

# PUNDITS' PICKS OF THE DAY

## XMAS RACING CHEAT SHEET



RUBY WALSH



MATT CHAPMAN



MICK FITZGERALD



PAUL JACOBS



PADDY POWER

### Kempton, Novices' Chase, 26th 1.55 PM

**MC:** **Danny Whizzbang** is stamina laden and the 3 mile trip will hold no fears. He just keeps on winning and while this is his toughest test, I'm hoping he'll be too good for Slate House and Black Op.

**MF:** **Black Op** ran a nice race at Newbury behind Champ when getting done for pace. The step up to 3 miles will make him tough to pass.

**PP:** **Slate House** proved his stamina for this trip when winning at Huntingdon and he can put his experience to good use here and hopefully get us off to a flyer.

### Kempton, Xmas Hurdle, 26th 2.30 PM

**RW:** Always a good race. Nicky Henderson has three entered and **Fusil Raffles** seems to be his favourite.

**MC:** This track suits **Verdana Blue**. Stable mate Fusil Raffles is sure to be a danger but I'm hopeful she'll at least hit the frame.

**MF:** In the absence of a recent run for Verdana Blue I feel that I have to go for **Fusil Raffles**.

**PJ:** The mares' allowance could bring **Epatante** into the picture and I'm keen on her chances.

**PP:** **Fusil Raffles** wasn't especially impressive on reappearance at Wincanton but should come on markedly from that outing.

### Leopardstown, PP Chase, 27th 2.55PM

**RW:** **Tower Bridge** is worth a look given owner JP McManus' record in this race. Redhotfillypeppers could be the best of whatever Willie Mullins runs.

**PJ:** A regular in these big field staying chases and a cracking second to Cabaret Queen in the Munster National when last seen in October, **Spider Web** is my each-way play.

**PP:** **Fitzhenry** ran a solid race when third in the Chase named after me last year. Another year older and wiser – Fitzhenry that is, not me – looks a good bet to hit the places at least again.

### Leopardstown, Novice Chase, 26th 2.20 PM

**RW:** There's no doubt that **Fakir D'oudairies'** jumping had been outstanding until Samcro exited and the fences down the back stretch at Leopardstown will suit him on Thursday. However, there's a long five-furlong run from the third last to the winning post at the Foxrock venue, with just two fences to jump. That could play into the hands of a strong stayer like **Laurina** but Fakir D'oudairies could be hard to beat.

**PP:** **Laurina** looked back to her best when winning her beginners chase at Gowran Park last time. I'm a big fan so I'm on her.

### Kempton, King George, 26th 3.05 PM

**RW:** **Cyrname** has loads of pace, is a great jumper and loves going right-handed. He'd be my pick.

**MC:** I have long backed **Clan Des Obeaux** each way for this and I'm sticking to him. He jumps, he stays, he's improving all the time and he'll come on tons from his first appearance at Down Royal.

**MF:** With only five rivals, Harry Cobden can dictate from the front on **Cyrname** and let the others try to pass him – they won't.

**PJ:** **Cyrname** looks the one to beat if he gets the fractions right.

**PP:** **Cyrname** earned a rating of 176, which makes him Timeform's joint highest-rated jumps horse with Kemboy, and he has plenty in hand on that form.

### Chepstow, Welsh GN, 27th 2.50 PM

**RW:** I'm going for **Yala Enki**. He ran alright for Paul Nicholls in the Ladbrokes Trophy at Newbury and the Welsh National has been the target for him in my view.

**PJ:** If you're looking for something to upset the likely favourite Elegant Escape, then **Big River** each-way could give you a good run for your money.

**PP:** This is usually a slog in a bog but the ground may be ok this year. Paul Nicholls has won this race twice before and **Truckers Lodge** has been nicely backed by punters in the last few days.



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