

# **NTF National Hunt 2019/20 'To Follow' List**



*An alternative 20 to keep in mind for the  
2019/20 NH Season*

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# NTF 2019/20 'To Follow' List

*An Alternative group of National Hunt runners to keep in mind this season...*

This 'to follow' list aims to be different from most of the others you will read this season. In this guide there is no room for a **Henderson, Nicholls, Mullins or Elliott** runner. I wanted this list to consist of runners that may just have slipped under the radar a bit over the last season or two. I could easily have filled the list with potential superstars from the big four yards, I probably would have been highlighting a few Cheltenham Festival winners in the process, but the facts are I'll be covering most of those types of animals by default when I run my [full National Hunt service](#), the big yards will have runners in all the top races and we will get to know their 'stars' at close quarters through my **NTF race analysis guides** and **exclusive weekend notes**.

My aim for this list was to exclude runners from the four 'superpowers' and try and find a bit of value elsewhere. Obviously looking for value in a list of horses to follow before the season has begun is a pretty tricky thing to do but, hopefully, I have managed to pull together a list that includes at least some runners that have slipped under the radar of the mainstream.

The runners in this guide WILL win races. Will they win races at The Cheltenham or Aintree Festivals? Possibly not but, like the runners from the main four NH yards, all things Cheltenham & Aintree will be covered in-depth in the **full NTF National Hunt service** and besides, there is so much more to the Jumps season than just the Cheltenham & Aintree Festivals, we jumping fans would do well to remember this!

As is the case with all NTF guides the info contained here is available for you to utilise for your own punting activities how you see fit. I have tried to include each horse's ideal conditions but most of these are young improvers and any race trends or preferences may not have revealed themselves yet.

All horses on this list went in my notebook for one reason or another last term and I exhaustively reviewed their runs over the summer & autumn months as I pulled this FREE NTF Guide together.

**Happy National Hunt Punting**

**Ben (NTF) – [www.narrowingthefield.co.uk](http://www.narrowingthefield.co.uk)**

## **SHANTOU EXPRESS (K Bailey) 4yo**

### **Career form 2-**

The Shantou gelding was only seen on the racetrack once last season, running an eye-catching race over 2-miles at Ludlow in March. He was giving 7lbs to the winner that day, a Nicky Henderson mare who boosted the form next time out with a close second at Class 2 level.

Given the fact he is still only a 4yo they may well decide to stick to bumpers for another season although personally I'd like to see hurdles on the agenda sooner rather than later, he looks the type to step on a good few gears with obstacles in front of him.

Trainer Kim Bailey had the following to say about the promising youngster on his website...

***"The only four-year-old which we ran last season and at the time we were slightly disappointed that he was beaten. However, the race worked out exceptionally well with the winner going on to be second at Cheltenham and the third horse winning its next three starts in bumpers. He has come back looking well and a lot more relaxed, we expect him to win his bumper before deciding whether to stick down that route for the season or go novice hurdling."***

### **Ideal Conditions**

*2m - 2m5f Novice Hurdles*

## **NOW IS THE WINTER (B PAULING) 5yo**

### **Career form 1-**

Another once raced bumper performer, with the 5yo Fame And Glory gelding winning his only outing with a determined effort off the front end at Stratford in March.

A couple of winners have already emerged from that contest, so the form looks sound, and it's also worth noting that the race was around five-seconds quicker than division one of the contest run half an hour previous.

Pauling has a strong record with his 4yo-5yo male hurdlers on their first or second hurdling start (30/117 | 26% S/R | +£198.42 BFLSP – W&P 53/117 | 45% S/R – since 2015) so it would be no surprise to see this youngster start his hurdling career with a bang and he's an exciting prospect for the season ahead.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m-2m5f Novice Hurdles*

## **LOSSIEMOUTH (T Lacey) 4yo**

### **Career form** U11-

This 4yo made up for a less than ideal racecourse debut run at Huntingdon in November (ran out when laying down a challenge inside the final 2-furlongs) by firing in two eye-catching victories at Newcastle & Carlisle.

The form of both those victories have been working out well to date, with the Newcastle form working out particularly well (field have won eleven races between them as of 30-09-19, the runner-up alone winning six and placing on a further three from nine starts).

Tom Lacey rates him as a 'very, very exciting horse' and also reports him to have 'schooled very well' during the off season.

