

NTF Weekend Notes – 12th, 13th & 14th October

Friday

215 Newton Abbot – Class 2 | Intermediate Chase | 2m5f | Heavy | 5 ran

1st – BEGGARS WISHES

Now 3 from 3 off a break of 121+ days and 15114242111 (6/12) off a break of 31+ days, compared to 7426P4 (0/6) off breaks of 30 days or less, so he certainly seems best to catch when fresh.

2nd - DOLOS

Not sure he's really as effective on testing ground as he's now 0/4, 2p on Soft & Heavy compared to 3/11, 5p on G/S & Good. Hard to fit him in the wider picture at present in all fairness and he's maybe more flexible than I give him credit for.

3rd – LE ROCHER

Finished a fast finishing 3rd after dropping right out of things at half-way. He will come on a bundle for the effort and he seems to peak in the December to January period, months where he has form figures of 1211111 (6/7), after this effort he is 0/7 in all other months. He'll surely prove best in handicaps and a small drop in the weights from his current mark of OR 144 wouldn't go amiss prior to his peak months.

4th – BENATAR

Way too free in the early to middle part of the race and he paid for those exertions in the latter part of the contest. Personally, I wouldn't be too fussed by the effort as there is every chance he will come on a ton for the outing and will now be bang ready to peak in his prime months of November through to January, where he is an unbeaten 4 from 4 (he's now 0/5 in other months). For me he's still a horse of plenty interest and hopefully today's effort will have put a few people off him.

5th - ROCKLANDER

Another that is likely to be seen to best effect in the coming months, with all his winning form coming in the Nov-Dec period (3311142U1 (4/9) – 22035F2P325 (0/11) in other months). He'll hopefully get dropped a few pounds for this as I doubt OR 145 is a winnable mark for him.

250 Newton Abbot – Class 2 | Handicap Hurdle | 3m2.5f | Heavy | 8 ran

3rd – CLONDAW CIAN

A solid effort and this should have sharpened him up for his prime month, November, where he has form figures of 11132 (3/5, 1p – all 3 career wins). He's also yet to win above Class 3 level (3/10, 3p C3 level & below compared to 0/9, 1p at C2 level+) so a small drop in class would be a wise idea.

5th – WICKED WILLY

Conditions were unlikely to suit the 7yo here and he'll be seen to better effect under the following... 2m4f-2m7.5f | RH | Hcps = 112113 (4/6, 2p - All 4 wins). He might need to drop a few pounds under both codes to get competitive again although I'm relatively open on that score.

325 Newton Abbot – Class 3 | Novices' Chase | 2m0.5f | Heavy | 3 ran

1st – MARIA'S BENEFIT

A solid effort from this reliable front-runner and she jumped soundly enough in the testing conditions on chase debut. She was rated 143 over hurdles but could well climb higher over fences, especially in races where she gets an easy lead as she's now 6 from 6 in fields of 9 or less.

2nd – MONT DES AVALOIRS

I expected a bit of a better effort from this 5yo now switched to fences but he still appeared a bit gangly and didn't jump quite as well as I thought he may. Still early days of course but he may just need this season to fill into his frame a bit more.

3rd – FLYING TIGER

He was all over the shop here, in many ways, and needs to improve his technique on the jumping front. In fairness to the horse the Nick Williams horses do seem to be running a bit flat at present, so they are all maybe just needing an outing or two to sharpen them up all blow off the summer cobwebs.

510 Newton Abbot – Class 5 | Bumper | 2m1f | Heavy | 6 ran

1st – HOLD THE NOTE

Not so much the horse I'm interested in here, albeit he could turn out to be decent enough, but more the record of the Channon horses in bumpers, especially under the following...Bumpers | C3 level & below | 13 or less runners...which returns the following...12/40 | 30% S/R | +£49.36 BFLSP – W&P 23/40 | 58% S/R – 40% above expectation. Worth keeping on the radar.

450 Downpatrick – Beginners Chase | 2m3f | Soft | 9 ran

1st – MOONBALL

Fairly bombed along on the front-end here and easily put in a lifetime best effort in victory, on what was her first start at further than 2m1f (this was 2m3f). She could be interesting to follow with the 4yo and female allowances on her side. Hopefully they keep front-runner with her as she really seemed to enjoy herself at the head of the pack. She did, however, win on heavy as a novice hurdler so deep ground maybe isn't completely out of the question.

