

ROYAL ASCOT

PUNDITS' PICKS OF THE DAY

DAY 3, THURSDAY JUNE 20TH



MICK FITZGERALD

PADDY POWER

JASON WEAVER

RUBY WALSH

MATT CHAMPMAN

2.30PM

NORFOLK STAKES 5F

- MF** The Norfolk Stakes over 5f starts the day and **WHISTLEJACKET** will be a huge player in this for Aidan O'Brien.
- PP** It's really hard to escape the claims of **WHISTLEJACKET**, who is the clear pick on form.
- JW** **BINADHAM** (each-way) looked really good on debut despite racing keenly. He's been talked up by his young trainer as an improver.
- RW** I can't get away from **WHISTLEJACKET**. He will be very hard to beat for Aidan O'Brien. I like the fact he has had two runs despite being beaten on debut.
- MC** Surely **WHISTLEJACKET** will take all the beating for Aidan O'Brien and Ryan Moore.

3.45PM

RIBBLESDALE STAKES 1M 4F

- MF** Diamond Rain is a worthy favourite but the Lingfield Oaks Trial winner **YOU GOT TO ME** (each-way) – who subsequently finished fourth in the Epsom Oaks – looks a bit of value.
- PP** The regally-bred **DIAMOND RAIN** looked a smart prospect when following up her debut win in a Newbury Listed event last month.
- JW** **DIAMOND RAIN** hasn't put a foot wrong so far winning over a mile and then 1m 2f. She should take this step up to 1m 4f in her stride also based on her pedigree.
- RW** **DANIELLE** was behind You Got To Me and Rubies Are Red last time out at Lingfield. I recently spoke with Kieran Shoemark and he really fancies her, so I'll keep her on side.
- MC** We didn't see the real **FOREST FAIRY** in the Oaks at Epsom and she might bounce back to her Chester form.

5.05PM

BRITANNIA STAKES 1M

- MF** A 1m cavalry charge where connections look to have this in mind for **VOLTERRA** (each-way) since he won a handicap at Newmarket last month.
- PP** **VOLTERRA** has had the form of his Newmarket handicap debut success boosted and might prove the answer to a typically wide-open renewal.
- JW** **SKUKUZA** is held in high regard by trainer Ed Dunlop and looks the ideal type for a big-field contest like this.
- RW** **FOLLOW ME** has a really good draw in stall 27 for Ross O'Sullivan and Shane Foley. He's won on his two starts at the Curragh and his latest victory was really impressive.
- MC** I loved **VOLTERRA** when he won at Newmarket last time and the fact he was well backed suggested the team thought he was well handicapped.

6.15PM

BUCKINGHAM PALACE STAKES 7F

- MF** A 29-runner 7f handicap to end the day and **NORTHERN EXPRESS** (each-way) ran very well at York last time over a mile.
- PP** **ENGLISH OAK** put up a most impressive display at Haydock and he's comfortably the most progressive sort in this field. **DIVINE LIBRA** is also going the right way.
- JW** Solid course form and the quick ground conditions can help **TACARIB BAY** (each-way) hit the frame and with a 3lb claimer on board he looks well handicapped.
- RW** **FRESH** (each-way) has won at Ascot over 7f a couple of times and he's off a mark of 92, which is very workable.
- MC** **GORAK** (each-way) was far from disgraced at this meeting last year off a high rating when 12th in this race rated 105. He's now down to 96 and has run really well in two big handicaps this season at Newmarket.

3.05PM

KING GEORGE VI STAKES 1M 4F

- MF** **PONIROS** was a good second in the London Gold Cup this season to King's Gambit and still looks reasonably well handicapped.
- PP** **GILDED WATER** is improving in leaps and bounds, looking better the further he went when powering clear for an authoritative success at Chepstow three weeks ago.
- JW** **GILDED WATER** has taken a step forward on each racecourse run and was impressive at Chepstow.
- RW** **GALLANTLY** is drawn in stall 13. He was impressive when winning at Chester last time and he's running off a fair mark of 88.
- MC** **PONIROS** (each-way) will be hard to kick out the frame after he stayed on strongly behind the talented King's Gambit at Newbury last time.

4.25PM

ASCOT GOLD CUP 2M 4F

- MF** Kyprios is the most likely winner, but my pick is **VAUBAN** (each-way). He should improve from his seasonal re-appearance at York when second to Giavelloto.
- PP** **KYPRIOS** suffered an interrupted campaign in 2023 but he was a high-class stayer the season before, the first of his four Group 1 wins coming in this race.
- JW** **KYPRIOS** has had a stop-start campaign since winning this in 2022 but has returned in style and can regain his Ascot Gold Cup crown.
- RW** The Gold Cup looks **KYPRIOS'** to lose when you consider the level of form that he has produced. He just gets the job done.
- MC** I have to take Kyprios on. **GREGORY** is a great each-way bet for me. He landed last year's Queen's Vase on good ground.

5.40PM

HAMPTON COURT STAKES 1M 2F

- MF** I would love to see Bracken's Laugh deliver on his promise but **KING'S GAMBIT** is the pick. He looked to have improved physically over the winter and won the London Gold Cup impressively.
- PP** **KING'S GAMBIT** made a mockery of an opening mark of 93 on return at Newbury last month and is fancied to take the step up to pattern company in his stride at the expense of French-raider First Look.
- JW** Richard Hughes' charge **BRACKENS LAUGH** has shown a lot of promise on his two runs to date this season and remains progressive.
- RW** **KING'S GAMBIT** looks to have more potential and has a nice draw in stall seven.
- MC** I see no reason why French raider **FIRST LOOK** won't run huge for Andre Fabre and James Doyle.

PADDYPOWER. NEWS

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