

off 130 at Kempton on Boxing Day and then winning at Leicester off 131. Ran his best race next time in a 2m 4f novices' handicap chase at Sandown, beaten a neck off 135. Not disgraced when travelling well for a long way on his debut over the Grand National fences. Again, shaped better than his finishing position suggests when sixth at Newbury. Dropped a further 2lb from 134 to 132 and not disgraced when sixth behind Midnight River a Cheltenham, staying on steadily to the line. Has been dropped 2lb, from 132 to 130, leaving him 1lb below his last winning mark. Appreciated the drop in grade when carrying top weight to victory in a 2m 4f 0-130 handicap chase at Leicester today (Wednesday). This should do him some good and may set the path for something better.

Lookaway (Neil King)

111 – 34

Sold to these connections after winning a point-to-point last November. Made his UK debut in a bumper at Newbury in February, battling hard to assert his superiority after racing keenly in the first half mile. Kept on strongly to win a Grade 2 bumper at Aintree in April. Highly regarded and has the pedigree to stay beyond two miles. Ran well for a long way on his hurdling debut at Warwick, jumping fluently in the main, but didn't appear to progress from that when fourth at Haydock.

Mighty Potter (Gordon Elliott)

1/131P – 111

Revealed a turn of foot when winning a bumper at Punchestown in March, 2021. Won by 29 lengths on his hurdling debut at Down Royal in October and then ran in snatches when a strong-finishing third in the Grade 1 Royal Bond Novice Hurdle at Fairyhouse in November. Overcame some sloppy jumps to win a Grade 1 at Leopardstown a month later before losing all chance in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle with a mistake at the fifth. Returned to winning ways when beating Gatsby Grey by four lengths in Grade 1 Champion Novice Hurdle at Punchestown in April, again less than fluent. Looked happier on his chasing debut over an extended 2m 3f at Down Royal in November and stepped up considerably on that when making all and jumping very efficiently, apart from pecking at the fourth and third last, to win the Grade 1 2m 4f Drinmore Novice Chase at Fairyhouse. Looks a long-term prospect for the Turners over 2m 4f at the Festival. Early 9/4 favourite to win the extended 2m 5f Grade 1 novice chase at Leopardstown on Sunday (1.40).

Mister Coffey (Nicky Henderson)

1/12/1304/32220 - 2

Has run just 12 times and has yet to win over fences despite shaping well on five occasions last season, third at Newbury in November and second to Jacamar next time at Kempton. Not disgraced when runner-up to L'Homme Presse in Scilly Isles Novices' Chase at Sandown and then unlucky second to Chambard in Kim Muir at Cheltenham, losing many lengths when hampered by a faller at the second and costing momentum with mistakes four out and at the last. Failed to show on his final start in the Topham Trophy, losing his right-fore shoe. Rated 140 and could be one for the Grand National, but is qualified for the 4m National Hunt Chase at Cheltenham. Prone to jump left but has a touch of class. Aintree in the spring a distinct possibility. Ran second at Chepstow over Christmas and entered for the Grade 2 3m Towton Novices' Chase at Wetherby on Saturday (2.40).

Saint Segal (Jane Williams)

1210 – 0512

Made a winning debut at Bangor in November and then second to Porticello in the Grade 1 Finale Juvenile Hurdle at Chepstow. Returned to winning ways next time at Warwick and had his final start in the Boodles Juvenile Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham, racing freely and produced with a challenge three hurdles from home before dropping away on the final turn. Probably needed the race when sixth of nine on his return at Chepstow in October and too keen next time at Ffos Las, finishing fifth of 12 off 123. Down to 121 and was well supported in the market before making a winning chase debut at Chepstow. Raised 7lb to 128 and overcame unfavourable terms when beating Christopher Wood, rated 9lb superior, at level weights at Hereford. Raised 8lb, from 128 to 136, and stayed on dourly to run a half-length second over an extended 2m at Doncaster on Saturday. Has been left on the same mark and likely to prove very effective stepped back up to 2m 4f. One to note for a festival handicap.

Stringtoyourbow (Christian Williams)

306021 –

In excellent hands and probably hatched a long-term plot when winning on his final start at Ayr in April. Showed early promise when third in a point-to-point at Fairyhouse in April, 2021. Campaigned judiciously in his early starts over hurdles, beaten 42 lengths at Exeter, 28 lengths at Wincanton and 112 lengths back at Exeter. Rated on 95 for his first handicap and stepped up to 2m 4f at Newbury, started 33/1 but looked all over the winner two hurdles from home only to be beaten a neck by Shearer, with the third 12 lengths away. Raised 6lb he comfortably won an extended 3m 0-125 next time at Ayr,

cruising through to win on a tight rein. Now rated a stone higher on 115 and bred for a trip, from the family of Grand National winner Red Marauder. Has the scope and ability to win again from his mark.

The Selections

American Mike (1.20 Leopardstown Saturday and 3.40 Leopardstown Sunday), Mister Coffey (2.40 Wetherby Saturday), Gelino Bello (2.55 Sandown Saturday), Empire Steel (3.30 Sandown Saturday), Mighty Potter (1.40 Leopardstown Sunday), Gaelic Warrior (3.40 and 4.10 Leopardstown Sunday)

The Ante-Post Agenda by Marten Julian

Appreciate It will be trying to enhance his Arkle claims at Leopardstown this weekend, when he has entries for the Grade 1 Irish Arkle Trophy over 2m 1f on Saturday (2.30). He is one of five entries from the yard and is currently a top price of 7/4.

I suggest we watch on.

Ante-Post Selection

Appreciate It (5/1 Arkle Trophy Cheltenham)

Under The Radar by Marten Julian

I have to drop Artic Breeze from this section following his abject display when pulled up at Southwell on Sunday. This was his first run since October, but he was never travelling and connections would have plenty of explaining to do were he to win next time out.

He is best left alone for the time being.

I see Bon Retour has moved yards and is now with Mark Walford. She has also changed ownership and has an entry for Wetherby on Saturday, but she done the business twice for her former owner and although still well below her peak mark she is dropped for our purposes.

Inaam warrants a look in the 6f 0-50 classified stakes at Lingfield on Friday (3.50). Drawn on the outside of the field in stall 12 may not be a disadvantage given he needs to be tucked in for a late burst.

There are no entries for **Idiopathic** and **Repartee**.

