

# THE BEST OF THE FESTIVE RACING 2023

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

**1.20 (Gr 1) Kauto Star Novices' Chase over 3m (Fav 10%):** Only one winning favourite seen with 4/10 sent off as 2<sup>nd</sup> favourites. 6yo are the preferred age group with 5/10 wins with all winners since 2013 aged 8yo or younger. 6/10 past winners had also won LTO with a further three finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> LTO. Past winners Coneygree & Long Run both went on to win Cheltenham Gold Cups.

**1.55 (Gr 1) Ladbrokes Christmas Hurdle over 2m (Fav 65%):** Nicky Henderson has won the race 6 times in the last ten years and has 2022 winner *Constitution Hill* entered this time. All past winners since 2013 were aged 5-7yo with 6yo faring best with 5/10 wins. Longest winning odds since 2013 are 13/2. Winners of the race can fare well in the Champion Hurdle with recent Cheltenham winners including *Binocular*, *Faugheen*, *Buveur D'air*, *Epatante* & *Constitution Hill*.

**2.30 (Gr 1) King George VI Chase over 3m (Fav 30%):** There have been plenty of multiple winners in this race. So, *Frodon* is one to keep on your shortlist, although no 11yo has won the race since 1990. Only 3 stables (with runners this year) have won the race since 2013. P Nicholls (6 wins); N Henderson (1 win) & W Mullins (1 win). The last Irish trained winner of the race was *Tornado Flyer* in 2021. All ten past winners last ran 21-58 days earlier. 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) Mercedes Benz Juvenile Hurdle over 2m (Fav 60%):** This race can sometimes throw up surprise winners with odds of 12/1, 33/1, & 14/1 seen since 2014 and favourites having a 60% strike rate in the last 10 years. Willie Mullins has won 3 times since 2013 and has 5 runners this year, with his last winner in 2023. Recent past winners have gone on to be top juveniles (Apples Jade/Bapaume/Aspire Tower/Zanahiyr/Fil Dor) 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 (Fav 40%):** Willie Mullins has won 6 races since 2015. \*9 wins since 2005. Two of the last six winners also won the Arkle Chase at the Festival in March albeit last three were no better than 5<sup>th</sup> at Cheltenham (or did not run there).

## LIMERICK

**1.33 – (Gr 2) Novices' Hurdle over 2M 7F (Fav 60%):** Willie Mullins has won 4 times since 2013 and Gordon Elliott has 3 wins since 2019. No 4yo has won the race since 2003 (when my records started) whilst 5yo horses have won 5/10 recent renewals. 10/10 past winners had odds of 7/2 or shorter.

## MARKET RASEN

**2.57 'Lincolnshire National' Handicap Chase over 3m 4f (Fav 15%):** In the last ten years there has been one joint and one sole winning favourite. 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 9lbs or less.

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

## WETHERBY

**1.35 – (Gr 3) 'Rowland Meyrick' Handicap Chase (Fav 22%):** Only 9 meetings have survived in the last 10 years with just two winning favourites seen. The last nine winners were all aged either 7/8 years old with 7yo faring the best. All winners since 2013 carried a weight between 10st 7lbs & 11st 11lbs. 8/9 recent winners had odds of 5/1 or shorter.