

# BetFan

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## Inside Today...

**FREE Tips From The Pro Punter, The Inside Edge and Early Odds**

**Top 10 Tipsters For February 2018**

**Altior And Native Rivers Must Perform In The Dress Rehearsals - By Ian Hudson**

**Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott**

**Low Scoring Millwall Versus Cardiff Match Expected**

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# **Altior And Native Rivers Must Perform In The Dress Rehearsals** - By Ian Hudson

The Cheltenham Festival begins four weeks on Tuesday so this weekend is the last opportunity for potential runners to race and then have enough time to recover. The best horse in action at Newbury on Saturday is Altior but his trainer believes the horse is more vulnerable than at any other time in his career. Altior must win the Exchange Chase to justify favouritism for the Queen Mother Chase. Native River is auditioning for another crack at the Gold Cup on the same card.

The Betfair Hurdle is one of the most competitive handicaps over the smaller obstacles and often attracts a big field. There should be at least 16 runners this year which means bookmakers will settle each way bets at one quarter the odds for the first four places. The other races previewed won't have the required eight runners for three payout places and they are more about quality than quantity.

Altior is trained by Nicky Henderson who had the brilliant Sprinter Sacre winning races at the highest level for five years. The trainer believes Altior could be as good and is potentially his stable star and that's saying something when it houses the current favourite for the Champion Hurdle and Gold Cup. Altior has won different races at the last two Cheltenham Festivals so is looking for a rare treble in March.

Politologue has the best chase form over two miles in Britain this season. The horse won the Tingle Creek Chase in impressive style and that is a recognised trial for the two mile championship. Altior can put down a marker for that race by beating Politologue but that will be a tough ask after a ten month absence from the track. On past form and ratings Altior is the horse to beat in the Exchange Chase and then the big one at Cheltenham next month.

Native River won two major handicaps last season with something in hand and that made the horse a Gold Cup contender. Native River ran a fine race to be third to Sizing John but that horse has underperformed this season. The Gold Cup is a demanding race that takes a great deal out of runners and back-to-back wins are rare. Best Mate won the race three times in a row at the start of the century but was an exceptional animal and Sizing John is not in that class.

The Denman Chase is Native River's prep for the Gold Cup and he must win comfortably in an average race to have any chance at Cheltenham. Newbury is a flat track and the race is over less than three miles. Native River won the old Hennessy Gold Cup on the course last season so relishes the conditions and can jump the fences. A clear cut win is required and anything less will take Native River out of the Gold Cup equation and the other four runners are not proven at the highest level.

Lalor was one of the best bumper horses last season and is a novice running in a big field handicap. The Betfair Hurdle could be too much for the horse and Jenkins has better credentials. Jenkins is trained by Henderson and he has won five Betfair Hurdles in its different guises. If he wins another and Altior prevails it will have been a good day at the office.

## **Today's Sports Betting Preview** - By Rick Elliott

### **Low Scoring Millwall Versus Cardiff Match Expected**

There are no TV Premier League fixtures this evening but the sacrilege Friday night will soon feature live matches from the top division. It's the usual Championship fare tonight when Millwall welcome Cardiff City to the Den. In the olden days the fixture was more about the trouble off the field but hopefully the football should do the talking.

Cardiff are 10 places and 16 points ahead of their opponents in this match and can increase their advantage in the Championship table. The Welsh outfit are [7/4 with Ladbrokes](#) to earn maximum points from this fixture. Millwall's league matches to date average less than 2.5 goals and Cardiff's fixture have been the same so the standout bet could be UNDER 2.5 GOALS at [13/20 with William Hill](#).

The racing is nothing to write home about today and three of the five meetings in Britain and Ireland are on All-Weather surfaces. The richest race of the day is the Class 2 Graduation Chase at Kempton (2.25pm). This is actually a half decent contest with runners who could be engaged at the Cheltenham Festival.

Only four horses have been declared so it's a small but select field. MODUS has by far the highest rating but at the time of writing there were no early prices so you must back the horse at the starting price or take a price nearer race time. The booking of Barry Geraghty to ride the horse for Paul Nicholls could be a tip in itself.

Australia play England in their third Twenty20 match early tomorrow morning as part of the Tri-Series that also involves New Zealand. England beat Australia by 8 wickets in the first match and then Australia beat New Zealand by 7 wickets in a match that required the Duckworth Lewis scoring to determine the outcome. The Aussies were too good for England in their second meeting, winning by five wickets. However, ENGLAND are now one of the best white ball teams in the world and can beat Australia again and that outcome is [13/10 with bet365](#).