The Selection

Inaam (3.50 Lingfield Friday)

A Look Ahead by Marten Julian

Nicky Richards is enduring a quiet spell at the moment but he is evidently taking his time to find a suitable opening for **Hard Iron**, having entered him a few times recently.

He has found a suitable opportunity for him in an extended 3m 1f 0-120 handicap hurdle at Catterick on Friday (4.12). The booking of Brian Hughes reflects intent and with bottom weight he does not appear to have much to beat.

Ronan Groome has done a thoroughly good job on this weekend's action at Leopardstown and I have little to add.

I hope Appreciate It wins the Irish Arkle, assuming he takes his chance, while Honeysuckle should not be 15/8 second favourite behind State Man in Sunday's Irish Champion Hurdle. As Ronan says she can be forgiven that recent defeat.

I expect Vauban to have come on a bundle from his Matheson run, where he finished just over four lengths behind State Man. The two could finish closer together this time, but both may struggle against the mare.

The most interesting runner over the weekend is Gaelic Warrior, who may carry top weight of 11st 10lb in the 2m 0-150 handicap hurdle on Sunday.

This would not be an orthodox path to Cheltenham, let alone to the longer trip of the Ballymore, but he is also in against Facile Vega and one-time Derby favourite High Definition in the 2m novice hurdle.

From the more exposed horses in the care of Willie Mullins he is possibly the one with the greatest potential.

Looking to the all-weather Clive Cox always thought a lot of **Kingdom Come**, who returned from a year off to win a 7f novice stakes at Kempton last month.

He has been allocated a mark of 80 and he has an entry in the Lincoln. He should go close if he returns to Kempton on Saturday (7.00).\

The Selections

Hard Iron (4.12 Catterick Friday), Kingdom Come (7.00 Kempton Saturday)

The Retrospective by Marten Julian

I was both surprised and disappointed that Edwardstone didn't quite see through his strong run to win the Clarence House Chase at Cheltenham last weekend.

He is rated 10lb superior to Editeur Du Gite and once Energumene was beaten off I expected his stamina to come to the fore on the run from the last.

Alan King seemed happy enough afterwards, having told the jockey beforehand that March was obviously the main plan, but even if not quite fully tuned up he still should have won.

As you are aware I have always liked Edwardstone but on this evidence my suggestion that he has enough stamina in his pedigree to stay three miles looks well wide of the mark.

He is joint head of the Champion Chase market with Energumene but, for me, there is now a slight doubt about him.

Noble Yeats shaped well enough in the Cotswold Chase, plugging on into third and looking as if he will relish the extra furlong of the Gold Cup.

I say more about him elsewhere.

Previously Noted Horses

Broughshane, Hard Iron, Hermes Du Gouet, Hobsons Bay, Poetikel Piece, Resolute Man, Tanganyika

The Cheltenham Diary by Marten Julian

There was plenty on offer at Cheltenham on Saturday, even if a few of the results raised more questions than answers.

I liked the way that Comfort Zone and Scriptwriter pulled clear of the third in the opening Triumph Trial, with the winner's only defeat from four starts over hurdles coming when beaten six and a quarter lengths by Lossiemouth in a Grade 3 at Fairyhouse in December.

That mare is now a top price of 11/8 for the Triumph Hurdle – remarkably short given that there is still over a month to go.

As you may be aware I had been very keen on Edwardstone to beat Energumene in the Clarence House Chase and everything looked in good order when he swept into the lead after the last. However he may have been a touch short of peak fitness, because after looking all over the winner – he was backed at 1.01 on Betfair – Editeur Du Gite just managed to edge into the lead close home and prevail by a head.

This was not what I expected, having said beforehand that Edwardstone's greatest asset is his stamina. I was expecting the strong pace and stiff finish to suit him but his trainer Alan King seemed happy enough afterwards, suggesting the horse had done a bit too much early in the race and was a bit 'gassy.'

I had a feeling, as the afternoon drew on, that Ahoy Senor was going to run well in the Cotswold Chase. I never fancied Protektorat to win and while hoping that Noble Yeats would go well, I wasn't sure that Emmet Mullins would have him fully tuned up.

In the end Noble Yeats stayed on well to finish third, without displaying that astonishing turn of foot we had seen from him at Aintree in December, where had he had finished ahead of the winner and the runner-up. The slightly longer trip and the strong pace of the Gold Cup will suit him better, while he will meet the winner on 3lb better terms.

In the last Front View, in the colours of JP McManus, shaped in the manner of a horse with the County Hurdle in his sights, but he is not quoted in the early betting.

He started favourite when well beaten in the Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap in 2020. Let's see if his name appears in the County Hurdle entries further down the line.

Cheltenham Festival Lucky 63 (E/W)

Lucky 63 E/W on Honeysuckle 11/2 (NRNB), Appreciate It 4/1, Gaelic Warrior 6/1, Shishkin 7/1 (NRNB), Paisley Park 12/1 (NRNB) and Noble Yeats 7/1 (NRNB) (Advised 12th January 2023)

The All-Weather Projects by Marten Julian

This feature is currently showing a profit to level stakes of 6 points.

Arabescato (John Butler): Grey son of Outstrip, who has won five – four on the AW - and placed in 10 of his 35 starts, winning off 54, 56, 65, 69 and 73. Has been held up in arrears in his recent starts and is now rated on 69, 4lb below his highest winning mark and 11lb below his peak of 80. Has won at trips ranging from 1m 2f to 2m 2f and is still showing enough to suggest he retains his ability.

Beau Geste (Tony Carroll) (WON 9/1, 3rd 5/2): Won four of his 38 starts, off 46, 53 and 57 in 2019-2020 and then again off 52 at Brighton in July, 2021. Won a 1m 0-50 classified stakes for us at Lingfield and raised from a mark of 49 to 51. A well-held third over 1m 2f at Lingfield last week, staying on late in the day. Entered for a 1m 0-52 at Kempton on Saturday (5.30) and a 7f 0-55 at Wolverhampton on Monday (5.30).

Got No Dollars (Stuart Williams) (4th 11/1): Four-year-old son of Showcasing who has won four of his 22 starts, placed on five other occasions, successful from marks of 52, 59, 62 and 67. Beaten eight times since and dropped just 6lb, now on 67 from 73, but never got a clear run in the closing stages last time at Kempton and subsequently dropped 2lb. Was tried over 1m 2f by former trainer Richard Hughes as a three-year-old and may appreciate a step up from seven furlongs. Was weak in the market before running well at Southwell last time out. Should be winning soon.