Saturday

215 – Hexham – Class 4 | Novices' Limited Handicap Chase | 2m4f | Soft | 10 ran

Fell – HEART OF KERNOW

I'd noted this lad last season as an exciting future chase prospect, so I was pleased to see him take to the fences well here on debut and he was still to be asked any serious question when departing 3 out. He still rates as an exciting prospect, especially when the ground is riding on the testing side and the fall aside there was plenty to like about this debut chase run.

250 – Hexham – Class 4 | Novices' Hurdle | 2m0.5f | Soft | 13 ran

1st – SIMPLY THE BETTS

Travelled like the class horse he is and it was almost certainly the testing conditions that resulted in him not putting the race to bed in quite as convincing a manner as it looked he was going to. Hopefully this win doesn't affect his handicap mark any (it really shouldn't) as connections clearly have a very well-handicapped horse on their hands at present (won this off OR 130) and they must now have some valuable handicap targets on the radar.

325 – Hexham – Class 4 | Handicap Chase | 3m 0.5f | Soft | 8 ran

2nd – FRANK THE SLINK

I wasn't sure if he still had the speed or enthusiasm to lead a field along from the front for any length of time these days but there was plenty to like about this effort and he could well pick up a similar type of race somewhere when he's given an easy lead. He's a low class animal so he needs plenty in his favour and I'd have the following conditions as his prime... Hcp Chase | 2m5f - 3m2f | OR 109 & below | C4 & below (<6k) | G/S or softer | DSLR 75 or less | Field of 11 or less | Carrying 11-01 or less = 27133111 (4/8, 1p - all 4 career wins)...so just a few!

PU – CLASSICAL MILANO

Ground disappeared away from him here as he seems to need it Good (2/8, 2p on Good – 0/4, 0p on softer) and he was struggling on the testing ground from some way out. Easy to put a line through this effort.

4.35 – Hexham – Class 5 | Handicap Chase | 1m 7.5f | Soft | 6 ran

3rd – JOHN WILLIAMS

A decent effort but I think he probably just needs a small drop in the weights before he's competitive again (ran here off OR 102). I'd be looking at prime conditions of... Chase Hcps | 2m4f & below | Field of 11 or less | OR 97 & below = 11P312 (3/6, 2p - All 3 wins). He maybe doesn't need to get right back to OR 97 but sub-100 would certainly help.

155 - Chepstow – Class 4 | Novices' Hurdle | 2m | Good | 9 ran

1st - PYM

I've liked this horse since the day he won at Ayr on bumper debut and assumed he'd go hurdling last season, but they've clearly protected him a little and given him time to come to himself (he stayed bumper-ing last term). He looked nice and professional here on hurdle debut and I'd expect him to kick on plenty for this run and it's not hard to see him making into a good enough animal to be running in all the end of season festivals. He's got a strong jumping pedigree (by Stowaway out of a Bob Back mare, who is a half-sister to Liss A Paoraigh) and I expect him to turn out to be a top-class hurdler and then chaser, he should have graded races in him.

335 - Chepstow – Listed | Novices' Chase | 2m3.5f | Good | 4 ran

1st - SPIRITOTHEGAMES

I'm glad the extra season hurdling last term doesn't seem to have hindered him jumping fences and there was plenty to like about this debut effort, jumping well in the main and travelling smoothly throughout. He's definitely best off a break (1111 of a break of 61+ days compared to 437225 off breaks of 60 or less) so that might just limit his appearances on the track as Skelton seems aware of the trend and probably won't rush him.

2nd – MONBEG LEGEND

Didn't do much wrong here and probably just bumped into better horse (Spiritofthegames). He may also be best over slightly further as all his wins have come at 2m4f+ and he may be a bit of a summer lover as he's 6/7 in May-Sept compared to 0/3 in other months. Far from damning evidence there but I do just wonder if he'll be susceptible to the better winter horses.

FELL – MASTER TOMMYTUCKER

Seemed to jump for fun until his mistake 4 out and was possibly unlucky not to be fighting out the finish of this. He was possibly a shade free, however, so he maybe needed the run to knock the freshness out of him anyway. He could prove to be a decent recruit to the chasing game and he's exceedingly lightly raced for a 7yo (only his 3rd career start) so it's hard to know exactly how good he could be.

