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TODAY'S FREE SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

TWL Pro Tip

Win Bet - Haydock 18:15 - Beatboxer @ 10/11

Early Odds

Win Bet - Haydock 19:55 - Cliffs Of Dover @ 11/2

Neo Investments

Win Bet - Wolverhampton (A.W) 14:20 - Ahundrednotout @ 9/4

Europe Can Win The Shergar Cup Without Dettori - By

Ian Hudson

It's debateable whether horse racing lends itself to the team format but Saturday's Shergar Cup at Ascot is now established in the racing calendar. The concept is something different and the meeting usually attracts a decent crowd but ultimately it's the ability of the horses that determines the outcome. Frankie Dettori was provisionally named in the team representing Europe but he has to honour riding commitments for John Gosden at Newmarket.

There are four three-jockey teams competing in the Shergar Cup. The meeting features six handicaps over various distances with a maximum field of 10 runners. Each jockey sits out one race so everybody has five chances to put points on the board for their team. Points are awarded for finishing positions and the team that wins most points over the six races wins the Shergar Cup. Even without Dettori Europe can beat the UK and Ireland, Rest of the World and girl's teams and win the Shergar Cup.

The event is named in honour of the horse that won the Derby in 1981. The horse was then taken from his stable in Ireland and the mystery is still unsolved. Sadly Shergar's jockey at Epsom, Walter Swinburn, is also no longer with us and the Ascot occasion will be in his memory as well as the best horse he rode. The European team members are Gerald Mosse from France. Andrasch Starke from Germany and Per-Anders Graberg from Sweden and that looks like a potentially winning team.

Team make-ups change from year to year so past form is not a massive factor in determining the most likely winners of this year's Shergar Cup. However, the most recent winners of the competition are as follows:

2015 Girl's - 2016 Great Britain and Ireland - 2017 Rest of the World

The Shergar Cup has been likened to the Ryder Cup in golf but it differs in one very important way. Points are awarded to jockeys but the best jockey in the world can't win races on inferior horses and the best horse in a race can compensate if the rider is not the most proficient in the race. As a team concept the fundamental flaw is that usually the best handicapped horse will prevail and the jockey is a passenger. Jockey ability is a factor but not the most important element of a partnership.

Rides are allocated by a draw but maybe the organisers would like to see a different team win each year. Possibly Team Europe could be given the best rides but the event must be seen to be fair and have integrity because the races are still betting events. There will be TV coverage on ITV so betting turnover will be healthy. Punters will still be backing horses based on the form and not the jockey and team they represent. Dettori is possibly the only jockey that would be backed blindly but he is riding elsewhere.

Two of the six races are confined to horse aged threes, another one allows horses of that age and older to take part and horse aged four and older qualify for the other three races. The race distances range from five furlongs to two miles and each contest is a Class 2 or Class 3 affair. There is a narrow range of weights and even without the team element the card features six trappy handicaps. Luck in the draw allocating rides will have a huge impact on the outcome of the Shergar Cup.

The jockeys and horses have different levels of ability so identifying the leading contenders could be difficult. You could back the best handicapped horse in each race and the ratings can be used to identify those horses. It's a team event but the normal rules of racing and handicapping apply.

Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott

Both Teams Can Score At Old Trafford

The World Cup final was played 26 days ago so less than a month and the new Premier League season starts this evening and for the first time on a Friday night. It's too early to talk about must win fixtures but for his mood and demeanour Jose Mourinho will be privately praying that Manchester United beat Leicester City at Old Trafford.

There is a World Cup hangover because United will be missing players who were involved deep in the tournament and some of Leicester's key individuals won't be fully fit after returning to the club later and less than a week of training. It's a nightmare scenario but MANCHESTER UNITED are 9/4 with **bet365** NOT to finish in the top four and qualify for the Champions League through that route.

Leicester were the most prolific team in the Premier League last season for both teams to score. In 24 of their 38 fixtures there was at least one goal in both nets. The league average is slightly greater than 50% but Leicester's average for BTTS during the 2017/18 campaign was 63%. United have not recruited the central defender they seem to lack so may be fragile at times at the back.

Jamie Vardy could be risked if Leicester need a goal and the statistics suggest they will score but one goal might not be enough. The home team were not prolific last season but should get past a Leicester defence that could be missing the services of Harry Maguire. United can put a smile on the manager's face but not before **BOTH TEAMS SCORE** and that outcome is 4/5 with **Betfair**.

There are six Flat meetings in Britain today but the most lucrative fixture is at Tipperary in Ireland. Coolmore sponsors the richest contest, a Listed race for horses aged two over seven and a half furlongs (6.40). The organisation are rich enough not to need presents but they own the most likely winner of the race called CHRISTMAS and the horse can be backed at 3/1 with **Ladbrokes** to prevail.