

# THE BEST OF THE FESTIVE RACING 2021

There is so much good racing at this time of year that rather than create a festival guide for just one meeting, I have decided to look at the best of what is on offer across the UK & Ireland.

The trends assessed are usually for the last 10 years albeit at this time of year meetings can be lost to the weather!

The guide will start on Boxing Day and be updated daily until New Year's Day.

## BOXING DAY – 26<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

### KEMPTON

**1.55 (Gr 1) Kauto Star Novices' Chase over 3m:** Only 3/10 winning favourites seen with 3/10 sent off as 2<sup>nd</sup> favourites. 6yo are the preferred age group with 6/10 wins with all winners since 2011 aged 7yo or younger. 7/10 past winners had also won LTO with a further two finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> LTO. Past winners Coneegree & Long Run both went on to win Cheltenham Gold Cups.

**2.30 (Gr 1) Ladbrokes Christmas Hurdle over 2m:** Nicky Henderson has won the race 6 times in the last ten years and has 2019 winner *Epatante* entered this time. Whilst *Not So Sleepy* dead heated with the mare LTO and is currently about three times the odds of the favourite, there has been only one winning 9yo in the race since 1983 (when my records started). Plenty of dual winners seen since 1983 although virtually all were in consecutive years with *Harchibald* in 2004 & 2008. All past winners since 2011 were aged 5-7yo with 6yo faring best with 5/10 wins. Winners of the race can fare well in the Champion Hurdle with recent Cheltenham winners including Binocular, Faugheen, Buveur D'air & Epatante.

**3.05 (Gr 1) King George VI Chase over 3m:** There have been plenty of multiple winners in this race So, *Clan Des Obeaux* and *Frodon* are clearly ones to keep on your shortlist. Only 3 trainers have won the race since 2011. P Nicholls (6 wins); N Henderson (2wins; C Tizzard (2 wins). The last Irish trained winner of the race was *Kicking King* in 2004/2005. 7/10 past winners last ran 30-37 days earlier whilst favourites have won 4/10 races since 2011. If thinking of an ante post wager for the Cheltenham Gold Cup it is worth noting that 2010 winner Long Run was the last horse to win here and the Gold Cup in the same season.

### LEOPARDSTOWN

**1.10 (Gr 2) Knight Frank Juvenile Hurdle over 2m:** This race can throw up surprise winners with odds of 12/1, 33/1, & 14/1 seen since 2011 and favourites having a 50% strike rate in the last 10 years. Willie Mullins has won 3 times since 2012 but has no runner this year. Recent past winners have gone on to be top juveniles (*Apples Jade/Bapaume/Aspire Tower/Zanahiyr*) and were placed 4<sup>th</sup> or better in the Triumph Hurdle. *Espoir D'allen* won the 2017 race and went on to win the 2019 Champion Hurdle.

**2.20 (Gr 1) Racing Post Novices' Chase over 2m 1f:** Willie Mullins\*/Paul Townend have won 4 races Since 2011 so *Ferny Hollow* seems to be the stable's best chance in the race. \*Six wins since 2011. Two of the last six winners also won the Arkle Chase at the Festival in March albeit last tow were no better than 5<sup>th</sup> at Cheltenham.

## LIMERICK

**2.40 (Gr 1)Boylesports 'Faugheen' Novices Chase over 2m 4f:** 9/10 winners had odds of 5/1 or shorter including four favourites and two 2<sup>nd</sup> favourites. Willie Mullins has five wins since 2011 (not represented this year) whilst Gordon Elliott has won the two of the last four renewals.

## MARKET RASEN

**2.15 'Lincolnshire National' Handicap Chase over 3m 4f:** In the last ten years there have been one sole and one joint winning favourite. The 2020 winner *Whos In The Box* holds an entry and is set to carry 11st against 10st 7lbs when winning the race. Since 1991\* we have seen one 10yo winner with all others aged 6-9yo and 8yo faring best. 8/10 winners carried a weight of 11st 4lbs or less.

\*Race originally over 4m 1f until distance reduced in 2003.

## WETHERBY

**2.10 – (Gr 3) 'Rowland Meyrick' Handicap Chase:** Only 9 meetings have survived in the last 10 years with just two winning favourites seen. The last eight winners were all aged either 7/8 years old with 7yo faring the best. All winners since 2011 carried a weight of 11st 11lbs or less. H Brooke has ridden 3 winners since 2016.

## WINCANTON

**2.45 – 2m 5f Handicap Hurdle (Cl 2):** Favourites have a 45% strike rate with all winner's odds being 10/1 or shorter, but just one winning 2<sup>nd</sup> favourite. 5yo have won 7/9 races with P Nicholls, P Hobbs & D Pipe all winning the race twice since 2010.