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TODAY'S FREE SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

[Footie Flutters](#) - Win Bet - Watford v Cardiff/Sunderland v Bristol Rovers 15:00 - Watford/Sunderland @ 4/6-8/11

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Win Bet - Doncaster 14:45 - Quel Destin @ 11/10

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Win Bet - Doncaster 13:00 - The Unit @ 2/1

Rick's Sports Betting: A Christmas Thistle Cracker in The King George? - By Rick Elliott

The King George V1 Chase has a history of producing multiple winners over the last 10 years and only the last three winners have won the race once since 2008. Kauto Star, Long Run and Silviniaco Conti all won more than one King George over that spell and Thistlecrack can win the race again two years after winning it for the first time. The mid-season championship chase takes place over three miles at Kempton Park on Boxing Day. Some of the best chasers in the sport have won it.

Trends can provide clues for the potential winners of championship races. Grade 1 races over fences are run at the same tracks and date from year to year and there are some established trials. The profile of past winners can help to identify the leading contenders for the upcoming race. The King George is a major trail for the Cheltenham Gold Cup and the second most important steeplechase of the season. Over the last decade the background of the winner has had a number of factors in common which in some cases have been without exception.

The King George attracts the best staying chasers in Britain and Ireland and sometimes from further afield. Francois Doumen often brought his best chasers to run in the race from France. From 1987 to 2000 he won the King George five times with four different horses. The common factor was that his winners were amongst the best rated chasers when he travelled to Kempton over Christmas. However, Kauto Star (2011) was the last winner to also win the Gold Cup. Long Run, Best Mate and Kicking King have also won both races this century.

Every winner of the King George over the last 10 years has had an adjusted Racing Post Rating of 174. All but one winner in that spell had run in eight chases or more. Nine of that 10 had been successful in at least one Grade 1 chase and the same number won the King George aged from six to nine. Two trends have delivered four times out of five so 80% of the winners have won a graded chase from 2 miles 4 furlongs to 2 miles and 6 furlongs and been rated within 6lbs of the top rated runner. All but two of the last 10 winners also had chase winning form over three miles or more. Six winners had run in the King George before.

There are a number of intended runners in the 2018 race who meet some of the qualifying criteria for possible winners. More significantly the trainer to follow in staying races is Colin Tizzard. He won the Gold Cup last season with Native River and two of the last three King George's with Cue Card and

Thistlecrack. Cue Card has been retired but Native River and Thistlecrack are still in the declared runners for the King George and the latter is best suited to the track. Native River could have some limitations exposed going right-handed at Kempton.

Thistlecrack is proven over the course and distance. The horse has not won a race since the Boxing Day feature in 2016. However, Thistlecrack ran a promising trial in the Betfair Chase at Haydock. The horse charged up the home straight better than any of the other runners without the jockey asking too many questions. Thistlecrack produced an RPR just two pounds below his best and that form and rating and other elements makes Thistlecrack the trends selection for the King George.

Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott

Everton Can Avoid Defeat At The Etihad

If you were asked to select Manchester City's best 11 John Stones, David Silva, Sergio Aguero and Kevin de Bruyne would be on the team sheet. If you were asked to name one Everton player who is indispensable the name of Idrissa Gueye would unlikely to feature. All five players will be absent today when Manchester City are at home to Everton in a fixture that has produced a draw in the last three seasons.

City have won nine home Premier League matches in a row but Everton have not been disgraced against top six teams on their travels. At the latest odds the DRAW is the bet of this match at 13/2 with **bet365**. These two teams have won more corners than anybody else in the Premier League this season.

Fulham and West Ham who meet at Craven Cottage today are in the bottom half of the table for corners won. The home team are on course to break the record for goals conceded in a 38-match Premier League season. The Hammers have won six league matches this season but only kept a clean sheet in one of those fixtures.

Fulham are at the bottom of the table while West Ham have won three EPL matches on the bounce. Fulham have the worst defence in the division but West Ham usually concede when they win a match. The trends suggest a West Ham win with both teams scoring but a more cautious option is just BOTH TEAMS TO SCORE at 8/15 with **William Hill**.

The racing Press have caught up with how unlucky Rather Be was in the BetVictor Gold Cup at Cheltenham. The horse is all the rage to win the second big handicap chase at Cheltenham before Christmas today. The International Hurdle (3.05) is also an intriguing race which The New One is trying to win for the fourth time. Jumping let Summerville Boy down against Samcro and Buvuer D'Air at Newcastle but the

horse still won the Festival opener in March after making a pig's ear of the last two hurdles. SUMMERVILLE BOY is the horse to back at 3/1 with **Betfair**.

Trackside In Ireland - By Declan O'Donoghue

MIN looked a Ryanair prospect with a classy and tough performance to land the Grade One John Durkan Chase at Punchestown on Sunday.

Having chased home Altior in both the Supreme Novices and the Champion Chase at the last two Cheltenham Festivals, the Willie Mullins team and Ruby Walsh will be keen to avoid Nicky Henderson's superstar with Min this time.

And with good reason as the Champion Chaser looked as good as ever when mastering their game ten year old Un De Sceaux in the Tingle Creek at Sandown.

Some welcome rainfall has enabled Mullins to finally move up the gears with his usual high class challenge for all the big races.

Mind you it was still officially good, good to yielding ground at Punchestown and Tornado Flyer skipped over nicely it for Walsh when landing the maiden hurdle.

Big things are expected from that 4/9 hotpot who was quite superb in bumpers last season.

He could go straight to a Grade Two at Leopardstown on December 27 Mullins said, or wait for a Grade One over two and a half miles at Naas in early January.

He certainly had them well strung out and could be ready to reach for the stars.

He loved the decent ground and of course being by Flemensfirth should have little trouble dealing with more juice in the surface when called upon.

Walsh and Mullins were also on target with 4/7 fancy Getabird who flopped big time when favourite for the Supreme Novices. That failure was no surprise to followers of our Irish Racing Service as we had repeatedly pointed out that Susannah Ricci's gelding is way superior when racing right handed.

He made an impressive start over fences now, travelling and jumping sweetly. We'll hardly see him at Leopardstown for reasons already stated, but the new Grade One at Limerick on Boxing Day looks a realistic target.

A huge leap in class and grade from last Sunday for sure, but he looks more than good enough.

Predictably, Cork had the softer ground that so many have been calling out for and here again Mullins ruled the roost with Camelia The Cote a highly impressive winner of the mares novice chase. She jumped for fun and skated home under Paul Townend. Certainly one for the notebook.

However even for the Mullins team it can't be glory all the way, and Great Field was an early casualty in the Hilly Way won by 16/1 shot Castlegrace Paddy.

Hard to judge the form really as Special Tiara hated the ground, but connections rate the Pat Fahy trained winner very highly and he must not be underestimated when turning up at Leopardstown on December 27th.

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