

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.

Favourites win rates are calculated over the last 10 years.

DECEMBER 27TH

CHEPSTOW

1.40 – (Gr 1) CORAL FINALE JUVENILE HURDLE OVER 2M (Favourites win rate 50%): All past winners since 2011 had odds of 6/1 or shorter. Using this criteria, the field is reduced to four or five with live chances of winning. With only one winner since 2011 having just one prior run that then reduces the contenders to three/four. As 9/10 past winners were 1st/2nd LTO that rules out another possible contender.

2.50 – (Gr 3) CORAL WELSH GRAND NATIONAL OVER 3M 6F+ (Favourites win rate 30%): Secret Reprieve is the likely favourite although we have to go back to 1988/89 for the last back-to-back winner (Bonanza Boy). 6/10 winners had two prior runs in the season, the others running three/four times. 8/10 winners had odds of 10/1 or shorter, including three favourites. Two winners of the race have gone on to win Gold Cups in recent years (Synchronised & Native River). A total of four past winners are entered again today.

KEMPTON

1.20 – (Gr 2) WAYWARD LAD NOVICES' CHASE OVER 2M (Favourites 30%-win rate): P Nicholls has won 4 times since 2013. 8/10 past winners since 2011 also won LTO. 9/10 past winners were either 1st/2nd favourites with three favourites and 6 second favourites winning. 5yo have won 6/10 recent renewals.

2.30 – (Gr 2) DESRT ORCHID CHASE OVER 2M (Favourites 60%-win rate): 6/9 recent winners went on to win the Queen Mother Chase at the Festival with the last two winners both placed in the QM Chase. Nicky Henderson is the leading trainer with 3 wins with Sprinter Sacre & Altior both going on to win the QM Champion Chase. Paul Nicholls has two wins since 2012 (neither won the QM Chase in the same season. When the favourite has flopped in recent times all the winners had odds of 4/1 or greater.

3.10 – 3M HANDICAP CHASE (Favourites 16%-win rate): A valuable handicap race which has the history of being the last televised race on Channel 4 Racing in 2016 – won by *Double Shuffle* who runs again today! No 10yo has won the race since 2001 so it may be worth discounting these two runners. 5/9 winners were either 1st/2nd favourites with all having odds of 12/1 or shorter. 6/9 winners carried a weight of 11st 4lbs or greater. Skybet are offering 5 places in the race.

LEOPARDSTOWN

1.10 – (Gr 1) PADDYS REWARDS CLUB CHASE OVER 2M 1F (Favourites 40% win rate):

The last eight renewals have thrown up four 16/1 winners and a 9/1 winner so beware! In the last 10 years four winners also won LTO, three were 4th, two were 2nd and one pulled up.

1.45 – (Gr 1) PADDY POWER FUTURE CHAMPIONSNOVICES' HURDLE OVER 2M (Favourites 40% win rate): Willie Mullins has won five of the last six renewals (only two started as favourites). Six of the last ten winners had also won LTO with three 2nd and one 3rd. Last year's winner *Appreciate It* went on to win the Supreme Novices Hurdle at Cheltenham whilst 2020 winner *Abracadabras* was 2nd in the same race at the Cheltenham Festival.

2.55 – PADDY POWER HANDICAP CHASE OVER 3M (Favourites 10% win rate): With such a large field in this very valuable race punters can get up to 7 places on e/w terms with various bookies. With only one winning favourite and two winning joint second favourites since 2011 it is possibly worth spreading the net a bit further. The positives to look for are horses aged 6, 7 or 8yo (8/10 wins in total); A last run 18-43 days earlier (10/10). The main negatives to avoid are winners LTO (0/10) and horses that did not finish LTO (0/10) and horses making a seasonal debut (0/10).

LIMERICK

2.05 – (Gr 2) NOVICES' HURDLE OVER 2M 7F (Favourites 50% win rate): Willie Mullins has won 4 times since 2011 but is not represented in 2021. No 4yo has won the race since 2003 (when my records started) whilst 5yo horses have won 7/10 recent renewals. 9/10 past winners having odds of 7/2 or shorter.

WETHERBY

2.15 – CASTLEFORD HANDICAP CHASE OVER 1M 7F (Favourites 44%-win rate): It is usually best to focus on horses aged 6-8yo with 8/9 past winners in this category. With 7/9 winners finishing 4th or worse LTO it is not always necessary to look for a horse in top form but maybe one on a potential winning mark again.