



The Cheltenham Festival 2019

Introduction

The Cheltenham Festival is the one week of the year that goes straight into the diary as one that is not to be missed. I have been making the pilgrimage to the Cotswolds since 1995 and it never ceases to fill me with anticipation ahead of a fantastic week of racing.

Last August, I left a full-time job to try to spend some time growing BG Racing Syndicates. I have been running BG Racing for around ten years but there was much I wanted to be able to do, to provide my shareholders with even more benefits and I am trying to grow the number of shareholders involved and with it the number of horses that we have in ownership. Sadly, we don't have a horse that is up to running at the Festival this season. My Brother had an outside chance of making it when he ran a cracking race at the course at the back end of last year ending up 2nd in a handicap, but he did not step forward from there and has picked up a knock which means he is currently unable to race. The Way You Dance has come back from layoff and is running again now, but he is not quite up to Festival standard. We have switched him back to the all-weather and he is likely to run on the Monday evening before Cheltenham. It would be amazing if he could get the week off to a flyer with a good run at Kempton.

One thing I always get asked is what horses I fancy for the Festival. Frankly, it would probably be best if no one cared as whilst I have regularly had a pretty profitable week at Cheltenham, you can almost be assured that the horses I have shared with others have lost and those that I thought were weaker selections or that I only settled on in the hours before the race have then bolted in leaving people asking why I did not tell them that I was having a bet! Never one to learn a lesson very quickly I thought that this year I would put my early thoughts on the Festival in print.

And, that is an important point. At the time of writing, it is hard to predict which horses will run where let alone which ones will win and I would urge every caution with early bets. Checking whether your bookmaker is operating a "non-runner no-bet" concession is probably wise. It can be pretty frustrating to start the Festival with a whole bunch of losing bets that you need to cover with winners from those that remain.

Caveats and health warnings aside, I have looked at the entries from the yards of Alan Fleming and Neil Mulholland (Johnny Farrelly has no entries this year) and provided my analysis. I would say that these are my thoughts and not those of the trainers. I know these yards and their horses very well though and feel able to analyse their chances. I have then worked through the Festival race by race laying out my ante-post positions and my idea of the current best bet (as at Sunday 3rd March).

I hope you enjoy the read. I know that you will enjoy watching the top class racing on offer and if you are having a bet, I wish you every success.

It would also be remiss of me not to put in a small plug for BG Racing. I aim to provide shareholders with a full ownership experience at fraction of the cost of sole ownership and I would love to tell you more about it if you are interested, so please drop me a line at phil@bgracingsyndicates.co.uk if you would like more information.

Phil Boyle



Runners From Our Stables

Alan Fleming

Alan is coming over from the Curragh for the week and running plans for his runners are still being finalised.

Bakmaj – has entries in the Supreme Novices and the Ballymore Novice Hurdle and he is a big price for both races. Bakmaj looked a great prospect when winning his bumper in 2017, but he was well beaten in the 2017 Festival Bumper and missed a year. Placed in three maiden hurdles, this season, either race would be a massive step up in form for him, but he had plenty of ability a couple of years ago.

Edelpour – has entries in the Supreme Novices, Ballymore, Albert Bartlett and Martin Pipe hurdles. Amazingly (given the regard he is held in), this one is still a maiden over hurdles. His latest run was a 2nd at Clonmel on Thursday and I am not sure whether they will bring him over for Cheltenham or not. It would be a surprise to me if he was able to be a factor with possibly the Martin Pipe being his best chance of getting involved.

Speaker Connolly – has entries in the Ultima, Close Brothers, National Hunt Chase, JLT, Brown Advisory, Kim Muir. Basically, he is in every handicap chase, plus the non-handicap JLT and National Hunt Chase! He has had a win and 3rd since getting handicapped and if he gets into a good rhythm with his jumping, then he could have a say in whichever race he contests. I would suggest that the Close Brothers is the most likely target as this is a novice handicap.