He could become a real star for the Lacey yard, and it would be no surprise to see him contesting graded race at some stage of the season.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Hurdles*

## **FLOATING ROCK (T Lacey) 4yo**

### **Career form 1-**

Another 4yo for the Lacey yard, this one only making the track once last season when winning at Catterick in February.

The form of that race has been working out well so far, with three of the beaten horse recording two victories each, five of those victories coming at a higher level.

In a brief conversation with trainer Tom Lacey he told me the following regarding Floating Rock...

***“He will go over hurdles in mid-October. He has summered well and has been schooling beautifully”***

He showed a pleasing battling attitude to secure his victory at Catterick and that type of determined mindset is always pleasing to see in a youngster, an attitude that will stand him in good stead when he heads over timber.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m-2m5f Novice Hurdles*

## **MORODER (J Mullins) 5yo**

### **Career form 21-**

We may not see the absolute best of this Morozov youngster until he goes chasing but he should be up to picking of a hurdle race or two in his novice season over timber.

His two bumper starts last season yielded a second at Plumpton and then a neck victory at Uttoxeter, with the form of the Plumpton run in particular working out well in the proceeding months.

The Uttoxeter victory came in testing conditions (heavy ground in driving rain) and he had to dig deep to fend off a persistent challenger down the home-straight but he always looked to be holding off the runner-up, in the manner of one with plenty stamina up his sleeve.

3m+ chases may ultimately end up being his game, but he should be up competitive over shorter trips this season, especially when there is plenty cut under foot.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Hurdles*

## **FITZROY (O Murphy) 5yo**

### **Career form 52-**

This 5yo son of Fame And Glory ran a close second behind fellow list member Now Is The Winter at Stratford in March, only going down by 0.5L at the line. He pulled hard in the early stages so the fact he was still in their pitching come the death tells you plenty about the potential ability he holds.

He was only fifth on his racecourse debut at Warwick in December, but he was staying on strongly at the end as the penny begun to drop and there was plenty to like about the effort. That race has produced winners since so it's likely it was an above average contest for the grade.

What really catches my eye about this one is his pedigree. He's from the family of War of Attrition & Presenting Percy and long-term I'd expect him to really shine when he heads over fences, although there was enough in his starts last season to suggest he's more than capable of picking up races over hurdles.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Hurdles*

## **IMPERIAL ALCAZAR (F O'Brien) 5yo**

**Career form** 423-

Despite not managing to find the winners enclosure in his three bumpers last season this Vinnie Roe youngster showed a strong performance level on each start and his form stacks up very well, particularly his second at Ascot in December. He had graded performers comfortably behind him that day and the race has, to date, fired out seven winning performances and five placed efforts, included the winner of the Grade two mares bumper at Aintree.

He's every inch a chaser of the future but it would be a shock if he wasn't to pick up hurdle victories on the way, particularly when stepping up in trip.

I had a chat about Imperial Alcazar with Ian Robinson (one of the main men behind the Imperial Racing syndicate) and this is what he had to say about the 5yo...

***“Imperial Alcazar has a lot of ability but was immature both physically and mentally last season. For that reason we limited him to three runs in bumpers where he improved with every run. His form stacks up well having finished a length clear of The Glancing Queen (winner of the Aintree Mares Bumper) in a listed bumper at Ascot. He will be at his best on soft ground over an extended trip and anything he achieves over hurdles will be a bonus as he is very much a chaser in the making. He may start in the bumper at the Cheltenham October meeting if we get soft ground, if not he will go jumping and step up in trip. He will hopefully be contesting some of the better hurdle races this season.”***

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Hurdles*

## **ONLY MONEY (C Gordon) 5yo**

**Career form** 461-

Only Money showed steady improvement throughout his bumper season last term, culminating with a convincing victory at Fontwell in March, where he pulled clear of his rivals in the final furlong to win from a next time out winner by almost three lengths.

All three of the bumpers he ran in have produced winners and the experienced he gained from those starts will stand him in good stead for a season hurdling.

