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# BetFan

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

### StatMan

Win Bet - Doncaster 14:05 - Lady Buttons @ 13/8

### Deep Thought

Win Bet - Kelso 13:25 - Tayzar @ 4/1

### Declan O'Donoghue - Irish Racing

Win Bet - Limerick 14:10 - Defi Bleu @ 5/2

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

In a previous article we highlighted the dangers of ante post betting. One insurance against not getting a run is the non-runner/no bet rule which is introduced in the weeks leading up to the Cheltenham Festival. The concession begins with the four major championship and is then extended to every race at the jumps meeting that matters most. If the backed horse does not run in a specific race stakes are returned.

Normal ante post rules mean that if you back a horse before the day of a race and it does not run the bet stands. The upside of ante post betting is generally the odds on offer are bigger than on the day of the race. However, three seasons ago I backed 10 horses for races at the festival and only one took part when the meeting came round in March. Everything that could go wrong did go wrong with the ante post picks.

Bookmakers issue odds for races like the Champion Hurdle and Gold Cup in the days after the renewal in the previous year. The impressive novices appear in the markets but if a week is a long time in politics a year is a lifetime in jumps racing. Injuries, lack of form and race targets can all count against punters who back a horse to win a named race that is taking place up to a year in the future. The best time to play the ante post markets when NR/NB is introduced which is usually in February.

Samcro was just about the best novice hurdlers of 2017/18 season and won the novices' hurdle over two miles and five furlongs at the festival. The horse was immediately quoted for a number of races in the following season, both hurdle races and chases. Connections did not announce immediately if the horse was to stay in the hurdling division or be sent novice chasing. Ante post wagers for the Gold Cup were lost when it was decided that Samcro would be targeted at the Champion Hurdle.

Sizing John and One For Arthur won the Cheltenham Gold Cup and Grand National respectively in 2017. Both horses were young enough to win the same races the following season. They were quoted in ante post betting for the 2018 renewals of the Gold Cup and National but neither took part. By the time the non-runner/no bet concession was introduced both horse had been ruled out of their targets and did not have a chance to record back-to-back wins in the two biggest chases of the season.

On the Flat things are slightly different because the betting for the Classics does not take shape until the trials at the start of the season. Only horses aged three are eligible which means the winner one year cannot contest the same race a year later. There is some ante post betting on the all-age races at Royal

Ascot but horse are more likely to be retired to stud after a successful Classic season rather than race at four. The risk of racing is offset by stud values which makes retirement the best financial option.

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

### **Liverpool Can Win Huge Match**

If Liverpool can remain unbeaten against Arsenal at Anfield today and the crunch match at Manchester City on Thursday they are will be in a great position to be champions of England for the first time since 1990. They are unbeaten after 19 league fixtures and half way to emulating the Arsenal side that did not lose a league match in the 2003/04 season. The two meetings last season produced 10 goals but a one-nil win in the old Arsenal style would suffice for Liverpool today.

The last five corresponding fixtures have seen 24 goals so that outcome is unlikely but Liverpool can win this huge match. The Arsenal defence is depleted and the home side's front men are getting into gear. In what could be a huge match for their title aspirations LIVERPOOL are the team to back at 1/2 with **Ladbrokes**.

For the first time in a number of seasons the Glasgow Derby between Celtic and Rangers is a meaningful fixture in the context of the Scottish Premiership table. Rangers have recovered from demotion and are now contenders again for the title. Despite only being watched by 800 fans CELTIC are the team to back at Evens with **William Hill**.

It's the fourth and final day of the Leopardstown Festival and the highlight is the Ryanair Hurdle which could have a massive bearing on the betting for the Champion Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival in March. Samcro is being kept at two miles despite two setbacks this season and may be vulnerable to a specialist at the distance.

On collateral form with Buveur D'Air Melon should be the favourite to win this race. The horse was a close second to the winner in the Champion Hurdle last season who easily beat Samcro in the Fighting Fifth Hurdle at Newcastle. If MELON is in the type of form that he showed at Cheltenham in March the horse must be backed today at 5/2 with **Betfair** and a win would strengthen his claims for Cheltenham in March.

### **Trackside In Ireland** - By Declan O'Donoghue

By the third day of the Leopardstown Christmas shenanigans, the social wannabes, the holly and ivy drinkers, the "must get out of the house after Christmas" crew have melted away, and it's a real racing enthusiastic crowd

that thronged the Foxrock enclosures to enjoy the top class fare at the south Dublin track.

Fog in the UK causing air flight delays meant Noel Fehily was still stuck in traffic on the M50 and missed a winning ride in the opener, Barry Geraghty happily stepping in for Henry de Bromhead on Malinas Jack 8/1.

Barry was fortunate in more ways than one as Diol Ker 20/1 seemed home and hosed for Noel Meade but Sean Flanagan's mount lost his footing just after the last and had to settle for third place.

The Willie Mullins trained French import Elite Charboniere was sent off at a crackpot price of 4/6, and, tucked in just behind the leaders most of the way by Ruby Walsh, found nothing at the business end and finished ninth.

Given a routine veterinary check after the race at the request of the Stewards, Elite Charboniere was found to be "blowing hard post race." I should hope so!

De Bromhead was on target in the next too where Rachael Blackmore gave a masterclass on Cuneo 12/1 who was all out to hold 10/1 chance Walk To Freedom - who came from the next parish for Robbie Power - and 7/1 fancy Themistocles who had every chance and attracted plenty of overnight support.

The tempo moved up a few gears for the Ballymaloe Foods Beginners Chase where 3/1 fancy Gun Digger picked up the pieces for Gordon Elliott and Jack Kennedy after long time leader Borderline Chatho and the rapidly improving Bacardys both fell independently of each other at the last.

"We got lucky" Elliott admitted "but he's a good honest type who jumps nicely and could make into an Irish Grand National horse some day."

Elliott had much bigger fish to fry in the next when Apple's Jade gave another superlative display in the Squared Financial Christmas Hurdle. The 8/13 hot pot led from flag fall and probably had Faugheen well cooked when the latter took a terrible fall at the second last.

Big cheers from the stands when Faugheen finally got back on his feet while as ever Apple's Jade has all sorts of Cheltenham options.

She'll go for the Irish Champion Hurdle at the Dublin Festival back at Leopardstown first, and it would not surprise if the Sun Racing Stayers Hurdle was her ultimate Cheltenham target.

She certainly takes the three miles trip in her stride and could have her rivals chasing shadows from an early stage.

It hadn't been a great day for Willie Mullins - and defeats for hotpots Annamix and Stormy Ireland at Limerick hardly lightened the mood - but suddenly everything came up roses with a superb performance from Kemboy in the Savills Chase.

Sent to the front relatively early when David Mullins decided to inject some pace into the race the 8/1 shot fairly buried his rivals, including some Gold Cup hopefuls, when drawing way clear of the chasing pack going to the line.

The hugely supported Monalee 11/2 ran a respectable race in second with 9/4 jolly Road To Respect - who met some traffic problems - third and Bellshill - a stablemate of the winner - an eye catching fourth.

But really it was one way traffic, and Willie Mullins' initial thoughts of going straight for the Gold Cup looks an inspired idea.

That said, the 6/1 odds that Ladbrokes chalk up won't have me kicking their door down in the morning to get on.

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