



GBI RACING PREVIEW SATURDAY JULY 14

YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST OF THE RACING ACTION IN THE UK AND IRELAND

THE BEST SPRINTERS IN EUROPE... AND BEYOND

The first contest each year in which the new crop of three-year-old sprinting talent gets to prove themselves against older rivals at the highest level, the line-up for Saturday's Darley July Cup has attracted seven different individual Group One winners. The race has an exceptional pedigree. Each of its last five winners have gone on to be crowned as the top European-trained sprinter in the end-of-season World Thoroughbred Rankings.

Likely favourite **Blue Point** has been regarded as a fantastic prospect ever since he was placed in the Middle Park Stakes and the Dewhurst Stakes as a two-year-old back in 2016. But it took him until the King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot last month to finally make his Group One breakthrough. He sets a tough standard on that form but will not have it all his own way with some smart performers in the line-up.

Successful three times in the race before, champion Irish trainer Aidan O'Brien will be mob-handed with five runners including dual juvenile Group One winner, **U S Navy Flag**, dropping back in trip having contested some of the top races over 1600m so far this season. The son of War Front tried to make all in the Irish 2000 Guineas two starts ago and held off all bar one of his rivals, emerging with plenty of credit in the process.



U S Navy Flag wins the Middle Park

He's far from the only high-quality three-year-old in the line-up though, with other leading representatives of the younger generation including **Eqtidaar** and **Sands Of Mali**, first and second - separated by half a length - in the Commonwealth Cup at Royal Ascot last month.

Eqtidaar is owned, like this race's 2015 winner and champion sprinter Muhaarar, by Sheikh Hamdan al Maktoum. Trained by Sir Michael Stoute, he warmed up for the race by cantering on the July racecourse under now-retired Ted Durcan on Tuesday morning.



Eqtidaar wins the Commonwealth Cup

Durcan said afterwards: "That was little more than a leg stretch for Eqtidaar but he's in super order and handled the undulations fine. The great thing about him is he has a great mind and was taking everything in. Hopefully that will put him spot on for Saturday and he has to be a player."

Stoute, who has won the July Cup three times, most recently with Ajdal in 1987, was represented by his assistant James Horton, who said: "Eqtidaar's weight has been very good since Ascot and he has every reason to turn up back here on Saturday with a good shout."

Other leading home-trained candidates are **Brando**, third in this race last year and subsequently successful in a Group One in France, and the very lightly-raced **Dreamfield**, making his first start at this level having finished second when sent off the red-hot favourite for the Wokingham Handicap at Royal Ascot.

An intercontinental flavour is added by the presence in the line-up of **Redkirk Warrior**. A three-time Group One hero in Australia, he will be a first ride in Europe for 21-year-old jockey Regan Bayliss. Co-trainer Ben Hayes is confident Redkirk Warrior, a disappointment behind Merchant Navy in the Diamond Jubilee at Royal Ascot, is ready to atone, saying: "He's definitely good enough. We've just got to get the best out of him."



GBI RACING PREVIEW SATURDAY JULY 14

YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST OF THE RACING ACTION IN THE UK AND IRELAND

ELSWORTH HOPING TO SPICE THINGS UP IN JOHN SMITH'S CUP

The richest-ever running of the famous John Smith's Cup raceday at York will see a total of £385,000 on offer in prize money and the 59th staging of the famous 2000m handicap.

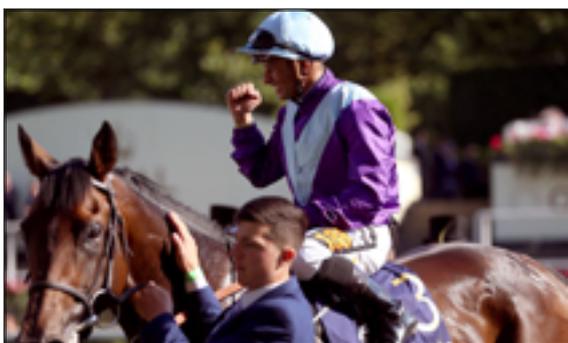
Named after Britain's best-selling ale, it is the centrepiece of a seven-race programme that now includes the newly-upgraded John Smith's Silver Cup as a Group Three contest and the Listed John Smith's City Walls sprint. The main event was taken last year by Ballet Concerto, a third win in the race for Sir Michael Stoute.

Stoute is without a runner this year after Zaaki was pulled out of the race, but another old master from the Newmarket area has a strong hand with David Elsworth sending up likely favourite **Dash Of Spice** and top-weight **Master Of The World**.

A winner at Epsom on Derby day and then again at Royal Ascot, Dash of Spice is moving up the ranks quickly and Elsworth said this week: "He is at a progressive stage of his career – he's improved the last couple of runs. This is a drop back in trip of course as it was a mile and a half (2400m) at Epsom and Ascot. But he has got plenty of ability to win over a mile and a quarter, of course he has.

"The horse's owner, Mr Smith, is an ambitious, speculative man, despite his modesty, and he has entered him in the Juddmonte International. Even though the horse has a lump of weight to carry this would give us an indication whether or not he's chasing rainbows.

"Master Of The World is always a danger. He'll probably go to Goodwood afterwards. But this race, while sort of a prep, he's not going in there as a forlorn hope. He's a course winner and never one you can rule out."



Dash Of Spice: Bidding for another victory



Ballet Concerto wins 2017 John Smith's Cup

MEADE HOPING TO GET BACK ON TRACK WITH EMINENT

Martyn Meade is hoping a drop back in trip will see the frustrating **Eminent** fire again in the Fred Cowley MBE Memorial Summer Mile at Ascot on Saturday. Meade has been baffled by two disappointing runs at Chester and Royal Ascot so far this season, after the Frankel colt ran so well in the 2000 Guineas and Derby last year, as well as winning the Craven Stakes and a French Group Two.

"He's had a couple of disappointing runs this season, so I think we'll try a new tactic with him," said Meade. "It's an absolute mystery because he's perfectly fine at home, it's all a bit baffling to me. I think the drop in trip might just help his confidence, or maybe even my confidence as well, and we'll maybe ride him a bit different."

A total of seven runners have been declared, with the standard arguably set by the David O'Meara-trained **Lord Glitters**, who ran the race of his life to be second in the Queen Anne Stakes at Royal Ascot last month.