Having watched him school I suspect he's another of those that will really come into himself when sent chasing but if he can translate the neatness he shows in the schooling ring at home to the racecourse then he'll definitely be picking off a few hurdle victories in his novice season.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m Novice Hurdles*

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NTF is continually progressing to stay ahead of the game. The NTF Unexposed Handicap Chasers angle was first included in the service last season, producing +£54.22 profit to Belfair SP, and I'll be looking to capitalize on the angle again this season, highlighting the qualifiers exclusively to full NTF members. The full NTF National Hunt package will be available at an EXCLUSIVE discounted rate to previous members and members of the NTF FREE list. Doors open mid-October...

**Make sure YOU don't miss out!**

Narrowing The Field

## **SAINT DE VASSY (T Symonds) 6yo**

**Career form** 4/3232-

This 6yo caught my eye on a number of occasions last season, particularly on his final start at Exeter in March when he couldn't quite get the better of the Philip Hobbs trained Dolphin Square, with a yawning 23l+ back to the remainder of the field.

A couple of his starts have come on very-undulating tracks and the figures for Saint Des Saints offspring do suggest they are at their best away from such testing tracks, so a switch to chasing and easier courses should see the youngster find his way to the winners enclosure this season.

Tom Symonds was kind enough to provide the following information and thoughts about his charge...

***“Regarding SAINT DE VASSY, the plan is to start him off over fences if the weather allows us to get the necessary schooling into him. The plan is fences even if he were to start over hurdles. He pleased us with every start last season but mainly in the way he gradually started to settle as he could always get rather keen early on. He probably thinks he is faster than he is! His optimum trip would be 3-miles although we are likely to begin at 2m4f.***

***Fingers crossed we are lucky with him as he has always showed us good potential.”***

There is definitely plenty of talent within this horse and it would be disappointing should chasing not unlock that potential.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Chases | Away from Very Undulating tracks | Possibly will be at best in single figure fields*

## **IMPERIAL AURA (K Bailey) 6yo**

**Career form** 31/11-

Whilst this youngster has been visually impressive on his last three starts (one bumper victory and two hurdle victories) it's the form of his Carlisle victory on hurdle debut that really impressed me.

He beat Irish raider Sole Pretender by 3.25L that day, a horse that went on to win its next three hurdles starts before finishing an excellent 5<sup>th</sup> in the Galway Hurdle, seeing his rating rise to a rather fetching OR 148 in the process. Imperial Aura starts this season on OR 133 and that's nothing if not a stand-out mark to go to war with.

If you also consider the fact that the third horse in that Carlisle Novice contest, who was 23L behind Imperial Aura at the line, went on to win twice and place once from five subsequent starts, you start to see just how good that piece of form could be.

Again, I spoke to Ian Robinson (from Imperial Racing syndicate) regarding plans for the 6yo and he told me...

***“His first target is the Tote Silver Trophy (Handicap Hurdle at Chepstow) before embarking on a Novice Chase career”***

He definitely looks a chaser in the making but it would be foolish not to first try and take advantage of that Hurdle Handicap mark he starts the season on, he could have anywhere north of 10lbs in hand and it makes sense to take a dart at a valuable pot before heading over fences.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f/5f Novice Chases*

## **PHOENIX WAY (H Fry) 6yo**

**Career form** 521 -

This JP McManus gelding could be something special when he switches attention to the chasing game.

Prior to being purchased by JP McManus the horse won his point-to-point by a very easy 12 lengths, so the scope to go chasing has been there from an early age.

Like Imperial Aura, however, it may be wise of connections to try and snaffle a handicap pot somewhere before taking the move to fences, given he starts the 2019/20 season on a very attractive mark (OR 133).

The form of all three of his hurdle races has worked out extremely well to date but it's his second at Sandown in December, behind the Nicky Henderson trained I Can't Explain, that really catches the eye. That race has produced 13 winning performances to date and five further placed efforts from 30 subsequent runs (with only two of the ten runners failing to score since) and looks like one of the hottest Novice races run last season away from the festivals.

In fairness the form of his other two hurdle runs should also be noted, with the Bangor Maiden he ran in producing 14 winning efforts to date and his Plumpton victory producing ten subsequent winning efforts. Basically, the form of all three of his hurdle starts have been backed up multiple times and simply cannot be knocked.

He's an exciting prospect whatever route they take this season.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Chases/Handicap Hurdles*

## **HOLD THE NOTE (M Channon) 5yo**

**Career form** 14312-

This 5yo looks to have the size and scope to jump a fence and the shape he made at his hurdles did suggest chasing will bring about improvement from him (for all he'll need to respect his fences more than he did his hurdles).

