



FUTURE CHAMPIONS FESTIVAL OCTOBER 12 & 13

THE FINAL GROUP ONE ACTION OF THE YEAR AT HEADQUARTERS

FRIDAY 12

The Flat season may soon be coming to a close but there is still plenty of quality racing left to be enjoyed and many will be looking forward to the Dubai Future Champions Festival on the Rowley Mile this weekend.

The feature race on Friday is the Group 1 Bet365 Fillies Mile, one of Europe's richest two-year-old races. Won by Minding, Rhododendron and Laurens in the last three years alone, it is always a contest where the form holds up well in regards to future stars, particularly the 1000 Guineas, with the aforementioned trio finishing first, second and second respectively in the first fillies' Classic of the season in the following year.

Ralph Beckett's **Antonia De Vega** (below left) heads the market and she has been impressive in winning both starts to date, most recently when staying on strongly to land the Group 3 Prestige Stakes over 1400m at Goodwood in August. This race has been the plan since and the extra distance will be right up her street.

As ever, Aidan O'Brien is the man to fear and he is responsible for three of the last four winners of this contest and is double-handed as he looks to further enhance that record. There was a neck between his pair, **Hermosa** and **Zagitova**, when third and fourth in the Moyglare Stakes last month.



The feature race is backed up by a strong supporting card, starting with the Group 2 Godolphin Challenge Stakes over 1400m where last year's winner, **Limato** (above right), is back to defend his crown. Henry Candy's popular six-year-old has rediscovered some of his peak form with commanding victories in his last two outings, albeit both over 1200m, and should have no trouble stepping back up an extra furlong here. He is surely the one they have to beat providing the ground stays quick.

In opposition, Charlie Appleby's **D'bai** and the William Haggas-trained **Mankib** pose the biggest threats and the latter could be the one to take advantage if Limato fails to fire. Mankib was very impressive when winning last time, albeit only in Listed class, but that took his record to three wins from his last four starts. He is clearly on a steep upward curve and deserves to take his chance in this better grade.

The Group 3 Godolphin Oh So Sharp Stakes offers further quality juvenile filly action on the card and, surprisingly, it is a race Aidan O'Brien has failed to win in the last decade. That said, O'Brien saddles likely favourite **Frosty** and she commands total respect, not only on the back of a commanding debut victory on the All-Weather at Dundalk last month, but also as a full-sister to Winter, winner of the 1000 Guineas in 2017. The fact Frosty managed to win on debut also bodes well with the stable's horses known to improve considerably for their debut efforts.

A similar comment also applies to **Hidden Message** from the William Haggas yard, who won eased down at Yarmouth last month and she could prove too good for these rivals if building on the deep impression she made with that impressive introductory effort.

Punters may be able to get the day off to a winning start with the Karl Burke-trained **True Mason**, who is the one they all have to beat as he drops in trip and class to contest the opening Group 3 Cornwallis Stakes over 1000m. The colt appreciates a bit of cut in the ground but seems effective on all surfaces having won on firm earlier in the season and was just outstayed having cruised into contention in testing conditions when contesting the Group Two Mill Reef Stakes last time out. He can reward those keeping the faith here.