PU – POETIC RHYTHM

Really needs to improve his jumping and I'm already wondering if he's one of those that may suffer for spending a season too many over hurdles (had 2 seasons over timber). I'd need to see plenty more from him next time out to think he'll have any chance of making an impact over fences.

410 - Chepstow – Class 2 | 4yo Limited Handicap | 2m | Good | 8 ran

7th - MERCENAIRE

I doubt this Good ground would have been anywhere near what he was after and I'd like to think he'll prove plenty better than this when the ground becomes deeper in the winter.

520 - Chepstow – Class 2 | Handicap Chase | 2m7.5f | Good | 12 ran

1st – THE YOUNG MASTER

Was always likely to take advantage of his well-handicapped nature but predicting exactly when that was going to be was always going to be tough. Saying that these were his prime conditions... NH | 2m6.5f-3m4.5f | G3 & below | OR 148 & below | CPs = 16P3U11111111 (9/13 - All 9 wins)...only problem was that he had disappointed under these prime conditions the previous 4 times he raced on them. He was 18lbs below his highest win mark here so there is wiggle room on the ratings although it's hard to say whether or not he could follow up this effort in coming starts.

2nd – TRAFFIC FLUIDE

He was 0/6 over 2m5f+ prior to this so there were signs he possibly didn't really stay but this effort suggests otherwise, and his race conditions/options have opened up somewhat off the back of this effort. He's now 0/8 off a break of 31 days+ so he should come on for the run (he's 4/11, 3p off breaks of 30 days or less) and he may yet have room for manoeuvre off his current mark of OR 147, given he was rated OR 162 in his prime.

3rd – BRAVE EAGLE

Fairly chucked in at the deep end here on only his 3rd chase start but he coped well enough with the rise in class and is well worth following going forward. Hard to pin down to conditions at present but from a pure handicapping angle his mark of OR 144 looks more than fair.

5th – OUR KAEMPFER

Tanked through the race but didn't find enough after the last to lay down a serious challenge. He's at his absolute best in fields of 10 or less (4/15, 3p compared to 0/13, 3p in fields of 11+) so a less competitive field (with regards to numbers) wouldn't be a bad idea. I'd have prime conditions as... C2 & below | OR 138 & below | G/S+ | Field of 10 or less = 4/10, 2p - all 4 career wins...he's handicapped to win at present.

6th – ROCK THE KASBAH

Surprised by the strength in the market behind him here (started as a well-backed 2/1 fav) as he's 0/7 off marks of OR 146+ (ran here off OR 147) and he looks like he needs a little help from the handicapper before getting fully competitive again.

8th – COO STAR SIVOLA

Generally needs his first run (0/4 off a break of 121+ days) and his winning form to date has come in the Jan-March period (4/9, 3p compared to 0/7, 2p in other months) so we may not see him get competitive again until the turn of the year. With that in mind it was no surprise to see him fade down the home-straight here.

10th – SILVERHOW

A disappointing effort but with hindsight he maybe did need the run (0/5 off a 91+ day break compared to 4/12 off shorter breaks) so he should strip fitter for the run. It may also be that he's 'just' a spring horse as he is 4/8 in Feb-April compared to 0/9 in all other months. I'd hoped he would be more than just that, and he may still turn out to be, but it is something that's worth bearing in mind.

11th – BIGBADJOHN

Seems to need smaller fields as he is 121312171 (5/9) in fields of 9 or less (0/10, 0p in fields of 10+).

Sunday

250 – Chepstow – Class 3 | Novices' Chase | 2m7.5f | Good to Soft | 9 ran

1st – DRINKS INTERVAL

Looks like a fluent front-runner to keep on the radar going forward although all 5 of her wins have come in the July-Oct period and she's 0/4 in the Nov-Dec period, so no guarantee she'll be quite as effective as we reach deep into the winter months.

2nd - DEBECE

Always looked like one that would make into a chaser so it's good to see him finally head down this route after an injury kept him off for a year after his novice hurdle campaign. Plenty to like about the effort here and he was well clear of the 3rd, with only the race fit and more experience (over fences) front-running winner proving too good for him.

5th – ENNISCOFFEY OSCAR

Jumping to his right is certainly a worry going forward, especially as his previous 3 wins had come left-handed and he's 0/3 RH. He'll be better as we reach into the winter though as he's 3111 (3/4, 1p) in the Nov-Feb period compared to 0295475 (0/7) in all other months.