He rarely ran a poor race last season, winning a Bumper and a Novice Hurdle in his five races, but there was still a sense of him 'learning his trade' and he's the type that is likely to have improved for another summer on his back.

He's always been held in high regard by his trainer and a step up to 3 miles and fences looks likely to bring about plenty of improvement.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m5f+ Novice Chases*

## **MINT GOLD (L Russell) 5yo**

**Career form** 3667133-

A neat and efficient jumper of his hurdlers and if he's able to transfer that technique to fences he should go on to bigger and better things over the larger obstacles.

He had an outing at Perth on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September over hurdles, a run that should have blown away the summer cobwebs, and attentions will now hopefully turn to chasing, with a longer trip also likely to be on the agenda.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Chases*

## **ESPOIR DE GUYE (V Williams) 5yo**

**Career form** 5172-

After an inconspicuous UK debut effort at Hereford in November (7<sup>th</sup> of 13, beaten 61L) his trainer, Venetia Williams, sent him for a wind-op. His next start came 102 days later where he chased home an odds-on Dan Skelton shot over 2-miles at Warwick, with the rest of the field strung out in-behind, a run that was a major improvement on his Hereford effort and much closer to the form he showed in France.

He's a typical Venetia type who is likely to go on to bigger and better things when faced with fences but given his relatively lowly mark of OR 120 over timber there must be the temptation to find a hurdle pot to gun for before switching to the chasing game.

He should handle longer trips (2m4f+) than what he faced over hurdles and with his sire's offspring generally revelling in testing conditions he looks the ideal type for Venetia to get a run of victories into during the winter before the handicapper catches up with him and the ground starts to try out in the spring.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Handicap Chases/Hurdles*

## **CAPTAIN MOIRETTE (S Smith) 7yo**

**Career form** 334//4118-

This 7yo picked up an injury that kept him off the track for 1000 days between his final bumper start and his debut effort over Hurdles last season but he showed he's suffering no ill effects of that enforced break by winning his next two hurdle starts and running a sound enough race on his final start of the season, in the G2 Scottish Champion Hurdle at Ayr.

Chasing will, ultimately, be his game and connections are unlikely to waste any more time over the smaller obstacles and will be looking to get him chasing sooner rather than later.

He looks a typical Sue Smith chasing type and he should pick up a couple of minor events on the north circuit before sights are raised in the spring.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m – 2m5f Novice Chases*

## **MINELLA WARRIOR (K Bailey) 7yo**

**Career form** 82//11421-

This 7yo first entered my notebook when he ran second in a bumper at Wetherby in March of 2017 behind the classy Kalashnikov.

Since then he's had a bit of a stop-start career and plenty of gaps between his races but connections did, thankfully, manage to get five starts into him last season, resulting in three wins, a close second at C2 level & a fourth at Grade 2 level, showing that he still retained all the ability he hinted at in his bumpers.

His pedigree screams 'Chaser' (he's by King's Theatre out of a Bob Back mare) and I'd expect his progression to continue over the larger obstacles this season.

This is what trainer Kim Bailey had to say about the horse on his website...

***"A very smart point-to-point winner who is lacking experience for a seven-year-old. We decided to spend the winter over hurdles, which turned out to be a very good decision, as he carried a penalty to success at Uttoxeter in September. He had a problem with his wind when well beaten in a Graded race at Chepstow, and after having a small operation, he returned with a good second in a Pertemps Qualifier at Huntingdon. Unfortunately, he was balloted out of the final at The Festival, for which he was well fancied, he went up to Wetherby and won a good 3m handicap under top weight in good style. He will head over fences this winter and although it has been a long time coming, we hope he will be worth the wait and take high rank amongst the novice chasers."***

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m5f+ Novice Chases*

## **RETURN TICKET (R Jefferson) 6yo**

**Career form** 31/1612-

This 6yo won in eye-catching fashion on his third hurdling start at Musselburgh in November and was unlucky not to back that up on his next start at Newcastle in March, losing out by a short-head at the line to a horse he was giving a stone and a half to and one that went on to win its next two starts.