Champayne Lady – has an entry in the Mares Hurdle where she is a big price. She was however a surprise 3rd in the Mares Novice race last year which was her last run. If Alan could get her there in last year's form, she would maybe have a squeak, but it would be a big ask.

Devil's Glen – has entries in the Supreme Novices and the Ballymore. He has not shown much form other than a win in a maiden and it would be a big surprise if he could get involved in either race.

Tully East – has entries in the Coral Cup, County Hurdle and Martin Pipe Hurdle. Alan has a good conditional in Liam Gilligan, so he may end up in the Martin Pipe unless Edelpour goes there. Tully was a top-class chaser, but he is being kept to hurdles now and needs to find some of his old form to contend. It would not be a huge surprise if he did though.

Hurricane Darwin – has an entry in the Cross Country and in my opinion is Alan's best chance of the week. He was 2nd to Josie's Orders last time and whilst there are some good ones in this race notably the brilliant Tiger Roll, Hurricane must have some chances of making the frame.

Mount Pelier has an entry in the Albert Bartlett. He was 2nd in a handicap yesterday and looks like he might win a handicap soon, but I suspect that he won't run here and if he does, it would be a huge ask.

Timewaitsfornoone – has an entry in the Foxhunters on Friday. He had been consistent and despite being a huge price, it would not surprise me if he ran well should he line up for the race.



Neil Mulholland

Walt – has entries in the Ultima, the Close Brothers and the Brown Advisory after winning a good handicap last weekend at Kempton. That was a step up for him and whilst he could run well again, I must admit that I do not see him as any great value in any of these three races. I hope I am wrong, but he looks short enough in competitive races.

Caroles Destrier – has entries in the Ultima and Kim Muir, but I suspect that after winning yesterday, Cheltenham may come a bit quick. He would probably be unlikely to run in my opinion.

The Young Master – has entries in the Ultima and the Kim Muir, but he is also in the Midlands Grand National the day after the festival. He seems to prefer decent ground and it will be softest on the first day, so the Kim Muir would probably be a better chance for him if he runs.

Kansas City Chief – has an entry for the Ultima, but he is 50-1 and on recent form would struggle.

Shantou Village – has an entry in the Ultima but is another that wants good ground and I think it will be on the soft side on day 1. He may also wait for the Midlands National.

Impulsive Star – has entries in the National Hunt Chase and the Kim Muir. For me, he would be Neil's best chance of the week and I hope he goes for the NH Chase as the test of stamina would surely suit.

Vis A Vis – has entries in the Ballymore and the Albert Bartlett. I am not convinced that he would be good enough to contend in either race.

Kalondra – has an entry in the Brown Advisory. He has masses of ability but is often let down by his jumping. He loves good ground and would probably need that and to get into a good rhythm, but it would hardly be a big surprise if he got involved should he take his chance.

Doing Fine – has an entry in the Kim Muir. I would be surprised if he ran to be honest, but if he does, he would likely be doing so as a stepping stone to some end of season staying handicaps when the ground gets faster.

The Twisler – has an entry in the County Hurdle, but I doubt that he would be good enough if he did run.

Niblawi – has an entry in the Martin Pipe, but having been off for a year, it would be some training performance if Neil got him there with a chance.



Tuesday 12th March

Supreme Novices Hurdle

I kind of feel that the market has this pegged right at the moment. Al Dancer looked great at Ascot but loads of horses with the Betfair Hurdle and look a good thing for this on official ratings and whilst they normally run well, they do not always win. Fakir Doudaires is likely to run here instead of the Triumph but I think he is plenty short enough and the same for me with Angels Breath as he is short enough for one beaten last time.

I backed Klassical Dream at 25-1 which might look good value, but he is drifting on the exchanges implying he may end up elsewhere and I hoped he would win more impressively last time. I have also backed Grand Sancy who is rated close to Al Dancer but is four times the price, Thomas Darby who is the only horse to beat Elixir De Nutz this season and who did so at Cheltenham and finally Itchy Feet who was second to Elixir De Nutz here in November and who I thought was overpriced.