CAMBRIDGESHIRE MEETING SEPTEMBER 27-29

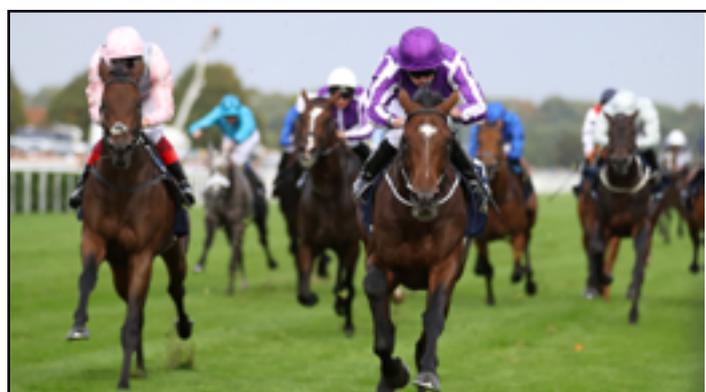
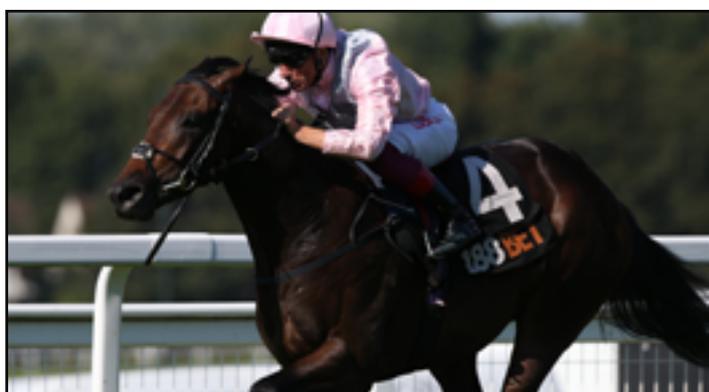
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SATURDAY 13

The Dubai Future Champions Festival comes to a climax on Saturday with the Group One Darley Dewhurst Stakes over 1400m the feature race on the card. Arguably Europe's most prestigious juvenile contest, it is a race which always produces leading contenders for the following season's Classics, particularly the 2000 Guineas, with Frankel, Dawn Approach and Churchill all going on to complete the double in recent years.

This year's leading juvenile is the John Gosden-trained **Too Darn Hot** (below left), who has swept all before him in his three starts to date and will look to cap his season with Group One honours here. In a week where his full-brother yearling sold for 3.5 million guineas at Tattersalls, he can show why his sibling commanded such a fee as he puts down a marker towards to the 2019 season. The Dubawi colt won by less than two lengths in the Group 2 Champagne Stakes at Doncaster last time out but it was another stylish victory, responding well for pressure and decisively putting his opposition to the sword in the final furlong.

A day earlier, Sir Michael Stoute's **Sangarius** had won the Listed Flying Scotsman Stakes over the same course-and-distance and booked his ticket for a tilt at this race. Comparatively, his performance was quite a bit slower than that of Too Darn Hot but the Kingman colt was running on slightly slower ground and had shown a good temperament after a lengthy delay before the race following an injury to one of his rivals in the stalls.



The supporting card also features the Dubai £500,000 Cesarewitch Heritage Handicap, the second leg of the historic Autumn Double and a race that famously straddles the counties of Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

The 3600m contest is set to see 34 runners head to post and Willie Mullins will look to gain compensation following **Stratum**'s luckless run in the Ebor Handicap at York back in August. His six-year-old had previously destroyed a good field over an extended 3200m at Newbury and was well supported to follow up on the Knavesmire but found all sorts of trouble on the inside rail. Likely to be suited by stepping back up in trip, Stratum should find the open nature of this track much more to his liking here and is a worthy favourite based on that Newbury success alone.

Incredibly Mullins has no less than six other raiders in the field, all with some sort of chance, but it is the Aidan O'Brien-trained **Southern France** who is the most intriguing runner. The three-year-old, who was unraced at the start of the year, has progressed with each start so far this season and produced a clear career-best when running third in the St Leger (above right) at Doncaster last month. He clearly stays well and is officially the highest-rated runner in the field on the back of his high-class form.

Other eye-catching contenders include **Speedo Boy**, who has had reasons for defeat lately, particularly when finding all kinds of trouble at Doncaster last time out. The Ian Williams-trained gelding looks feasibly treated from a mark of 98 although he would prefer a bit of ease underfoot. **Stargazer** also looks well placed from the same mark and could be a lively contender if replicating some of his earlier form in the season. Sadly, neither has been done any favours in the draw for stalls positions with both horses out wide in the high numbers.

Awesometank is an interesting runner in the concluding Group 3 Darley Stakes over 1800m. The filly has been improving with each start this season and followed up with a narrow second over this trip in France last time out, coming unstuck on ground slower than ideal. Held up that day, a return to her aggressive front-running tactics can be expected here and if the ground remains dry, she must hold every chance.