Madrinho (Tony Carroll) (4th 0/30, 0): In the frame in 31 of his 90 starts, winning nine, and frequently finishes his races strongly. Has won off a high of 76 and on seven other occasions from a higher mark than his current 59, shaping very well when left with too much to do in a 7f 0-65 handicap at Wolverhampton. Has been beaten twice since and needs everything to fall right for him.

Martineo (John Butler) (0): A winner of six, and placed 10 times, from 49 starts, his handicap victories coming off 60, 70, 71, 73 and 78. Has not won since January, 2022, but now down to a career-low 54 and showed three outings ago that he retains the ability to win from this mark. Rated 24lb below his peak and despite hefty market support failed to quicken when sixth of 10 last week at Wolverhampton. Warrants another chance.

Neptune Legend (Tony Carroll): A winner of one of his 21 starts, placed on five other occasions, and has dropped from a mark of 83 to 65 since joining the yard from Hugo Palmer for 30,000gns last spring. Related to useful sorts including Group 3 winners Summerhand and Eastern Impact but has shaped recently as if a step back up to seven furlongs would be in order. Nicely handicapped at present and poised to collect when wanted.

Pink Jazz (John Butler): Six-year-old winner of four of his 35 starts, winning off 55, 58, 63 and 68. Now on 52, caught the eye in a 1m 0-52 handicap at Wolverhampton, keen early on in last, still well behind leaving the back straight before finishing strongly inside the final furlong. Usually up with the pace when successful and, from a very favourable mark, his turn is near. One to note in the market if he runs in the 1m 0-52 handicap at Kempton on Saturday (5.30).

Repartee (Tony Carroll): Rated on 103 at his peak, when trained by Kevin Ryan – ran third in the Group 2 Gimcrack Stakes and runner-up in a valuable sales race – but beaten nine times since joining Tony Carroll in February, 2022, and now down to 68. Has hinted that he retains some ability, notably over 7f at Wolverhampton in November, and may be suited to a strongly-run 6f. Quite evidently no longer the force of old but owned by punting connections and one to respect when the money is down.

Split Elevens (John Butler) (3rd 6/1, WON 4/1): The winner of four and placed 10 times from 34 starts, his wins came from 6f to a mile off 52, 54, 58 and 60. Has not been granted much slack by the handicapper, rated on 59 having won off 58 at Brighton in August, and invariably slowly away, but was perhaps a shade unlucky not to win at Wolverhampton the time before last, held up a long way off the pace and then short of room between horses. Gained compensation this week over the same course and distance, winning cosily under a very cool ride from his jockey. Needs everything to fall right for him.

Tolstoy (Stuart Williams) (4th 13/2): Very well-bred four-year-old son of Kingman, out of an unraced daughter of Frankel, who has won three of his 15 starts all his victories over six furlongs when trained by John Gosden. Was rated on 96 when joining this yard last August and been beaten seven times, dropping to a mark of 88. Stayed on late to grab third close home in a 5f 0-105 at Southwell in January and can be forgiven his run at Lingfield in January when racing wide throughout from outside draw in 6f 0-105. Stayed on steadily when fourth over an inadequate 5f at Southwell and dropped 11lb, from 88 to 87. Bred to stay a mile so may have something in hand if stepped up in trip.

The Selections

Pink Jazz (5.30 Kempton Saturday), Beau Geste (5.30 Kempton Saturday and 5.30 Wolverhampton Monday)

Jodie's Jottings by Jodie Standing

This week was frustrating on many levels, but we also had some good fortune to help counterbalance things.

On Thursday, Escaria Ten ran a fine race in the Thyestes Handicap Chase under topweight of 11st 12lb. Adrian Heskin had him positioned in prime spot throughout and turning for home I thought we were in with a real shout until the burden eventually caught up with him and he had little more to offer between the final two fences. His jumping was superb, as it was on seasonal debut at Thurles at the beginning of December, but I don't think he built on that effort here.

The nine-year-old didn't seem to stay the Grand National trip last year, so whether connections will go there again is uncertain. He could be one to aim at the Ultima Handicap Chase at the Cheltenham Festival – a race sponsored by his owners.

Back on home turf, I was frustrated that I talked myself out of The Imposter at Wetherby to favour The Gooner who was making his handicap debut from a mark of 100.

My number one mantra in horseracing, especially when I'm torn between a couple in the same race, is go with the horse who shows the better attitude. That piece of advice deserted me on this occasion but I do feel The Gooner could be leniently treated if he brushed up his jumping over the longer trip.

For a long way I thought he was going to do the business as he travelled well throughout and his jumping was neat. However, once push came to shove, he didn't have the staying power I expected and he soon weakened into fourth from the back of the last.

There seemed to be little excuse but maybe he'll pick up a race when encountering some spring ground.

On Friday at Doncaster, I was very taken by the performance of Greyval in the mares' Listed juvenile hurdle. The daughter of The Grey Gatsby had shown a good deal of promise when runner-up over this course and distance to Arclight earlier in the month – a race I thought she could've won had Paddy Brennan asked her for a more serious effort on the run-in. However, she had clearly benefitted from that positive experience and comprehensively reversed the form with Nicky Henderson's mare, beating her to a tune of two lengths with plenty more left in the tank.

A smooth-travelling sort with a gutsy attitude, it wasn't all plain sailing for the grey as she was forced to sit and suffer in amongst runners before switching wide approaching three from home. She then caused some argy-bargy over the penultimate flight but luckily came away unscathed before

winging the last and sticking on gamely up the run-in.

There's no doubt she possesses plenty of raw ability and it'll be interesting to see where she ends up next. The Triumph Hurdle has been mooted but she could be better placed in the mares' novices' hurdle, or maybe even the Fred Winter.

After Greyval's win, the luck stopped there as we had three seconds on Saturday, two of which could've gone either way had our selections had a clearer passage to the line.

First was Rambo T who confirmed what I'd been fearing all along – he needs a step-up in trip. Connections have probably been reluctant in asking him to stay further as he's quite a keen traveller, but being by Ocovango out of a Brian Boru mare, the stamina is overriding the speed in the latter stages of his races. I still believe in his ability, and maybe a switch to handicaps could be the way forward.