All four hurdle races he contested last season have produced plenty of next time out winners and he's only really disappointed once in six career starts to date, when running 6th of 12 at Carlisle last October, albeit he's likely to have needed that run (first start for 164 days) and the race has turned out to be a solid piece of form (first four home have won 8 races between them since).

Trainer Ruth Jefferson told me the following...

***“He’s summered well. He has an entry at Perth over fences Thursday (26<sup>th</sup> September) but he’s not sure to run as we are struggling to school at home (due to dry weather). His last couple races have worked out well which is good as the Olly Murphy horse he beat at Ayr didn’t go on as expected. The plan is 2m - 2m4f Novice chases. Obviously, he likes better ground, so fingers crossed he gets a few runs in before a mid-winter break and a spring campaign.”***

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m-2m4f Novice Chases*

## **STONEY MOUNTAIN (H Daly) 6yo**

**Career form** 5101/12123P-

This 6yo has run at the last two Cheltenham Festivals (Champion Bumper & Albert Bartlett) and although he finished well-beaten in both it's the only two times he's disappointed in his ten-race career to date.

I'd be surprised if he's a G1 animal anyway but he's certainly an above average performer and he should make his presence felt this season over fences. The experience he's gained in the graded races he's contested won't be wasted either.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m5f+ Novice Chases*

## **THE WOLF (W Greatrex) 5yo**

**Career form** 437343-

Despite the 5yo still being a maiden after six career starts there was enough in his runs last season to suggest he's one that just needed a bit of time to come to himself, something that trainer Warren Greatrex commented on a few times last season.

I thought he ran a lot better than the bare form of his 4<sup>th</sup> suggests in the Grade 2 Novice at Cheltenham's January meeting, and in the Class 3 he contested at Newbury on his final start, and he strikes me as one with plenty more ability in him than he's shown so far.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m5f+ Novice Chases/Handicap Hurdles*

## **SOUTHERN SAM (O Sherwood) 5yo**

Career form 23251-

Chasing was always going to be this lads game so it was pleasing to see him put up some noteworthy efforts over the smaller obstacles last season.

His fifth in the European Breeders' Fund Novices' Handicap Hurdle at Sandown in March was probably his stand-out effort, a race that has a long tradition of producing top class staying chasers of the future.

Despite doing little wrong in his novice hurdle career it's this season over fences where I really expect him to shine, especially when running over staying trips on galloping tracks.

### **Ideal Conditions**

*2m5f+ Novice Chases | Possibly best on galloping tracks*

## Closing notes...

Hopefully you find the info in this FREE NTF guide enjoyable and are able to make use of the material included within. The aim of this guide is to pinpoint a group of horses that are slightly out with the mainstream and will improve for going Novice Hurdling or Novice Chaser, or for a couple of them going down the handicap route. The traits & preferences of the runners in this list will become more apparent as the season develops and I will be looking to update it exclusively to members of the **full NTF subscription service** as we reach deeper into the season. Unlike my Summer Stunners guide, where we were fully aware of the likes & dislikes of the horses on the list, we will have to approach this list a bit more carefully and almost 'learn as we go along' with many of the runners on the list.

'To Follow' lists can be tricky to produce profits from, but they do help you focus the mind and help you get to know the ins and outs of yards and, more specifically, the likes and dislikes of specific horses. If you can source patterns in amongst a horse's wider form then profits are there waiting for you.

Personally, I didn't see the point in stuffing my list full of Nicholls, Henderson, Mullins & Elliott runners as that information is freely available in wider racing press and I'll also be covering their runners on **the full NTF Service** as we charge through the 2019/20 season. Instead I wanted to try and bring to your attention some of the 'lesser lights' of the game but still ones I feel can win plenty of races between them this National Hunt season.

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Happy National Hunt Punting

**Ben (NTF)**

[www.narrowingthefield.co.uk](http://www.narrowingthefield.co.uk)

## Thanks...

Big thanks to the following trainers & owners for taking the time to speak to me about their runners...

**Ruth Jefferson** – <https://www.ruthjefferson.co.uk/>

**Tom Lacey** – <https://www.cottagefield.co.uk/>

**Tom Symonds** – <https://www.thomassymonds.co.uk/>

**Ian Robinson (Imperial Racing)** - <http://www.imperial-horseracing.com/>

**Kim Bailey** - <http://www.kimbaileyracing.com/>

