

THE BEST OF THE FESTIVE RACING 2022

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.

JANUARY 1ST

No suitable races yesterday and this will be the last update in this festive format.

CHELTENHAM

1.25 – (Gr 2) DIPPER NOVICES' CHASE OVER 2M 5F (Fav 27%): With 8/9 past winners having odds of 4/1 or shorter L'Homme Presse & The Glancing Queen are possible choices with 2nd favourites having the edge in recent years.

2.00 – (Gr 3) PADDY POWER HANDICAP CHASE OVER 2M 5F (fav 50%): Nigel Twiston-Davies has a great record in this race (3 wins since 2014) so Vienna Court is worth a look in the market and is currently 9 or 10/1 with 6 places on offer with several bookies. The last 10 years have seen 6/8 winners with odds of 9/1 or shorter (includes four favourites). The 8 latest winners were all aged between 7-19 years, with 9yo winning four races.

2.35 – 3M HANDICAP HURDLE (Fav 50%): All eight recent winners were aged 6-9yo with 7yo taking three of these races. A last run 15-53 days earlier was also a common factor. Highest weight carried by winners since 2012 was 11st 4lbs. The race looks as trappy as ever so an e/w bet with a bookie offering 5 places may pay dividends!

3.10 - (Gr 2) RELKEEL HURDLE OVER 2M 4F (Fav 38%): The profile of the winners has changed markedly since the race was moved from December to January in 2016. If we look at the last five years in isolation, we saw two sole/joint favourites and the rest at odds of 8/1 to 16/1. Three winners were aged 6yo and the others 7-8yo. No seasonal debutant has won the race since 2006 (last year's winner McFabulous, when run at Kempton is attempting to overturn this statistic in 2022) Apart from fallers etc, all 8 past winners were 6th or better LTO. Whilst generally Irish trainer runners fare well at Cheltenham, in this race we go back to 2001, when run at Newbury, to find the last Irish trained winner.

3.50 – (LISTED) 1M 6F NH FLAT RACE FOR 4YO (Fav 25%): Well backed horses tend to fare well in this race with 7/8 winners having odds of 11/2 or shorter (including two favourites & three 2nd favourites). Apart from one horse making its debut the rest were all 1st/2nd on all starts in the current season.

MUSSELBURGH

2.10 – 'HOGMANEIGH' HANDICAP HURDLE OVER 2M (Fav 35%): 6yo have won 5/10 renewals. In the weights 9/10 winners carried 10st 6lbs or greater. Last year's winner Blakeny Point is now 1lb lower in the ratings. Last Irish trainer winner of the race was in 2014.

2.50 – ‘AULD REEKIE’ HANDICAP CHASE OVER 2M 4F (Fav 0%): Race upgraded to Class 2 in 2017 and run five times since then, with all winners having odds of 10/1 or shorter, but none being either 1st/2nd favourites. The four winners all carried a weight of 11st 7lbs to 11st 12lbs. Three winners had finished 5th on their last run with one unseating LTO and the other winning LTO. All five winners were aged 7-9yo.

TRAMORE

2.20 – (Gr 3) SAVILLS CHASE OVER 2M 5F+ (Fav 55%): The race was upgraded from Listed to Gr 3 after 2019 winner, *Al Boum Photo*, went on to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup (and went on to repeat that success here and at Cheltenham in 2020) and winning here in 2021. Like the last three years, the horse will make its seasonal re-appearance today. Willie Mullins now has 6 wins in the last 10 years with Paul Townend riding four of these winners.