Up at Doncaster, Stay Away Fay was brave in defeat to Maximilian in the Grade 2 River Don Novices' Hurdle. The six-year-old, who was having only his second start over hurdles, didn't jump with the greatest amount of fluency but he stuck to his task in gutsy style despite being slightly hampered and intimidated approaching the last. Ultimately, he wasn't good enough on this occasion but given his inexperience remains a decent prospect.

Later in the day, we once again had to accept defeat, this time with Cap Du Nord who was beaten a length by Cooper's Cross in an incident-packed Sky Bet Handicap Chase.

Christian Williams' charge travelled and jumped the best he has all season but was short of room turning for home before being forced to switch wide after the fourth last, just as the winner had moved into contention. Knuckling down well for Jack Tudor's urgings, the ten-year-old had built up a good head of steam moving down to the last and was coming between runners before that passage began to close. Switched quickly to the outside, his momentum was once again interrupted as the winner shifted to his right, causing Cap Du Nord to swerve back to his inside.

It's hard to suggest that Cap Du Nord would've won as Cooper's Cross looked to cross the line strongly, but had our selection had a clearer sight of the last, he could've landed running which would've propelled him to the line. It was a frustrating end to the day.

Thursday

We start the week with low-key action at Wincanton and Fakenham where I'm hoping Torula and Camulus both come up trumps in their respective handicaps.

Ben Pauling's **Torula** (1.30) is making his handicap debut over hurdles and is back up in trip after showing shades of promise on his last two starts over 2m at Chepstow and Huntingdon respectively. Beaten 18 lengths into fifth place at the Welsh Grand National meeting following a wind procedure, he then ran on into third place, 11 and a half lengths behind Western Zephyr last month where his hurdling in the latter stages lacked conviction.

A mark of 105 is quite high for all that he's achieved, but he's a horse who tries hard and the step back up in trip looks the right move now handicapping. This doesn't look an overly tough race so fingers crossed the six-year-old can put his best foot forward. The yard's continued good run of form certainly bolsters confidence that a bold run can be expected.

Over at Fakenham, this could be the day that **Camulus** sparks to life for Christian Williams (3.50).

As I've said previously, the six-year-old has good pointing form having finished a short head in front of the 129-rated Ukantango at Curraghmore in October 2021, whilst a further five lengths behind was the 116-rated Benassi and 12 lengths behind him was the 124-rated Issuing Authority. Other winners have also come from the race.

Despite this, the Walk In The Park gelding is yet to get off the mark in five attempts under Rules – including four times over hurdles, once around this track over the longer trip of an extended 2m 7f. However, there was plenty of encouragement to take from his three-and-a-half length defeat by Time Flies By at Fontwell in October and I did like the way he stayed on behind Dream In The Park at Ascot later that month on his first start in a handicap from a mark of 101. He was, though, woefully below par from that same mark when last seen here in November.

Now tongue-tied after a break, he should be making his mark from a rating of 98, if only he can recoup the level of form that he showed in his point. Let's not lose faith just yet as Christian Williams is a dab hand at getting horses back.

Friday

There's just one horse to be with today, which is **Well Dick** in the novices' hurdle at Chepstow (2.30).

Charlie Longsdon's six-year-old finished runner-up over this course and distance on his Rules debut behind Makin'yourmindup back in December before going on to make virtually all under a strong ride from Brian Hughes at Uttoxeter on New Year's Eve.

As honest as the day is long, Well Dick only has the one pace but he'll keep galloping longer than most and although he's been beaten around here, the long home straight and the spaced- out hurdles are perfect for him.

Heezer Geezer, rated on a mark of 129, is officially 3lb better off at the ratings (when taking Bradley Roberts 7lb claim into consideration) but he's trying the trip for the first time having won around Hereford over an extended 2m 3f last time. He stayed on well that day after been off the bridle turning into the straight but this test requires a lot more stamina, which, on breeding, he doesn't have.

Well Dick responds for pressure, so I hope Bradley keeps turning the screw as the opposition move up to his quarters. The only reservation I have is with the ground not riding soft enough. At Uttoxeter, it was very testing and the opposition floundered. Here it's good to soft, good in places and that could mean something in the line-up could have a better finishing burst if they are able to keep tabs on Well Dick until the final furlong.

Whatever the case, I'd rather be with Well Dick than against him.

Saturday

The main action is, of course, on the other side of the Irish Sea this weekend but that doesn't mean there aren't bits of intrigue on these shores. At Sandown, I'll be keeping **Movethechains** onside if he's declared for the Class 2 handicap chase over the extended 3m (3.30).

Gary Moore's nine-year-old has made Lingfield his playground with all four of his victories being around that track, and it's a shame that they lost the jumps action on their Winter Millions weekend, as I had high hopes that he would extend his winning record in the Surrey National Handicap Chase. Those successes were over the extended 2m 7f trip and started from a basement rating of just 80 before defying 87, 100 and 117 on ground ranging from good to soft, to heavy.

Not at his best on seasonal reappearance in the Welsh Grand National, he took an age to warm to the task before plugging on for fifth place, 46 lengths behind The Two Amigos. He now has to bounce back to form from a mark of 127 but I do believe he has more to offer.

In the concluding bumper, I will be siding with either Captain Teague or Wrappedupinmay – both trained by Paul Nicholls and owned by Johnny de la Hey (4.03).

Captain Teague made a winning start to life under Rules at Plumpton last month – a course which wouldn't have played to his strengths given his scope and lengthy stride – and the form has already been boosted by the third who went on to win next time. He was green once he hit the front that day but knuckled down nicely when asked to assert by Harry Cobden and crossed the line with plenty left in the tank.

Wrappedupinmay was another to justify short odds when cruising to a 24-length victory on New Year's Day at Exeter. Although those in behind looked far from special, the Ocovango gelding could only do what was asked

of him and he did so with aplomb and confirmed the promise displayed when coasting to a 30-length success in a point-to-point at Dromahane in April.

This race will be a sterner test but both horses look destined for better things and, in Captain Teague's case, he should relish this stiffer course, whilst Wrappedupinmay has already proven himself around a galloping track.

Sunday

Starting at Leopardstown, I'll be watching rather than investing in many of the races, but I will be affording **Indigo Breeze** a second chance if he took his place in the handicap chase over 2m 5f (2.40).