Best Bet:

*¼ pt each-way - Grand Sancy – 12/1 Skybet 1/5 odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed
¼ pt each-way – Thomas Darby – 20/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed*

Arkle Chase

I am already in a hole with this race. I backed Mengli Khan at 6-1 and then he started getting stuffed on a regular basis. I then backed Le Richeburg at 8-1 (also had him in a double with Delta Work) only for him to be ruled out for the season. I am left with Lalor who I backed at 5-1 and Us And Them at 20-1. The exchange markets would seem to suggest that Defi De Seuil will not be switched here despite the absence of Le Richeburg and frankly this race is starting to look a bit ordinary. Lalor still looks to have a good chance but is plenty short enough now. At around 20-1, Us and Them each-way still looks like good value to me. He was 2nd to Le Richeburg twice and second to Hardline who is half his price.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Us and Them – 20/1 Skybet 1/5 odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Ultima Chase

It is hard to work out who will run here as most are double entered. If Now McGinty ends up here (unlikely), I would want to be with him and similar comments apply to Robinsfirth, Discorama, Tout Est Permis and Janika. I have had small bets on last year's winner Coo Star Sivola (although I think he will want it softer) and Le Breuil, but I will probably have day of race bets here once the field is confirmed.

Best Bet:

Nothing at this stage.



Champion Hurdle

This is a race I am really looking forward to although having backed Apples Jade at 4-1 for the Mares Hurdle on the basis that she would only run there and Buveur D'Air for this at Evens on the basis that it was buying money, the field is not quite what I wanted to see! I have also backed Espoir D'Allen at 20-1 each way as I think he could run a big race here and he has now been confirmed as a runner yet.

Coming at the race fresh, I would be with Buveur D'Air. Apples Jade had problems last year with her coming into season which connections think they have fixed. She would not have come into season until now anyway though, so for me there is still some doubt on that. Laurina has only had the two runs, one where she was different class and one over two and a half miles. I think Buveur D'Air is not going to be the fashionable pick, but arguably he is the one they have to beat and I would therefore side with him.

Best Bet:

½ pt win – Buveur D'Air – 15/8 Bet365 – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

¼ pt each-way – Espoir D'Allen – 16/1 Bet365 – non-runner no-bet – best odds guaranteed

Mares Hurdle

How good would my 4-1 on Apples Jade look now? I have backed Roksana at 14-1 each way and I will probably look for a couple of long priced each way bets on the day given that Apples Jade and Laurina will probably run in the Champion and there has to be doubts over Benie Des Dieux after not running since last season and Limini who has been on the go a long time and not exactly showing top class form.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Roksana – 9/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Close Brothers

I like the Irish raider Riders Onthe Storm in this race and I have backed him at 10-1 each way. He looks like he may have been laid out for this and I could see him being a gamble. I have backed Speaker Connolly here as well as I think this is the right race for him and I would be interested in Solomn Grundy (who was with Neil last season but now is with Henry De Bromhead) if he turns up here.

Best Bet:

¼ pt each-way – Riders Onthe Storm – 10/1 Skybet ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

¼ pt each-way – Speaker Connolly – 20/1 Skybet ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed



National Hunt Chase

I must admit I am not a huge fan of OK Corral as I am not convinced this is the right race for him. He has plenty of speed and this stamina test did not seem the most sensible option to me. Of the market leaders I much prefer Ballyward. I hope Discorama runs in a handicap (where I would be interested in backing him) and Delta Work surely goes for the RSA. I have not had a bet yet. Probably at the moment I am leaning towards Impulsive Star and Now McGinty if they run here.

Best Bet:

¼ pt each-way – Impulsive Star – 12/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

¼ pt each-way – Now McGinty – 20/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed



Wednesday 13th March

Ballymore Novice Hurdle

Day two opens with the Ballymore and Champ (who I am on for the Albert Bartlett – doh) shares favouritism with Battleoverdoyen. I am surprised (and frustrated) to see that the exchanges suggest Klassical Dream will also run here. I am on Brewinupastorm and Sams Profile at the moment with the latter having been backed since I took 25-1. I am happy with those two and will look at the race again after the runners are known.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Brewinupastorm – 10/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

RSA Chase

I am on Santini at 12-1 ante post and Topofthegame at 9-1 so my position on this race looks great. I have loads of time for Delta Work though, so I will definitely have a saver on him. He also makes most appeal at the current prices.

