

# PUNDITS' PICKS

## THE EPSOM OAKS, FRIDAY, 4.30PM



MATT CHAPMAN

**MANUELA DE VEGA** was well beaten by John Gosden's Mehdaayih at Chester earlier this month - but I take her to run a huge race on Friday in the Fillies Classic. Her trainer Ralph Beckett is keen to take on the winner that day again and so am I. I'll have a few quid each-way at a double-digit price. Lovely.



JASON WEAVER

**MAQSAD** was so impressive when bolting up in the Pretty Polly Stakes at Newmarket that it was a performance that made you sit up and take notice. There may be stamina doubts about her staying the 1m 4f trip of Friday's Classic but she wasn't stopping that day over over 1m 2f. She has proven ability to act on quick ground and that is the stumbling block for the two market leaders, **Pink Dogwood** and **Mehdaayih**.



MICK FITZGERALD

**MEHDAAYIH** has been supplemented for the race and her trainer John Gosden doesn't do this unless he feels it is worthwhile. William Haggas' **Maqsaad** is interesting but did finish over four lengths behind Mehdaayih when a beaten odds-on favourite at Yarmouth last year over a mile. As you would imagine, Aidan O'Brien is strongly represented and saddles the likely favourite **Pink Dogwood** but his **Peach Tree** looks too big a price and will be ridden by his son, Donnacha.



PADDY POWER

I've learnt to my cost that it rarely pays to go against Aidan O'Brien in the Classics – or any other big race. However, I can't row in with him this time. **Pink Dogwood** looks to have plenty to do form-wise from her Navan win. The same could be said about **Maqsaad** and **Anapurna** who both won their respective trials. For a bit of value, I'm going for another Irish raider in Dermot Weld's **TARNAWA** who won a 1m 2f Group 3 contest at Naas impressively earlier this month and could improve again.



PAUL JACOBS

While I loved the way **Mehdaayih** finished off her race in the Cheshire Oaks, how **Anapurna** looked outstanding the further she went at Lingfield and that **Pink Dogwood** is quite obviously the pick of the Aidan O'Brien posse; the one outstanding piece of value left in the Fillies' Classic has to be Chester runner-up **MANUELA DE VEGA**. She was giving weight away all-round and she wasn't abused late on when her chance had gone and ran an outstanding trial.



FRANK HICKEY

**MANUELA DE VEGA** is my each-way alternative to **Pink Dogwood**. Second at Chester to **Meydaayih**, her jockey had to sit and suffer that day, as the winner got a clear run. Her trainer Ralph Beckett said that she had very little work done before that run and was also conceding 3lbs to the winner, but they meet on level terms on Friday. Beckett has already won the Oaks twice in his career - so what's not to love?



BRENDAN DUKE

Current prices make it around 8/11 that either **Pink Dogwood** or **Mehdaayih** win the Oaks. I'd be a layer at their prices though as there are so many that can step forward here that I find it hard to rule anything out of the race. So I'll take a chance on another Aidan O'Brien runner **DELPHINIA** who is a massive outsider in the betting.



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