Gordon Elliott's charge was last seen finishing three parts of a length behind The Real Whacker at Cheltenham's November meeting where he was upped in trip to a shade beyond three miles for the first time. That form has subsequently worked out well with the winner going on to claim Grade 2 success in the Dipper back at Cheltenham on New Year's Day and now rated on a mark of 153.

Indigo Breeze travelled and jumped supremely well that day and he looked for all the winner turning for home until he was outbattled up the hill. Rated on a mark of 135, he looks to have plenty of scope for improvement, and although I believe he got the trip at Cheltenham this drop back in distance looks a good move.

Back on home soil, hopefully we get a chance to see **Getupearly** make his handicap debut at Hereford over the extended 3m (4.03).

A winner at the second attempt in the pointing field, the Getaway gelding is yet to make his mark over hurdles, having been beaten 13 lengths, 71 lengths and 42 lengths over trips ranging from an extended 2m 3f up to 2m 5f.

Although there hasn't been a great deal to take from those efforts, he did stay on at the one pace on his Rules debut at Worcester over 2m 4f, suggesting that he'll get further in time. He also plugged on to finish fifth last time when never put into the race.

He's from a family that the trainer knows particularly well, having trained the half-brother, War Sound, and the dam's half-brother, Planet Of Sound, amongst others. Getupearly could find a new lease of life now handicapping from a mark of 101. Interestingly, he was declared to run at Chepstow a couple of weeks ago but the meeting succumbed to frost. There was money for him prior to that abandonment which perhaps suggested the yard were expecting an improved effort given his previous starting prices had been 18/1, 33/1 and 66/1.

Tuesday

Tightenourbelts is worth more than a look if he declares for the novices' hurdle at Market Rasen (1.45).

He was strong in the market for his Rules debut at Chepstow back in October when keeping on well from the rear to finish a never nearer fourth of 14, just over six lengths behind Makin'yourmindup. He then gave the 132-rated Timeforatune plenty to think about when beaten into second at Taunton before the turn of the year where he made most of the running and stayed on well once headed after the last to keep the winning margin to less than two lengths.

Beaten only seven lengths by the promising Weveallbeencaught in a point-to-point at Dromahane in December 2021 having received a patient ride, it's only a matter of time before the Mahler gelding gets off the mark.

Finally, we have the rearranged Alan Swinbank mares' Listed bumper to look forward to, and I'm standing firm with my original selection, **Dysart Enos** (3.45).

The daughter of Malinas only finished two lengths behind the subsequent impressive bumper winner, Fancy Girl, in a point-to-point at Ballyragget in March and probably would have finished a lot closer had she jumped better. She was then sold to these connections for £95,000 at the Goffs UK Aintree Sale in April and made the perfect start to life under Rules when staying on strongly to win by eight and a half lengths on bumper debut at Ludlow in November.

That form is yet to be truly tested but I liked what I saw from Dysart Enos and, although this is a big step up the ladder, I hope she can improve.

The Selections

Torula (1.30 Wincanton Thursday and 4.30 Taunton Tuesday), Camulus (3.50 Fakenham Thursday), Well Dick (2.30 Chepstow Friday), Movethechains (3.30 Sandown Saturday), Captain Teague or Wrappedupinmay (4.03 Sandown Saturday), Indigo Breeze (2.40 Leopardstown Sunday), Getupearly (4.03 Hereford Sunday), Tightenourbelts (1.45 Market Rasen Tuesday), Dysart Enos (3.45 Market Rasen Tuesday)

Ante-Post Selection

It's For Me E/W @ 25/1 NRNB (Champion Bumper Cheltenham)

The Dublin Festival by Ronan Groome

Eight Grade 1s, €2.1 million in prize money, an influx of British racing fans on the Irish capital and Cheltenham clues aplenty. That is the Dublin Racing Festival, which now in its sixth year, is the amalgamation of three standalone January/February fixtures into a mega weekend of National Hunt action.

With that all said, this year's edition does look a little light in terms of competition. Most strikingly, only the Ladbrokes Novice Chase had more than 10 entries on Tuesday afternoon.

In total, there are only 66 entries for the eight Grade 1s and Willie Mullins has 33 of them. That is a stark reminder of the state of play. At the moment the Closutton bandwagon is all encompassing and it's hard to envisage anything other than another steamroller performance over the two days.

It's not the fault of Willie's, nor a slight on the great man, because without him running handfuls of his horses against each other, the festival would be a far poorer spectacle. You just wonder, where are all the other horses gone? It's a discussion for another day.

For now let's try and find a few winners. I've gone through all eight Grade 1s, whether I've tipped or not, and a couple of handicaps that caught the eye. The suggestion is to wait for declarations, which will come through on Thursday and Friday mornings for Saturday and Sunday respectively, before having a bet.

Saturday

1.20 Nathaniel Lacy Solicitors Novice Hurdle (Grade 1)

Good Land is favourite here off the back of his maiden hurdle win over 2f shorter at this track over Christmas. He was impressive that day, coming eight lengths clear of Tag Man and the form of the race has worked out, with fourth home Embassy Gardens winning a Grade 3 since. His trainer Barry Connell is having a fabulous season so there is lots to like but at 9/4 or thereabouts, his profile doesn't warrant his current billing.

Sandor Clegane is basically the same as him, an impressive maiden hurdle winner with scope to improve further now. Okay, he doesn't have the course win over hurdles but he ran a fine race when second to Facile Vega in the Grade 2 bumper at this meeting last season so you know he goes well around here.

That all said, surely the British raider **Weveallbeencaught** is getting underestimated, possibly because he is a British raider alone.

Third to Hermes Allen in a Cheltenham novice hurdle on his hurdles debut, he stepped forward significantly when outstaying Rock My Way up the hill in a maiden hurdle at the same track on New Year's Day. The pair of them came miles clear and the runner-up has since taken the Grade 2 Ballymore Novices Hurdle on Cheltenham Trials day last weekend. That is a near guarantee Weveallbeencaught is at least a Grade 2 horse in Britain, so in form terms, he is ahead of his rivals in this contest. A big strapping horse that cost £210,000 this time last season, he looks a really nice prospect that can continue to improve, and he shouldn't be underestimated coming back to his native land having won his point-to-point here at Dromahane.