Best Bet:

1pt win – Delta Work – 3/1 Bet365 – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Coral Cup

I am a big fan of Uradel and I have backed him here, but he may not get into the race. I am also each way on Brio Conti and Whiskey Sour and I will definitely look at Dallas Des Pictons, Vision Des Flos, Barney Dwan and Wicklow Brave if they end up in the field. Whiskey Sour is probably the one I am most keen on right now, but that may change!

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Whiskey Sour – 16/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Champion Chase

I suspect that Altior will win but at long odds that is not telling you anything you could not work out. I am on Sceau Royal each way at 20-1 but frankly I cannot see a way into the race for betting purposes at the moment. If Un De Sceaux ran here I would be backing him without the favourite, but that looks unlikely. The same applies to Min who is more likely to run.

Best Bet:

Wait until day of race market:

½ pt win – Min (betting without Altior)

½ pt win – Un De Sceaux (betting without Altior)

If one does not run have the full 1pt on the other, if both do not run, then no bet!

Cross Country

Tiger Roll is even money to win this race again and whilst that is short enough, it is probably about right. I have Hurricane Darwin each-way, but I also backed My Hometown who misses the race. I will have another look on the day, but for now.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Hurricane Darwin – 16/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed



Fred Winter

I have several I am interested in here. My list is Lethal Steps, Star Max, Zafar, Prabeni and King D'Argent. I have already backed the first three ante post. This looks wide open, but it should be a really good race and there are bound to be a few that have been "plotted up" for the race. Zafar looks a possible in that regard and may be well handicapped and suited by a fast pace. Star Max is another that could be well handicapped, whilst Lethal Steps is surely better than he has shown to date.

Best Bet:

¼ pt each-way – Star Max – 14/1 Paddy Power ¼ odds 5 places – non-runner no bet

¼ pt each-way – Zafar – 33/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Bumper

Blue Sari and Envoi Allen dominate the market, but I am unlikely to back them at the current odds. I will probably find some each way options closer to the race.

Best Bet:

Nothing at this stage.



Thursday 14th March

JLT Novice Chase

I am on Lostintranslation at 5-1 and was so hoping that Defi De Seuil would switch to the Arkle, but it seems he may come here, and he would be a tough opponent for my selection. This race will probably cut up as many of the market leaders are more likely to run elsewhere. There may be some each way value to be had if you fancy an outsider. Kildisart each way could be a good option at the current prices.

Best Bet:

½ pt win – Lostintranslation – 3/1 Bet365 – non-runner no bet - best odds guaranteed

½ pt win – Defi Du Seuil – 7/2 Bet365 – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Pertemps Hurdle

Sire Du Berlais looks a solid favourite to me. I am on Walk to Freedom at 14-1 and I will probably back Notwhatiam when some markets with extra places are available.

Best Bet:

¼ pt each-way – Walk to Freedom – 11/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

¼ pt each-way – Notwhatiam – 20/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Ryanair

I am on Monalee for this at 8-1 so I hope he can win. The value of this bet will depend on what runs where as Footpad, Min and Frodon could all come here or run elsewhere. I am unlikely to be able to resist backing Un De Sceaux or Min if they run, but I hope they go to the Champion Chase. Right now, I think Tout Est Permis looks the best value at current odds.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Tout Est Permis – 20/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Stayers Hurdle

I am a huge Paisley Park fan and I cannot believe that I did not back him for this earlier in the season. He is very short now and I would have a healthy respect for Faugheen. I am not a fan of Supasundae at this trip though so if Apples Jade and Samcro do not come here I will probably look for an each-way option. Right now, Faugheen each way is probably the best value as I cannot see him out of the frame.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Faugheen – 5/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Brown Advisory

