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I used to have a handle on life, and then it broke.

Today's free tips are courtesy of Lucky 7 Naps, Weekend Racing and Early Odds.

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## **TODAY'S SPORTS BETTING TIPS...**

1 - Win Bet - 15:00 Newbury - Dans Le Vent @ 20/1

2 - Each Way Bet - 15:45 Taunton - Dellface @ 20/1

3 - Win Bet - 15:35 Newbury - Duke Des Champs @ 5/1



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## **Harry The Viking Is Young At Heart** - By Rick Elliott

After the glorious King George and four days of high class jumps racing at Leopardstown the racing is ordinary but competitive at Newbury and Haydock this Saturday. The racing year starts all over again at Cheltenham on Monday which is the official birthday of race horses in the UK and Ireland. In age specific races it would be too complicated to use the actual date of birth of horses so they all advance one year on New Year's Day. The lucky ones get a day at the races to celebrate.

One of the many attractions of National Hunt racing is the longevity of the horses. Cue Card is twelve on Monday and the horse won the bumper at the Cheltenham Festival in 2010. Red Rum won a third Grand National in 1977 having first run in the race in 1973. By contrast the winner of this year's Derby has already been retired. The New One has been running in Grade 1 hurdles for five years but its rare for a Group race winning Flat horse to race beyond three but Enable is a welcome exception.

The economics of Flat racing mean a horse is a much more lucrative commodity at stud than on the racecourse. The winner of the Derby is always an entire horse and geldings are not eligible because the breeding line is paramount. Many decent male jumpers have had their equipment removed because there is no value in them producing offspring at the end of their racing career. Consequently, jumpers become old familiar friends while Flat horse are just fleeting acquaintances.

It's this affinity and connection with horses that race over jumps for a number of years that causes genuine sadness when one is lost in action. Nichols Canyon was a brave multiple Grade 1 winner who always tried his hardest. The horse had a fatal fall at Leopardstown and even a grizzled pro like Ruby Walsh expressed genuine concern for the owners. An appropriate News Year's wish is no fatalities on the track but sadly they are part of the nature of horse racing. Many Clouds was a cruel loss to the sport and a horse that won a Grand National and could have won another.

The Last Fling Handicap Chase is the feature race at Haydock and Alfie Spinner is one of those stalwarts of the jumps game. The horse celebrates his 13th birthday at the turn of the year but can still be competitive in this Class 2 contest over more than three miles, three furlongs. The ground is officially heavy and the meeting could still be lost to the weather. However, the race will be a slog and that could suit Alfie Spinner who is the joint oldest horse in the race with Harry The Viking. Emperor's Choice is aged 10 and a former winner of the Welsh Grand National over 29 furlongs.

Alfie Spinner has run 43 times under rules and has won three times over fences and two hurdle races. The horse has run at the Cheltenham Festival two times without much success but was fourth in the Becher Chase over the Grand National fences at Aintree in December 2014. Alfie Spinner has been around for years but produced a decent run last time out when second to a horse four years his junior at Chepstow.



Wild West Wind could oppose again but Alfie Spinner is weighted to reverse the places at Haydock.

Harry The Viking is a few pounds inferior to those two horses but the seven pounds claimed by Rachael McDonald could make all the difference. It would be appropriate for a horse of advanced years to win a competitive handicap chase two days before his birthday. Harry The Viking won a similar race at Carlisle at the start of November over three miles and two furlongs on good to soft ground. The horse is racing off a winnable mark with the rider's allowance and can win for the senior citizens of the sport. A win would not be the end and Harry The Viking could run as a teenager.

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

Phil "The Power" Taylor from Stoke has been champion of the world 16 times and is the best darts player in the history of the sport....or pub game. It's debatable whether throwing three small objects in the general direction of the board could be called a sport but I'm sure some oddball is trying to get darts to become an Olympic sport. Michael van Gerwen has taken getting three in the bed (three triple 20s) to a new level and he awaits Taylor in the final of the PDC World Championship if both players win their semi-finals matches today. The double on Taylor to beat Jamie Lewis and MVG to beat Rob Cross pays 2/5. The Dutchman is odds-on to win the tournament and prevent Taylor ending his career with a 17th world title.

There are six fixtures in the Premier League today starting at the traditional time of 3pm. In the olden days every fixture began at this time and it's a relatively recent concept of matches being played at times that suit the TV companies. Television money finances the sport and he who pays the piper calls the tune. In modern language that translates to Sky and BT pump a fortune into football so they can dictate when matches start and that is when they can attract most viewers. The live televised match today brings together Manchester United and Southampton at Old Trafford. The 1976 FA Cup Final involved these teams and racehorse trainer Mick Channon played for the Saints. UNITED can win this time at [4/11 with Ladbrokes](#).

There have been some strange results at Leopardstown this week which have caused shake-ups in several betting markets for races at the Cheltenham Festival in March. Sizing John ran too badly to be true in the staying chase and the main beneficiary is Might Bite in the Gold Cup. The impressive King George winner at Kempton on Boxing Day is now the favourite to win the most prestigious chase of the season. The horse is a best priced [4/1 with William Hill](#) to win the Gold Cup. The racing today is more about competitive handicaps than graded contests. The feature race is at Newbury where the Grade 1 Challow Novices' Hurdle provides the quality. Taylor first won the world darts championship WAY BACK THEN so a horse of that name would be an appropriate winner of this Newbury contest at [9/2 with Coral](#).

## **Declan's Eye-Catchers** - By Declan O'Donoghue

**ACTIVE FORCE** (Noel Meade) On an otherwise golden day for the popular Meath trainer this horse failed to live up to expectations at Leopardstown on Thursday in what was probably the hottest bumper so far this season. He'll make amends next time.

**BOOT CAMP** (Gordon Elliott) Snapped up by Gigginstown and Jessica Harrington was disappointed to lose him. Didn't set the world alight in last Tuesday's Leopardstown bumper which was his first run for Gordon Elliott. No surprise if he goes over hurdles straight away and he is reportedly ground versatile, always a big plus in Ireland.

**BURNING AMBITION** (Pierse Power) Boasts a formidable point to point record and looks an exciting recruit to the Hunters Chase circuit. Justified huge market confidence at Limerick, will need more racecourse experience in the meantime but won't be out of place at Cheltenham.

**MOUNT PELIER** (Alan Fleming) While unable to go the pace early on, he was finishing fast when second to smooth winner Carefully Selected in a bumper. Has already had a good spin over hurdles and is clearly useful but will need three miles to really shine.

**UCELLO CONTI** (Gordon Elliott) A stable outsider in the Paddy Power Chase he ran out of his skin to finish second of the 28 runners. The Aintree Grand National is the target.

**SUPASUNDAE** (Jessica Harrington) With his stable going through a barren patch - not least with Sizing John on the same day - this was a stand out performance and it was only the 7 lbs allowance that exceptional mare Apple's Jade received that cost him victory. Already a Cheltenham Festival winner, the Stayers Hurdle beckons.

**SYMPA DES FLOS** (Willie Mullins) Stepping up big time in trip proved the key for a horse who had previously a frustrating run of seconds, admittedly finishing runner up to some very useful types. But two miles and six at Limerick saw him really come into his own. Will be a good staying hurdler, but could be over fences sooner rather than later.

**[CLICK HERE For Declan's Irish Racing Service!](#)**