1.55 Donohue Marquees Spring Juvenile Handicap Hurdle (Grade 1)

I'm keen to take on Lossiemouth but possibly not in this race. She has looked very good on both starts, scoring at Grade 3 level on her seasonal bow at Fairyhouse and then coming clear in the Grade 2 Knight Frank Juvenile at this track over Christmas. However both those wins owed plenty to her positioning and turn of foot because they were slowly run races where finishing speed was optimal. The thing is, that is exactly what this contest could be as Willie Mullins dominates the entries with seven of the nine runners.

Fairyhouse Grade 3 scorer Blood Destiny would be a real rival for her but it seems unlikely he will be declared so soon after that latest start and it's likely Gala Marceau will be her chief opposition again. She ran a fine race to be second to her in the Knight Frank, which was her first start of the season and for her new stable. That was a fine effort, considering she raced freely and she is entitled to improve now. She could also easily be further benefitted by a stronger pace to run off. But we might just have to wait until Cheltenham for that.

2.30 Goffs Irish Arkle Novice Chase (Grade 1)

Again, this is a similar story, with Willie Mullins dominating the entries and question marks over who the champion trainer will allow to run, but it will be disappointing if he doesn't have at least three involved.

Appreciate It was the best of them over hurdles and did plenty of his winning at this track so while he hasn't done a lot over fences so far, the back class is there with him. You'd have to be excited about Dysart Dynamo as well, as he looked like a real 2m chaser with the way he attacked his fences and got into a rhythm over the course and distance at Christmas. El Fabiolo is doubly entered, but his owners have James Du Berlais for the 2m5f option Grade 1 so he could run here. Again, he was impressive for his debut, but he did make a few significant mistakes late on and will be running and jumping much faster now.

Saint Roi is probably going to run, considering he won the Grade 1 over this course and distance at Christmas but despite that he seems to be a little discounted. Perhaps that is because he beat Visionarian, who was a 25/1 shot on the day, but he also reversed form with Fil Dor who was a further seven and a half lengths back in third, and previously when he and Gordon Elliott's horse came clear at Navan, there were rave reviews for both. Saint Roi should be suited to the way this race is run, as he is a hold-up horse with smart turn of foot late on so he could easily get involved at the business end. His price should hold up on the day.

3.05 Paddy Power Irish Gold Cup (Grade 1)

It is hard to see past Galopin Des Champs, even if he has to prove himself officially in a 3m chase.

The worry you might have had for him was the question of could he switch off over the longer distance and would his main power-pack style be blunted, having done all his racing at intermediate trips last season. He hasn't answered that question yet but his John Durkan run was very promising, as he settled in well and then powered away under minimum urging late on. It seems far more likely now that he will improve or at least maintain his level over 3m than regress so he is going to be very difficult to beat.

Stablemate Stattler ran a fine race when conceding weight to former Gold Cup winner Minella Indo at Tramore and he should come on for that. He is a nice prospect but he doesn't have the same fire power as Galopin Des Champs. Franco De Port should run here and if he does, have a look out for him in the side markets (without the favourite, two places, three places, match bets). He has a decent record at Leopardstown having finished first and second here in 2m1f Grade 1s as a novice and he ran another fine race when staying on into fourth behind Conflated in the Savills Chase.

4.10 Paddy Power Handicap Chase

Rebel Gold has had a fine season and gained a deserved win when bolting up in the Dan & Joan Moore Memorial Handicap Chase at Fairyhouse last time. That is traditionally a hot 2m handicap chase and it looked like it again, in slight contrast to this heat which only had nine runners 12 months ago, which looks on the cards again.

Last year Patrick Foley's 10-year-old ran a fine race when sixth to Birchdale in the the 2m5f handicap chase at this meeting, and that was off a mark just 4lbs lower. This year he comes into the race in the form of his life having come nine lengths clear of Dunvegan at Fairyhouse and previously finding only the well handicapped mare Maskada too good in the Tim Duggan at Limerick. Like lots of these, he is fairly exposed, but no other horse bar Final Orders has the same sort of handicap chase form so he is taken to score again at around the 5/1 mark.

Sunday

1.10 Irish Stallion Farms EBF Paddy Mullins Mares Handicap Hurdle (Grade B)

For many this is one the less appealing heats of the week, in terms of class anyway, but it often throws up a good betting opportunity and I think I might have found a good option in Henry de Bromhead's mare **Rioga Choice**.

She has the potential to be nicely handicapped off a mark of 121 after she was last seen running fourth to Magical Zoe in a Grade 3 mares' novice hurdle at Down Royal at the beginning of the season. She outran

odds of 16/1 there when facing up to some smart mares like the winner, The Model Kingdom in third, Saylavee behind her in fifth and Liberty Dancy further back in sixth. To illustrate the suggestion that she could be well handicapped, The Model Kingdom is rated 131 now while Liberty Dancy is 129, and is towards the top of the weights in this contest. She could have finished a little bit closer as well at Down Royal had she not been barrelled into at the second last, before running on again, so this 2m2f trip should also suit.

It seems likely that Henry de Bromhead might have had one eye on this contest since that run - it's a valuable race on a marquee weekend - so she could be cherry ripe for a big run and odds of 12/1 make plenty of appeal.

1.40 Ladbrokes Novice Chase (Grade 1)

Mighty Potter is a likely runner and likely favourite. There is lots to like about him.

He is a Grade 1 winner over hurdles at this track and he looked really good in the 2m4f Drinmore, overcoming a few mistakes to power on past Gaillard Du Mesnil, who upgraded the form with his win in the 3m Grade 1 novice chase here over Christmas. You'd fully expect him to confirm that form with the Willie Mullins runner, who performed admirably at Fairyhouse, but is surely better over at least 3m rather than the 2m5f here. Plus Mighty Potter has the scope to improve further, on this just his third start over fences. He is easily Gordon Elliott's best chance of a Grade 1 over the weekend and by the time declarations come through, he could have an easier looking task, with Gerri Colombe reported to be heading to Sandown for the Scilly Isles and the same owners Journey With Me preferring softer ground.

James Du Berlais is the really interesting one. He was deemed good enough to run in a Champion Hurdle first time up by Willie Mullins a couple of seasons ago and then finished second to Klassikal Dream in the 3m Grade 1 at the Punchestown Festival. He was off the track 600+ days when he returned at Fairyhouse for his chase debut on New Year's Day and though he beat very little there, he jumped and travelled very well, clocking a good time in the process. The 'bounce' factor is evident now, but if that forecast proves a myth to him, he'll be a big player.

