

CHELTENHAM CHEAT SHEET

PUNDITS' PICKS OF THE DAY

DAY 4, FRIDAY MARCH 18TH

RUBY WALSH

MICK FITZGERALD

GINA BRYCE

MATT CHAPMAN

FRANK HICKEY

1.30PM

JCB TRIUMPH HURDLE

- RW** Vauban is very good but I'm not sure if the soft ground is in his favour. The more it dries the better his chance. It's going to be a real test of stamina on soft ground. That will suit **FIL DOR** better. If it's dry, then Vauban or Pied Piper can use their speed.
- MF** **VAUBAN** should be unbeaten as he was knocked sideways by Pied Piper on debut at Punchestown but only lost narrowly. Davy Russell has switched to Fil Dor who looks a strong stayer. Vauban to win.
- GB** **VAUBAN** won the Grade 1 Spring Juvenile Hurdle last time out and can take another step forward again here.
- MC** Vauban will be very hard to beat. However, I'm having a few quid each-way on **FIL DOR** as a strong gallop will help this stayer get closer to the Mullins runner after his Leopardstown defeat.
- FH** **PIED PIPER** won on heavy ground on the Flat and we know he handles the track.

2.50PM

ALBERT BARTLETT NOVICES' HURDLE

- RW** I was taken by Hillcrest's win at Haydock last month on heavy ground. We know he'll handle conditions. It'll suit Ginto too. I just marginally prefer **HILLCREST**.
- MF** The unbeaten **GINTO** looks the real deal and looked one to follow when winning a Grade 1 contest at Naas in January.
- GB** **GINTO** has been crying out for this trip. He's tactically versatile and this big long-striding horse can gallop his rivals into submission.
- MC** The giant **HILLCREST** just looks full of stamina and in a renewal that might not be the strongest that could be enough. I was really impressed with his win at Haydock last time.
- FH** **HILLCREST** is a really good horse, who has course form, will handle testing ground and has been good on the clock.

4.10PM

ST JAMES' PLACE HUNTERS' CUP

- RW** The headgear will help Billaway but he's been runner-up twice in this contest which doesn't bode well. Frank Hickey has backed **PREMIER MAGIC** so I'll copy his homework and do the same!
- MF** Surely **BILLAWAY** will get his head in front having finished runner-up twice. The alternative to the favourite is **WINGED LEADER** who likes soft ground.
- GB** **BOB AND CO** can make amends this year for his popular owner jockey David Maxwell after tipping up three fences out last year when travelling well.
- MC** **BILLAWAY** was desperately unlucky to get picked up last year and surely has strong claims to make up for that under Patrick Mullins. Got a confidence boosting win last time at Naas.
- FH** **PREMIER MAGIC** recently beat last year's Hunter Chase winner, Porlock Bay, in a point-to-point. He has a nice profile for this and is a fair price.

5.30PM

MARTIN PIPE CONDITIONAL

- RW** Adamantly Chosen has had three runs over hurdles and is going the right way but I don't know how good he is. Hollow Games and **GRAND JURY** look a bit more value at the prices and I'll side with the latter.
- MF** **LANGER DAN** can get revenge for last year's defeat by the Galopin Des Champs. We've seen what he's done since! **FREEDOM TO DREAM** merits a saver each-way on his back form.
- GB** **HOLLOW GAMES'** form ties in strongly with Ginto (who runs in the 2.50pm) and on his handicap debut can sign the day off in style for the Gordon Elliott yard.
- MC** The reappearing **FIVE O'CLOCK** was desperately unlucky when seventh in this in 2020 after nearly being brought down in the middle of the race. He's been off since then, but we know Mullins can get one ready and he's primed for the big day.
- FH** **DECIMATION** would look extremely well handicapped on his form last year and is an appealing each-way prices on that form.

2.10PM

COUNTY HURDLE

- RW** **STATE MAN** is well handicapped and looks a graded horse in the making. I just hope inexperience doesn't cost him like it did his stablemate Gaelic Warrior on Tuesday.
- MF** **COLONEL MUSTARD** is a nicely-weighted novice and could be improving. **FIRST STREET** will appreciate any drying ground and could be an each-way selection.
- GB** Trainer Dan Skelton has won this race three times in the past six years and looks to have laid one out for the race in second-season hurdler **WEST CORK**.
- MC** State Man is the talking horse, but I'll be going each-way on the more exposed **WEST CORK** for the Skelton team.
- FH** State Man could be thrown in at the weights but **COLONEL MUSTARD** looks very well handicapped considering his form has been strongly franked this week.

3.30PM

CHELTENHAM GOLD CUP

- RW** It should be relatively easy for **A PLUS TARD** to turn the Leopardstown form around with Galvin. A Plus Tard has more speed and will do me to go one better in the Gold Cup this year.
- MF** I'm hoping the ground continues to dry out as **GALVIN** is a better horse on better ground. King George winner **TORNADO FLYER** is the each-way play. Both have proven course form.
- GB** The lack of an obvious pace-setter throws a spanner in the works for the strong, staying types like Galvin and former winner Minella Indo. That could play into the hands of Rachael Blackmore and last year's runner up **A PLUS TARD**.
- MC** I'm siding with **GALVIN** for the win and **AL BOUM PHOTO** each-way.
- FH** **TORNADO FLYER** is unexposed at the 3m 2f trip and don't think his King George VI Chase at Kempton over Christmas win was a fluke.

4.50PM

MRS PADDY POWER MARES' CHASE

- RW** **ELIMAY** was unlucky last year and the cheekpieces will suit her. I'm hoping she can bounce back. Zambella is a big danger as the trip will suit her.
- MF** There's little between Elimay and Mount Ida so it could come down to one good jump. I'll take last year's runner-up **ELIMAY** to shade it.
- GB** **ELIMAY** and stablemate Colreevy provided one of the finishes of the week in this race last year when she was narrowly beaten. She can make amends now.
- MC** A strong fancy here is last year's runner up **ELIMAY**. The mare was back in winning form at Naas last time and connections will be very disappointed if she doesn't go one place better.
- FH** **MOUNT IDA** stays further than this 2m 4f trip which could be important at the business end considering the ground has softened up considerably from earlier in the week.

PADDYPOWER. NEWS

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