



GBI RACING PREVIEW SATURDAY & SUNDAY DECEMBER 1-2

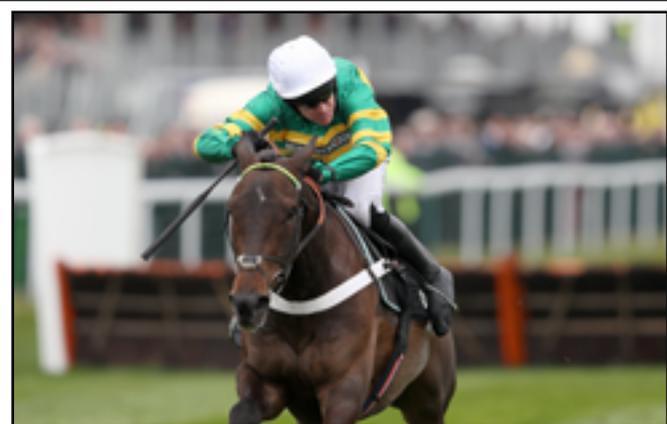
YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST OF THE RACING ACTION AT THE WEEKEND

CLASH OF TOP HURDLERS AT NEWCASTLE

Since March 2017, Buveur D’Air has been the number one hurdler in training, looking down upon his rivals from the Champion Hurdle throne having won the championship twice at Cheltenham.

But nearly four months before the eight-year-old goes for a famous hat-trick at the Festival, he is already facing a hotly anticipated early showdown with would-be titleholders Samcro and Summerville Boy in the Grade One Betvictor Fighting Fifth Hurdle (2.05pm GMT) at Newcastle on Saturday.

It is the highest-quality staging of the north east of England’s number one jumping prize since 1980, when Sea Pigeon finished second to fellow star Birds Nest before the placings were reversed by the stewards and the clash comes at a time when the opportunity to see very best performers lock horns outside of the major spring festivals are increasingly few and far between. Here is our guide to the three big players.



BUVEUR D’AIR
Trainer Nicky Henderson
Form: 11/1111-

Buveur D’Air has only tasted defeat over hurdles once in his career, when finishing third in the Supreme Novices’ Hurdle won by Altior at Cheltenham in 2016. Since then, he has not looked back, usually cruising his way to success with a mixture of pure speed and accomplished jumping skills, although his most recent victory in March was more dependent upon guts and willpower as he scrambled home from Melon in testing conditions.

Nicky Henderson says: “I took him to Newbury a few days ago for a proper gallop as he is a horse who needs to do a lot of work as he is a very stuffy horse. He had a little wind operation over the summer because he had always been making a faint little whistle for a couple of years and I wanted to get that sorted out so it didn’t become an issue in the middle of this season. This will be as big a test as he has faced but he’s in good form.”

SAMCRO
Trainer Gordon Elliott
Form 1111F-2

It’s crunch time for Samcro, the impressive winner of the Ballymore Novices’ Hurdle at last season’s Cheltenham Festival, who runs for Ryanair boss Michael O’Leary’s Gigginstown House Stud operation. The seven-year-old is on something of a retrieval mission after suffering a surprise defeat by Bedrock - who is in the field too - at Down Royal last time out. That loss dented his big reputation. Can he get back on to the Champion Hurdle trail here?

Gordon Elliott says: “I couldn’t be happier with him, he came out of his last race in great form and did a serious bit of work last week. There’s no excuse now, it’s a proper test. Mick Jazz was beaten three lengths in the Champion Hurdle last year and he wouldn’t get near Samcro. That’s not saying Samcro will definitely be good enough, but there’s no excuses.”

SUMMERVILLE BOY
Trainer Tom George
Form 122311-

Went to Cheltenham for the Supreme Novices’ Hurdle as a relative outsider despite having previously won a Grade 1 at Sandown, but showed impressive mettle to overcome clumsy jumps at the final two flights to collar Kalashnikov and confirm himself a smart performer. If he can brush up his fencing skills, he undoubtedly appears to have the engine to mix it with the very best.

Tom George says: “He had a good summer, he’s been back in since the middle of July and since then we’ve been gradually stepping him up and he’s ready to go now. We had a few mistakes in the latter part of his races, but essentially he’s a good jumper. I think he’s got an unbelievable amount of talent, he was just looking around, so it’s greenness more than anything.”