2.10 Ladbrokes Dublin Chase (Grade 1)

This is the most disappointing Grade 1 of the weekend but with the Clarence House run last week, it's probably not a surprise. Blue Lord looked a completely different proposition with his course-and-distance win here at Christmas, and much like Edwardstone has done in Britain, he has shown he is very much able to compete at the top level in open company. He really should and needs to win to maintain that belief that he can cut it in a Champion Chase.

Gentleman De Mee has a win over Edwardstone, and it was around this time last year that he really got going as a novice chaser but you'd need to be the forgiving type to put full faith in him after three disappointing efforts this term.

3.10 Chanelle Pharma Irish Champion Hurdle (Grade 1)

I'm backing **Honeysuckle**. If you're not a believer anymore, let me try and change your perspective of her run in the Hatton's Grace Hurdle.

If she wasn't unbeaten going into that race, would there have been as much furore as there was after? Her first defeat in 17 races has led to an automatic assumption she is on the downgrade but is that actually the case? On very soft ground she has come 30 lengths clear of the rest of the field with Teahupoo, who has proven his ability to stay 3m since, and Klassical Dream, a bona fide stayer. It looked as good as any of her other runs in the same race previously and the official handicapper has agreed, leaving her on a mark of 165. If you take that literally she is 5lbs clear of State Man.

She is only nine and returning to Leopardstown on decent ground, I think she has every chance of running to her current assessment. If she does, State Man has to find that 5lbs (when you factor in the mares allowance) and it's 12lbs for Vauban. That is a possibility of course - both the Willie Mullins pair are young, up-and-coming horses, especially Vauban, who can get closer to his stablemate now. But Honeysuckle will surely be trained to the minute for what has been billed as a last chance saloon or final hurrah type of run and I think she has a reasonable chance of regaining the winning thread.

3.40 Tattersalls Ireland Novice Hurdle (Grade 1)

Facile Vega is a long odds-on shot after securing his first Grade 1 over

hurdles at this course and distance over Christmas. However he didn't impress as much as people thought he might there and that race was strangely run, with all bar the front two exaggeratedly held up. With that in mind I don't really see the subsequent wins from the third and fourth Ashroe Diamond and Path D'oroux as form boosts for the race. If you take that line, Facile Vega has basically just seen off Il Etait Temps, who couldn't cut the mustard in Grade 1s as a juvenile last season. I appreciate he has still won well and should improve again, but this race could be hotter, especially if either Irish Point or Inthepocket are allowed to run.

High Definition has been confirmed as an intended runner by Joseph O'Brien and he is most intriguing. In the annual flat rating classifications published last month, he holds a rating of 117. I can't remember a horse that good on the flat pitching up over hurdles and I think he looked more than promising on his debut, where he was notably weak in the market beforehand. He jumped greenly, but still managed to win comprehensively and I just think there could be huge upside in him.

On a side note, most of the belief in Facile Vega comes from his excellent bumper campaign. It would have been interesting if High Definition rocked up to the Grade 2 bumper on this card last season, I know who I'd have been on anyway. So I'm willing to take a chance at prices in and around the 7/1 mark now.

The Selections

Weveallbeencaught (1.20 Leopardstown Saturday), Saint Roi (2.30 Leopardstown Saturday), Rebel Gold (4.10 Leopardstown Saturday), Rioga Choice (1.10 Leopardstown Sunday), Honeysuckle (3.10 Leopardstown Sunday), High Definition (3.40 Leopardstown Sunday)

The Weekend News by Ian Carnaby

Last week was most satisfactory with Il Ridoto and Hacker Des Places giving Paul Nicholls a Cheltenham double at just over 26/1.

Il Ridoto deserved a valuable handicap chase after finishing a good fourth in a similar race last time, while Hacker Des Places benefited from young Angus Cheleda's 5lbs allowance in the closing handicap hurdle.

I've said before about young riders coming through and taking on their elders while still in their teens. They may not have the cockiness of a young Lester Piggott - 'Out of the way, granddad!' but talent generally outweighs nerves these days. Professional sport is so competitive that there are not many chances on the big stage and they have to be grasped early. Nicholls, who touches perfection as a trainer, has both Cheleda and Freddie Gingell at his Ditchheat stable and when they ride inmates with stable-jockey Harry Cobden available at the same meeting, the hint must be taken. Hacker Des Places won because of Cheleda's 5lbs allowance.

Just staying with that SSS Super Alloys Handicap for a moment, mention must also be made of the fifth home, Tom Symonds's Hystery Bere. Third in the race last year (it was a pretty desperate finish), the horse did not win afterwards and probably needed his reappearance outing when fourth of six at Doncaster. Virtually ignored at 25/1 last Saturday, he was just about last running down the hill but overtook about nine rivals in the straight. He was never likely to win but it was an eye-catching effort and we don't want the form-book or other observers making too much of it.

Hystery Bere looks very capable indeed off a mark of 128 and should be watched carefully from now on. He was ridden by Jordan Naylor, a shrewd booking because it brought him a pound into the handicap proper instead of being 2lbs adrift. I imagine Jordan wondered what he'd taken on when the horse failed to pick up until late in the day, only to finish very strongly. Jim Old rates Jordan highly and believes he is better suited to some of the inmates at Nigel Twiston-Davies's stable than the trainer's son. You can make up your own mind about that but there is no

doubt the 3lbs allowance comes in handy and I hope he is on Hystery Bere again next time.

It was a good winning day in this quarter, though I'm bound to say I wondered again how things might have turned out if I'd decided to enter the exchanges market a few years ago. It's almost unnerving, how often horses starting at poor value do not win anyway. I'm not a fan of Haydock in the soft and invariably treat the result of the Betfair Chase with caution. When A Plus Tard ran miles below his best, it seemed to me that Protektorat merely had to keep up the gallop to win comfortably. Would you truly rate Eldorado Allen, Frodon and Bristol De Mai Grade 1 contenders these days?

