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6	 The Judge	+67.70
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TODAY'S FREE SPORTS BETTING TIPS...

StatMan

Win Bet - Southwell (A.W) 14:05 - Matterhorn @ 15/8

Deep Thought

Win Bet - Southwell (A.W) 12:20 - Side Effect @ 7/4

Neo Investments

Win Bet - Wolverhampton (A.W) 18:45 - Corinthia Knight @ 9/4

Today's Sports Betting Preview - By Rick Elliott

Wolves Can Hold Their Own Against Liverpool

Wolves were one of the best sides to be promoted from the Championship to the Premier League when they came up last season and have had no problems taking on the big boys. They are at home to unbeaten Liverpool tonight who will end the first half of the season at the top of the league if they pick up three points at Molyneux. The betting suggests an away win is on the cards but Wolves would disagree. The club with a strong Portuguese influence can avoid defeat.

The home team have met sides from the top six five times this season and have only suffered one defeat. Wolves beat Chelsea at home earlier this month and drew the other three fixtures against the Premier League elite. The Liverpool defence is disrupted by injuries but Wolves are just about at full strength. Wolves play deep and hit teams on the counter attack. They are just one of three teams to take points of Manchester City this season so the DRAW is the bet at 7/2 with **bet365**.

There are eight second round matches in the PDC World Championship today. Despite having a pint of beer thrown on him during the walk-on Michael Van Gerwen kept his composure to record a comfortable first round win. Several seeds on the other side of the draw are gone from the darts tournament at the Alexandra Palace in London. MVG at his best will take some beating but the ante post tip, MICHAEL SMITH, has looked good and can still be backed at 8/1 with **Ladbrokes**.

There is an excellent card at Ascot today featuring a novice chase and novice hurdle worth almost £20,000 to the winner. Lil Rockerfeller has the best hurdles form of the four runners contesting the chase over two miles and five furlongs at 2.30 but unseated the rider at Cheltenham a week ago. The Grade 2 hurdle for inexperienced horses at 1.55 over just less than two miles looks open. On form figures THISTLE DO NICELY is a big price at 16/1 and is the each way nap.

Unowhatimeanharry Is The Nap Of Saturday At Ascot

- By Ian Hudson

There is no racing in Britain and Ireland for three days which means Saturday's fixtures are the last betting action before the start of two major jumps festivals in Britain and Ireland on Boxing Day. The JLT Long Walk Hurdle is the highlight of Saturday's card at Ascot and Unowhatimeanharry is the horse to back to cover some of the expenses over Christmas. Kempton and Leopardstown are the venues for the main holiday meetings in Britain and Ireland and the racing is superb at both tracks.

The spell from Saturday to Tuesday is the longest break of the season and the only blank days in the calendar. Good Friday was another protected day but now the All-

Weather finals at Lingfield are the highlight of the Easter period for some racing fans. The lack of racing from Saturday adds to the anticipation for the racing on Boxing Day when the King George V1 Chase at Kempton is the highlight. There are eight Grade 1 races during the four day Leopardstown Christmas Festival. The meeting features many trials for the championship races at the Cheltenham Festival.

The Long Walk Hurdle is a Grade 1 race run over three miles and one furlong and there are 12 obstacles to be jumped. The race is one of the major trials for the stayers' hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival and since 1971 five horse have won both races. Thistlecrack was the latest in the 2015-16 season and that horse is now entered in the King George on Boxing Day. Thistlecrack won that race in 2016 which was just his fourth race over fences. The horse ran pleasingly in the Betfair Chase at Haydock in November and was not far off his best on ratings. There should be some improvement for the King George and Thistlecrack is a leading contender.

Bristol De Mai won the Haydock Grade 1 for the second year in a row. The horse will run in the King George which is the second leg of a series which offers a one million pound bonus for any horse that wins the three most prestigious staying chases of the season. Bristol De Mai is ideally suited to Haydock but Kempton and Cheltenham are not his forte which means winning the King George and the third leg of the bonus series, the Cheltenham Gold Cup, looks beyond him. Thistlecrack can win the King George for the second time and get right in the mix for the Gold Cup.

Unowhatimeanharry won the Long Walk Hurdle in 2016 but could only come third in the stayers' hurdle the following March. Sam Spinner won the race last year but then disappointed at the Cheltenham Festival. The Ascot feature has a history of producing multiple winners and Big Buck's and Reve De Sivola won it three times in as many years. Baracouda is the only four times winner from 2000 to 2004 only missing out in 2002. The trainer, Francois Douman, has the same record while Richard Johnson is the leading jockey with four wins between 1999 and 2013.

The last 10-year-old to win the Long Walk Hurdle was Deano's Beano in 2002 and Unowhatimeanharry is now that age. The horse was the best staying hurdler of two seasons ago but did not produce his form at the Festival. He was back to his best in winning the Long Distance Hurdle at Newbury at the end of last month.

Unowhatimeanharry can win at Ascot on Saturday and thus again become a leading contender for the staying hurdle race that matters most at Cheltenham next March.