GBI RACING PREVIEW SATURDAY OCTOBER 27



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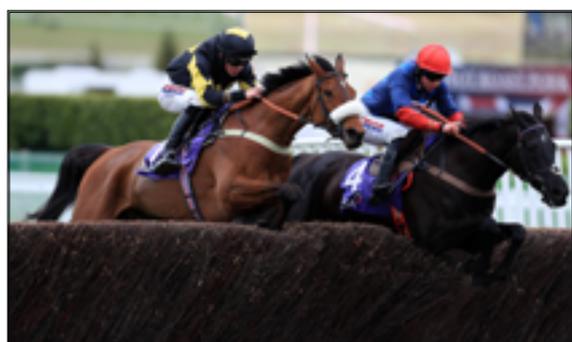
TIZZARD TRIO OUT TO TAKE THE TROPHY

Old rivals **Elegant Escape** and **Thomas Patrick** are among 13 runners going for glory in the £250,000 Ladbrokes Trophy at Newbury on Saturday, the 5400m highlight of the Ladbrokes Winter Carnival. The pair clashed just three weeks ago in the Listed Future Stars Intermediate Chase at Sandown Park, with Elegant Escape prevailing by half a length, but a 1.8kg swing in the weights should bring them together here.

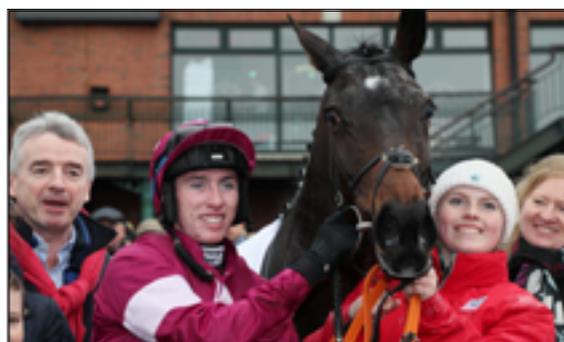
Grade 1 winner **Black Corton** has the chance to emulate stablemate Denman, who was the last top-weight to triumph in 2009. Bryony Frost gets another chance to showcase her considerable skills in the saddle.

Elegant Escape's trainer Colin Tizzard, who won this race with subsequent Cheltenham Gold Cup hero Native River in 2016, also saddles National Hunt Chase third **Sizing Tennessee** and **West Approach**.

Trainer Alan King and jockey Wayne Hutchinson combined to win this race in 2015 with Smad Place, and the pair team up again with **Dingo Dollar**. A winner over fences at Newbury last season, Dingo Dollar finished fourth in his prep race over hurdles at Newbury's opening fixture earlier this month.



Elegant Escape and Black Corton in action



Apple's Jade: Bidding for hat-trick of wins

CLASSY MARE APPLE'S JADE STARS AT FAIRYHOUSE

Apple's Jade is set to face nine rivals when she bids for a third victory in the Hatton's Grace Hurdle at Fairyhouse on Sunday. Gordon Elliott's star mare got the better of a thrilling battle with Vroum Vroum Mag when striking gold in 2016 and was a hugely impressive winner over the ill-fated Nichols Canyon last season.

Having warmed up for her return to Fairyhouse with victory in the Lismullen Hurdle at Navan - just as she did last season - Apple's Jade is a hot favourite to complete the hat-trick and become the third three-time winner, emulating Limestone Lad and Solerina.

The six-year-old is just one of four runners for Elliott, along with **Dortmund Park**, **Farclas** and **Sutton Place**. Willie Mullins - who has saddled three previous winners of the Hatton's Grace in **Hurricane Fly**, **Zaidpour** and **Arctic Fire** - also fires four bullets, with **Bapaume**, **Shaneshill**, **Wicklow Brave** and **Limini** all declared.

Jessica Harrington's Irish Champion Hurdle and Punchestown Champion Hurdle winner **Supasundae** and the Joseph O'Brien-trained Early Doors complete the field.

The first of three Grade 1 prizes on the afternoon is the Royal Bond Novice Hurdle. Willie Mullins has claimed this prize on a record seven occasions and runs **Aramon** and **Quick Grabim**, who finished first and fourth respectively in the For Auction Novice Hurdle at Navan three weeks ago. The latter, who Ruby Walsh described recently as being "definitely in our top bracket of novice hurdlers", is fancied to reverse the placings on this occasion though, having been wholly unsuited by the funereal early pace in his last appearance.