I'm not saying Protektorat couldn't win the Paddy Power Cotswold Chase on Saturday because that would be ridiculous, but on his overall profile and the doubt about the Haydock form, 5/4 was a truly dreadful price. As for Paisley Park in the Cleeve Hurdle, all I can say is that the horse has been very good to me (and us) in the past but, at 11, he simply isn't as good as before and still finds little at one stage or another in his races. 13/8 was hard to believe last week, when his modest third to French challenger Gold Tweet suggested things will be very tough from now on. It's a pity, but at that price the bookmakers knew there would be sentimental money for him, especially given his excellent record in the Cleeve. You have to be very careful when it comes to big televised races on Saturdays because value is often hard to find.

As far as Gold Tweet is concerned, he fairly coasted home in the end and should take his chance in the Stayers' Hurdle. I'd never have found him over a trip as long as this and the Irish will have plenty to say come March, but he was quite impressive and easily pulled clear of the durable Dashed Drasher.

The latter is of interest to me because he just outpointed Nicky Henderson's First Street for second place in the Relkeel. That was over a much shorter trip than the Cleeve but still quite a bit longer than the Betfair Hurdle at Newbury. My argument may be flawed here because of the worry about the contrasting trips but First Street probably has the pace for a top two-mile handicap and he will be my choice at Newbury. It's possibly worth noting that Henderson has toyed with the idea of

running him as a back-up to talented mare Epatante in recent weeks and that is quite a compliment.

Musselburgh stages a prestigious two-day fixture this weekend and the race that interests me most is the bet365 Scottish County Handicap Hurdle (3.16 Musselburgh Saturday).

Stuart Crawford has been sending over more and more challengers from Ireland recently and enjoys a fair degree of success. His **Holmes St Georges** has won twice here already - indeed, he's never won anywhere else - and looks to me more effective over two miles than two and a half. He has only one below him in the weights as things stand and that one, Cuban Cigar, carries a stone less than anything else.

Holmes St Georges is owned by Simon Munir and Isaac Souede, so will be the mount of Daryl Jacob, who does not get up on as many big-race fancies as expected. He may be re-routed to Wetherby for the William Hill Handicap Hurdle (3.23 Saturday) over a longer trip but I think the easy two around Musselburgh is more Holmes St Georges's game.

I shall be backing Donald McCain's **Nayati** as well. He enjoys himself here and although some will field against him off 11st 7lbs, he has been raised just 3lbs for winning last time. He does things pretty easily but can wander late on. He concedes Holmes St Georges 16lbs, which may bring them close together.

The Selections

Holmes St Georges and Nayati (3.16 Musselburgh 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.

Thursday

Torula*	Jodie's Jottings	1.30 Wincanton
Camulus	Jodie's Jottings	3.50 Fakenham

Friday

Well Dick	Jodie's Jottings	2.30 Chepstow
Inaam	Under The Radar	3.50 Lingfield
Hard Iron	The Look Ahead (MJ)	4.12 Catterick

Saturday

American Mike*	The Premier List	1.20 Leo'town
Weveallbeencaught	Ronan Groome	1.20 Leo'town
Saint Roi	Ronan Groome	2.30 Leo'town
Mister Coffey	The Premier List	2.40 Wetherby
Gelino Bello	The Premier List	2.55 Sandown
Empire Steel	The Premier List	3.30 Sandown
Movethechains	Jodie's Jottings	3.30 Sandown
Captain Teague	Jodie's Jottings	4.03 Sandown
Wrappedupinmay	Jodie's Jottings	4.03 Sandown
Rebel Gold*	Ronan Groome	4.10 Leo'town
Pink Jazz	The All-Weather Projects	5.30 Kempton
Beau Geste*	The All-Weather Projects	5.30 Kempton
Kingdom Come	The Look Ahead (MJ)	7.00 Kempton

Sunday

Rioga Choice	Ronan Groome	1.10 Leo'town
Mighty Potter	The Premier List	1.40 Leo'town
Indigo Breeze	Jodie's Jottings	2.40 Leo'town

Reference Sheet

Rebel Gold*	Ronan Groome	2.40 Leo'town
Honeysuckle	Ronan Groome	3.10 Leo'town
Holmes St Georges	The Weekend News (IC)	3.16 Musselburgh
Nayati	The Weekend News (IC)	3.16 Musselburgh
High Definition	Ronan Groome	3.40 Leo'town
American Mike*	The Premier List	3.40 Leo'town
Gaelic Warrior	The Premier List	3.40/4.10 L'town
Getupearly	Jodie's Jottings	4.03 Hereford

Monday

Beau Geste*	The All-Weather Projects	5.30 Wolves
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Tuesday

Tightenourbelts	Jodie's Jottings	1.45 M Rasen
Dysart Enos	Jodie's Jottings	3.45 M Rasen
Ribeye	The Sleeper Section	4.15 M Rasen
Torula*	Jodie's Jottings	4.30 Taunton

Marten's Ante-Post Advice

(Advised in Ed 313) Appreciate It (5/1 Arkle Trophy Cheltenham)

(Advised in Ed 313) £1 E/W Lucky 63 on Honeysuckle 11/2 (NRNB) Champion Hurdle, Appreciate It 4/1 Arkle Trophy, Gaelic Warrior 6/1 Ballymore Novices' Hurdle, Shishkin 7/1 (NRNB) Ryanair, Paisley Park 12/1 (NRNB) Stayers' Hurdle and Noble Yeats 7/1 (NRNB) Gold Cup

Jodie's Ante-Post Advice

(Advised in Ed 313) It's For Me E/W @ 25/1 NRNB (Champion Bumper Cheltenham)

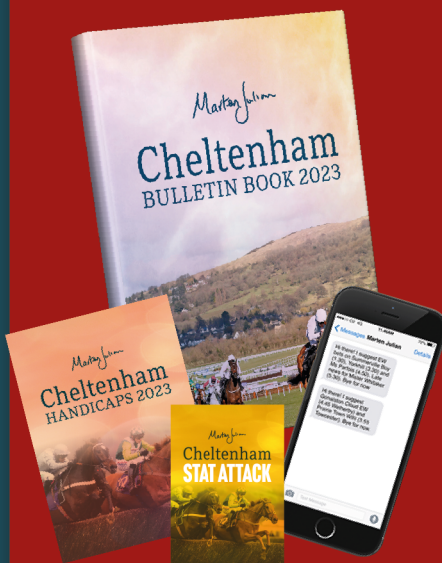
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