



The Wine Tipster's Five Ante-Post Selections For The Cheltenham Festival

Tuesday 10th March - Sky Bet Supreme Novices' Hurdle (Grade 1) 2M 1/2F -13.20hrs

Old Park Star (Nicky Henderson)

It's worth saying this could be something of a turning point for the British Challenge as the home team look as strong as the Irish in many divisions this time around, and the Prestbury Cup might be a closer affair than is normally the case.

Old Park Star can get the party started. Physically he looks the real deal, strong, tall, well-built and in truth more one for middle distances next year but for now two miles suits him fine. It would be easy to mark him down simply as a galloper, but he has speed, too, as he's shown in all three of his wins so far, all on very different tracks, too. The speed figures merely back up what your eyes are telling you, and for all El Cairo is no mug, Old Park is the Star that could be shining for years to come.



Sky Bet – 15/8 to win

Tuesday 10th March- Unibet Champion Hurdle Challenge Trophy (Grade 1) 2M 1/2F -16.00hrs

Golden Ace (Jeremy Scott)

To say the top of the market in the Champion Hurdle is muddling is an understatement, to say the least.

Indeed it says much that Constitution Hill is a 5-1 chance at the time of writing when his next outing is going to be on the Flat, and will tell us precisely nothing as regards his future chance in the Champion Hurdle. Lossiemouth won't ever have a better chance of winning a Champion but whether she even takes part, connections having swerved the chance last year for the Mares, is a question. Brighterdaysahead has it all to prove after stopping to a walk in this last year, and all in all it's current champion Golden Ace that makes the most appeal.



She wasn't right at Wetherby on her reappearance but made amends in good fashion by winning the Fighting Fifth, travelling best throughout, and she lost nothing in defeat when second to Sir Gino in the Christmas Hurdle. With poor Sir Gino suffering a pelvic injury in the Unibet Hurdle, she won't be facing him again,

and there's nothing else in the opposition she needs to be scared of. She can keep her crown.

Unibet – 6/1 Each Way

Thursday 12th March - Paddy Power Stayers' Hurdle (Grade 1) – 3M – 15.20hrs

Honesty Policy (Gordon Elliott)

Teahupoo is again the one to beat in the Stayers Hurdle but he isn't bombproof by any means, and will be another twelve months older by the time this comes around. It stands to reason he shouldn't be getting quicker at the age of nine, and is surely vulnerable to younger legs. On that score, step forward Honesty Policy.

The one question he has to answer is whether he'll handle Cheltenham, but that aside, this improving 6yo will surely be making a challenge for the title this year. He looked a stayer when just getting the better of Regents Stroll over 2m4f at Aintree and stepped up to three miles at Punchestown, was only beaten half a length by Jasmin De Vaux. He made his seasonal reappearance in the Long Walk, looking in need of the run but closing the front pair down all the way to the line, improving again in the process. There's more to come from him, and he can break down the old guard to win.

Paddy Power- 7/2 To Win



Friday March 13th - Mrs Paddy Power Mares Chase (Grade 2) 2M 4F – 14.40hrs

Diva Luna (Ben Pauling)

Diva Luna has an entry in the Arkle too, but Ben Pauling has both Mambonumberfive and No Questions Asked for that particular contest and the seemingly easier option of the Mares Chase on the Friday, with the 2m4½f trip more in her favour, is probably going to be her target.

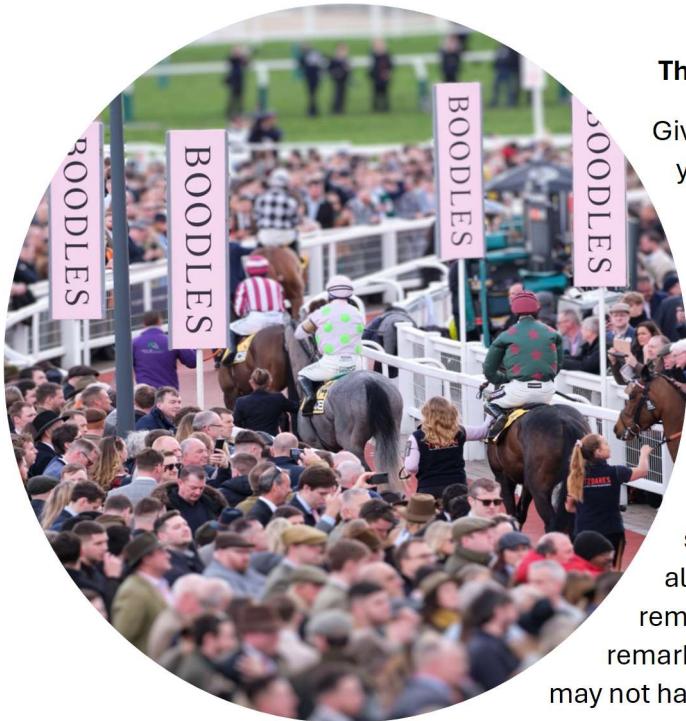
She was so impressive when scoring on her chase debut at Bangor, running out a 19-length winner from the useful Joyeuse, and although less impressive when scoring at Warwick in December, she didn't need to be at her best, and the race might just have come a bit quick for her anyway.

Already a winner at Cheltenham over this trip over hurdles, she continues to go the right way and for all the Irish contingent is a strong one, she still has improvement to come, and can make her presence felt, particularly with Spindleberry somewhat blotting her copybook at the weekend.

Paddy Power- 10/1 - Each Way



Friday 13th March - Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup Chase 16.00hrs 3M 2 1/2 F



The Jukebox Man (Ben Pauling)

Given he's been a horse to follow for the past two years, it makes perfect sense to include him in the five ante-post bets for the Festival, as he still has the potential to go off shorter - or even favourite on the day.

We now know he can mix it at the very highest level after his battling King George win and the way he rallied so gamely to get back up after being headed on the run in not only suggests bags of courage, but the he'll be well suited by the extra stamina demands the Gold Cup will ask of him. In all the excitement surrounding the horse it is to be remembered that was just his fifth start over fences - a remarkable rise in a fairly short space of time - and he may not have finished improving yet.

Unibet – 11/2 To Win