325 – Chepstow – Grade 2 | Novices' Hurdle | 2m3.5f | Good to Soft | 8 ran

2nd – DOUBLE TREASURE

Finished well clear of the remainder (20L back to third) and hopefully they go back over fences with him at some stage soon. He's probably best on Good (5/7, 1p – 5 of his career wins) but he handles Good to Soft well enough (2512 – 1/4, 2p) and as long as they avoid Soft (60677 – 0/5) he should be OK. The handicapper has been pretty generous off his last two chase starts, dropping him from OR 150 to OR 142 and that looks a much more feasible mark to try him in some of the better handicaps. Whether he proves up to the task is another matter but OR 142 at least gives him a fighting chance.

400 – Chepstow – Class 2 | Veterans Handicap Chase | 2m7.5f | Good to Soft | 13 ran

1st – KINGS LAD

I like veterans' chases but if a horse is ever going to go against its preferred race conditions it's most likely to be in these races!! Pre-race I had the following as prime conditions for this boy... C3 & below | OR 138 & below | NOT LH tracks = 6/10, 1p - all 6 career wins... this was Class 2 and Left-handed!! Enough said!

3rd – CAROLES DESTRIER (*one to follow)

A decent effort on seasonal debut and he'll come on for the outing. I'd have prime conditions as the following... Listed level & below | DSLR 45 or less | 2m5f+ = P111P1171F (6/10 - all 6 career wins) if you add in only flat & slightly undulating tracks you get P11111 (5/6). His current mark of OR 136 looks very winnable, given his last win was off OR 146 and he almost won a Hennessey off OR 148, maybe these veteran's chases will be what he needs to revitalise him although given he ran 5th in last season's Bet365 Gold Cup he could well score out with the oldie's races.

4th – BEAT THAT

Did remarkably well to finish as close as he did after making a complete bollocks of 4 from home, De Boinville being lucky to even stay in the plate. I reckon De Boinville possibly had him a bit too far back in this in all truth, but he was creeping closer when he made the mistake. You'd think/hope OR 140 is within range for him and he is still lightly raced over fences for a 10yo, this being only his 7th chase start.

6th – BISHOPS ROAD

Will enter the winter months on what should be a winnable mark (ran here off OR 142 but should go down a pound or two for the run) and I'd have prime conditions for him as... Soft/Heavy | OR 144 or below | G3 level & below = P21112611 (5/9, 2p - all 5 career wins).

435 – Chepstow – Class 2 | Handicap Hurdle | 2m | Good to Soft | 5 ran

1st - BALLYMOY

Has improved hand over fist for the wind-op he had last November and has now won his last 4 starts. I'd like to see him go chasing sooner rather than later but I couldn't blame them for keeping him hurdling either. An exciting prospect.

510 – Chepstow – Class 2 | Handicap Chase | 2m3.5f | Good to Soft | 9 ran

1st - CHARBEL

Never that easy to win a handicap off marks in the mid-150+ range (OR 154 here) but he dug in well here to secure his first win since a Beginners Chase victory in October 2016. I've always had my doubts about him as a Graded operator and this win now takes his record at Listed level & below to 13112111 (6/8, 1p - all 6 career wins) compared to 0/10, 1p at G2 level+. This win will probably put him up to a mark where he'll struggle in handicaps and they may be forced to re-enter the Graded races, where I wouldn't be overly keen on him at all.

2nd – BARON ALCO

A huge effort on his first run for 577 days and he's now 1321 off a break of 121+ days. He'll get put up for this effort, but he may have a bit to work with anyway so as long as he doesn't get hammered by the handicapper he should still prove of interest. Also worth noting he's an unbeaten 3 from 3 in November and all 6 of his wins have come in the Oct-Jan period (132111341221 – 6/11).

5th – BARNEY DWAN

Should come on for the run as he's now 0/4, 0p off a break of 121+ days. I'd have prime conditions for him as... G/S & softer | DSLR 60 or less | carrying 11-08 & below = 4114B1113 (5/9, 2p – all 5 career wins).

7th – ART MAURESQUE

Softening ground will have been against him here and I'd have prime conditions for him as... Good or quicker | C2 or below = 111111 (6/6 - all 6 career wins)...he just doesn't get them very often.

8th – BALLYHILL

Always needs a run after a break as he's now 0/9 off a break of 31+ days. I'd have prime conditions for him as... 2m0.5f+ | 9 or less runners | DSLR 30 or less = 1F511 (3/5 – All 3 career wins).