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

**Each Way Hits** 

Newcastle 18:15 - Encoded @ 66/1 Each Way Bet

**Footie Flutters** 

Lille v Strasbourg/Sheff Utd v Sheff Wed 1945 - Lille/Sheff Utd @ 3/4-1/2 Double

**Declan O'Donoghue - Irish Racing** 

Dundalk (A.W) 18:00 - Rayanma @ 4/5 Win Bet

# Footpad Can Put Down A Marker For The Season - By lan Hudson

The significant action in the context of the Cheltenham Festival this weekend is in Ireland and the star of the show is Footpad. There is a competitive handicap chase at Aintree on Saturday but Naas and Navan stage races that could have a bearing on the jumps meeting that matters most next March. Footpad won the Arkle at the festival last season and could graduate to being a leading contender in the Champion Chase at Cheltenham in the spring.

The National Hunt season is now in full swing and the turf Flat season ended last Saturday at Newmarket. From now until Christmas there is a major televised jumps race each Saturday as the best horses reappear after a summer break. Between now and the end of the year there are competitive handicap chases at Cheltenham and Newbury. The Ladbrokes Trophy, formerly the Hennessey Gold Cup, has historically provided pointers for the Grand National and Cheltenham Gold Cup.

There is a £1 million bonus up for grabs for any horse who can win the Betfair Chase at Haydock later this month, the King George at Kempton on Boxing Day and the Cheltenham Gold Cup. Kauto Star (2007) is the only horse to win the bonus so it takes a special steeplechaser to win the three most important staying chases in the same season. Might Bite has the versatility to win three Grade 1 chases on different types of track. Bristol De Mai and Native River could both win one of the three but Might Bite can act going right and left handed and on a flat and undulating track.

Footpad won the Arkle over two miles at Cheltenham in March. The horse was ridden off the pace by Ruby Walsh who made his move approaching the straight. The race was put to bed in a few strides and the manner of the win suggested that stamina would not be an issue. Footpad is prominent in the betting for the King George and speed will be important at Kempton over Christmas. Willie Mullins has never won the Gold Cup and this weekend will be informative about his leading contender.

Footpad is entered at Naas on Saturday and Navan the following day. The Naas race is a better opportunity but the horse won't be tested. The tougher assignment is at Navan in the Grade 2 Fortria Chase, which is run over two miles as is the option at Naas. At some point Mullins will step the horse up in trip and how he copes will determine the season-long target at Cheltenham. Mullins has another potential winner of the Fortria Chase in Great Field so the easier race is on the cards.

The Rewards4Racing Handicap Chase at Aintree on Saturday is a Class 2 contest over 2 miles, three furlongs and 200 yards. At the time of writing the final field was not known but 23 horses were still in the race ahead of the declarations. If Value At Risk is a runner the horse would be of interest. A run 13 days ago means fitness won't be an issue and many of the leading contenders have not run for more than

200 days. Value At Risk is a solid handicapper but Footpad is the best horse running in Britain and Ireland over the weekend.

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

### Wimbledon Can Win The Battle Of The Dog Tracks

It's a meeting of former dog tracks in the FA Cup tonight and the steel city derby. The live football is not from the Champions League or Premier League but there is a great deal at stake in the two fixtures. Haringey are at home to Wimbledon in the FA Cup first round and United welcome Wednesday to their Sheffield home in the Championship. The BBC choose a live match in the early rounds of the FA Cup with the potential for an upset but tonight the higher ranked team should progress to the next round. Wimbledon are second bottom in League One but should still be too good for the Isthmian Premier outfit. WIMBLEDON are 1/3 with **Paddy Power** to win in 90 minutes. Both teams have scored in Haringay's last eight matches.

The Sheffield derby might not be the most passionate in the world but in the Yorkshire city the two fixtures are the most important of the season. Local dust-ups don't always go to form but Wednesday are now on a losing run of four matches. The visitors are 17th in the Championship and a win for United would take them to the top of the table. Three of the last five meetings at Bramhall Lane have been draws but the home team have been inconsistent in recent matches. However, in this case the match should go to form which means three points for SHEFFIELD UNITED and that outcome is 8/15 with **bet365**.

There is also a cup match in rugby union this evening when Northampton visit Gloucester in the Premiership Cup. The away team were well beaten in the league fixture in Gloucester earlier this season but Northampton are going well in tonight's competition. Recent form from the academy league suggest Northampton have been underestimated by the bookmakers in this fixture. NORTHAMPTON +11 is the handicap bet at 10/11 with **Betfair**.

The most lucrative race of the day is the handicap over one mile at the All-Weather meeting at Dundalk (.8.00). The most likely favourite is King's Field but the weight the horse carries will make a win a tough ask. At the bottom of the weights PEDISNAP is competitive and the horse can be backed at 14/1.