



Wednesday 24th May 2023

Hi there,

We have to keep a close eye on handicap debutant Clarko's Back in the opening 1m 46-65 handicap at Kempton late this afternoon (5.05)

The son of Harry Angel, who has been gelded since last seen and wears a tongue-tie for the first time, caught my eye on his first two starts last season which is why I put him in the Sleeper list of the *Weekend Card*.

He looks only reasonably handicapped on an opening mark of 65, but there has been market support for him at long odds and he is well drawn in stall five. There are horses with similar profiles from good yards here, but Jamie Osborne has had a couple of winners and six placed horses from his last 11 runners so I hope to see him go close.

Later in the evening Sir Michael Stoute will be expecting a good season with Balhambar (8.10). The four-year-old shaped very well last year, notably winning at Chepstow and then running creditably after a troubled passage in a decent handicap at Ascot.

He has been gelded and this could lead to better things. Sea King is the other one to note but he's a little high in the handicap off 92.

Stable-companion Crystal Caprice is also expected to have a good summer. She runs in the 1m 2f Listed race at Ayr and is hopefully over a few of the issues she faced last season (3.30). She is rated just 2lbs behind the short-priced favourite Al Husn.

There has been interesting market strength behind Yaaser (4.00) and Irish raider Big Dream (5.30) later in the day.

In the extended 3m 0-100 handicap hurdle at Southwell we need to keep an eye on Millie Of Mayo (8.20). Nicky Richards has had a good season and is making a pleasing start to the summer campaign, and this eight-year-old mare has won two of her three races off 3lbs and 7lbs higher marks than today.

Her hat-trick came in the summer and early autumn of 2020 and she is suited by the good ground. I expect that she is being prepared for a summer season but may just need this today. Nicky would not still have her in training if he didn't think she could win again.

I think we have to be with Clarko's Back each-way and Balhambar to win.

Bye for now

Marten



Wednesday 17th May 2023

Hi there,

It's one of the most challenging first days to the Dante meeting than I can ever remember, with five other meetings to muddy the waters even more.

Getting those out of the way before addressing York, I don't think there is anything for us at the jump meetings at Newton Abbot, Perth and Worcester but at Bath they're stepping in again on Sleeper qualifier Galilaeus, from 5.4 to 2.72 on Betfair (6.40). Backers did their money on the well-bred son of Galileo in the Windsor mud a fortnight ago, but he's down 2lbs and Ralph Beckett reaches for the blinkers. He is one to watch with an eye to future improvement.

In the next it's interesting that Marcus Tregoning still has La Forza in training (7.10). Rated just 46 he is owned by the trainer and is possibly used as a lead horse or schoolmaster, but watch the market just in case.

Now moving to York, which opens with a handicap worthy of a main meeting Saturday fixture (1.50).

William Haggas has an excellent record in the race and he earmarked La Yakel for this month's race, but he was beaten off today's mark when fourth on his final start at Newmarket last October and might prefer easier ground.

Stable-companion Tasman Bay is new to the yard and has dropped in the weights while Real Dream is lightly-raced and could be an Ebor candidate down the line.

For those wanting a bet I suggest you look at Forza Orta. He was second in the race last year, versatile regarding ground and he has dropped to a favourable mark. He is consistent and has the best speed figure in the field.

We need to steer well clear of the 22-runner 6f handicap – Khanjar may be one to look forward to once William Haggas finds his stride (2.25) – and that brings us on to the Group 2 Duke Of York Stakes, which is worthy of Group 1 status this year.

It's truly remarkable that Highfield Princess was winning off just 58 less than three years ago, and she is now here having won three Group 1s last season and rated 61lbs higher on 119. She does, though, customarily need her first outing and John Quinn has a long programme in mind for her.

Gimcrack runner-up Marshman receives all the allowances and is fit having won a Group 3 at Chantilly while Australian raider The Astrologist went very close in a Group 1 at Meydan in March.

The one I like is Azure Blue – a sprinter with a turn of foot. The mare is one of the lowest rated in the field and she is suited to easy ground, but I have liked her for a while now and she is the type to keep improving through the season. At around 12 on Betfair she is an each-way selection.

Moving to the Musidora I hope to see Infinite Cosmos enhance her Oaks claims although in an ideal world I'm sure Sir Michael Stoute would prefer not to run the filly just 12 days after her return at Sandown (3.35).

She was still very green at Sandown but her rivals are mostly lightly-raced here as well. Of these Empress Wu was visually most impressive when winning her sole start at Lingfield in November while Group 1 Fillies' Mile runner-up Novakai sets the height of the bar on a mark of 113. Midnight Mile can also call upon Group form but Infinite Cosmos has more to offer and this will establish her Oaks credentials.

In the next I like Zu Run (4.10). Andrew Balding's son of Zoustar won in good style at Chelmsford last season before being left with too much to do next time at Kempton. I think he will prove better than 89 and may be one for the Britannia if he stays a mile.

I have a message for outsider of the field Land Lover in the 5f novice for two-year-olds (4.45) while I've not given up on Heathen, who couldn't handle the mud at Thirsk, in the last (5.15).

As you will gathered it's a challenging day but I suggest we go with Azure Blue and Zu Run, both each-way.

Bye for now

Marten



Friday 5th May 2023

Hi there,

It promises to be a hugely informative day at Newmarket, with potential Group-class contenders all over the place.

For me the most interesting runner is Infinite Cosmos in the 1m 2f maiden fillies' stakes (4.45).

There has been a steady buzz about this filly for a few weeks now, with the Oaks as her intended summer target. She ran a blinder in a 1m maiden at Doncaster last October, finishing a short-head second in a race that she would have won with stronger handling.

The winner there Sea Of Roses is now rated on 100 having finished second in a Group 3 in France last month. Infinite Cosmos, who is now down to a very steady 10/1 for the Oaks, has been working very well and although a maiden filly I will be surprised to see her beaten.

In the opener Like A Tiger showed his Derby entry was more than warranted when winning a 80-90 handicap over this course and distance a fortnight ago (1.15). That was a remarkable performance because he lost half-a-dozen lengths at the start but came away to win by four lengths off a mark of 83.

Salt Bay was third in a Group 1 in France last October but is untried on quick ground while Salisbury winner Circle Of Fire has been weak in the market, just as he was before his intended engagement at Sandown last week. This is a very decent contest.

There is a message for Bass Player in the 7f 0-105 handicap (3.00). Tom Clover's four-year-old has plenty of ability but he is a gawky type who carries his head quite high. A wind operation since last season may help and he is worth a look at around 14 on Betfair.

In the next connections must be hoping the first-time application of sheepskin cheekpieces rekindles Hurricane Lane's enthusiasm for the game (3.35). He was disappointing on his two runs last season and didn't find much at Newbury a fortnight ago.

At Goodwood Skysail runs for the Premier List from the *Weekend Card* (4.20).

The chestnut confirmed the promise shown on his Windsor debut when beating 14 rivals in a 6f maiden contest at Newbury in September. He was then just 13th of 27 in a valuable sales race the following month at Newmarket, short of room throughout the final quarter mile.

He looks fairly treated on a mark of 80, given his misfortune at Newmarket, and he appeals as the right type for a competitive handicap but the first-time application of blinkers is a concern. However, at around 12 on Betfair, we have to be with him. Chindwin, rated on 79 but entered for the Derby, must be thought capable of better.

I want to tread carefully at the moment but we need to be with Skysail each-way.

Bye for now

Marten