This is another that I would like to be more sure of who is running. With that said, I have backed Janika who I really like for this race. He should have won at the course last time when left too much to do and I think he could be a good thing in this race. I am interested in Springtown Lake at bigger odds and would look at Kalondra and Jerrysback if they ended up in the field.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Janika – 12/1 Paddy Power 1/5 odds 5 places – non-runner no bet



Mares Novice

I thought Epatante looked great last time and is a worthy favourite for this. I do not have any bets in the race yet, but I would want her on my side.

Best Bet:

1pt win – Epatante – 5/2 Bet365 – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Kim Muir

I am intrigued by Kilfilum Cross and I am on each way at 20-1. It was eye catching that Derek O'Connor rode this one at Ludlow last time and if he took the ride here, this one will crash in the market. Measureofmydreams is the one I expect to start favourite and I have therefore taken some 10-1 and I will probably add Now McGinty and Speaker Connolly if they run here.

Best Bet:

¼ pt each-way – Kilfilum Cross – 20/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

¼ pt each-way – Measureofmydreams – 10/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed



Friday 15th March

Triumph

My only ante-post bet is Tiger Tap Tap, but I cannot see him overturning Sir Erec. The value right now has to be Quel Destin. I am not sure he can win, but he looks so solid that he surely should make the frame.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Quel Destin – 7/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

County

Super competitive as ever. At the top of the market I like the chances of Wonder Laish and I gave backed Winston C at 25-1 who is a novice and could be unexposed. I would be interested in Vision D'honneur if he came here and also Scarlet Dragon who will probably not make the field.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Wonder Laish – 10/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Albert Bartlett

I have backed two here. Rockpoint at 33-1 and Lisnagar Oscar at 7-1. The latter looks rock solid but the former has been disappointing since I backed him.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Lisnagar Oscar – 6/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Gold Cup

I am with Anibale Fly to repeat last seasons place performance at 33-1 and I also have a feeling that Shattered Love could outrun her odds and have backed her at 25-1. I think the two at the top of the market Presenting Percy and Clan Des Obeaux could be special horses, but at the prices, I cannot see them as value. The current value could be Road to Respect (who may run elsewhere) and Al Boum Photo. The latter has been forgotten and has won his only start this season impressively against horses that have won since. The former was 4th last year and on better ground this season could easily get in the mix.

¼ pt each-way – Al Boum Photo – 14/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

¼ pt each-way – Road to Respect – 14/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Foxhunters

The Irish seem to think that Stand Up and Fight is unbeatable here. Shantou Flyer has the best recent handicap form, but his jockey could be an issue. I am on him ante-post but he does not look value now. I cannot get away from Pacha Du Polder. His form is identical to last year (well beaten in February) and he has the wins here in the book. I will stick with him each way.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Pacha Du Polder – 20/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 3 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed



Grand Annual

Magic Saint is a strong favourite here at around 7/1 so my 10's ante-post is now looking OK. He is short enough now that perhaps each-way alternatives are the way to go. I am also on Whatswrongwithyou at 20/1 and he is half that price now.

I would like Us and Them for this, but I hope that he will run in the Arkle rather than here, so the best bet at the moment in my opinion is Not Another Muddle. All his form is on soft ground, but if he lines up here and handles the underfoot conditions, he should have a good chance.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Not Another Muddle –12/1 Bet365 ¼ odds 4 places – non-runner no bet – best odds guaranteed

Martin Pipe

The Martin Pipe takes over from the Grand Annual as the last race of the Festival this year. I don't have a bet in this race yet and much as I like Dallas Des Pictons, he looks too short already. Uradel will probably end up in the Coral Cup so at the moment I would suggest an each way play on Canardier who has not been out since winning at the track in October on what looked like a scouting mission for this.

Best Bet:

½ pt each-way – Canardier –16/1 Paddy Power ¼ odds 5 places – non-runner no bet