

NTF Weekend Notes – 13th, 14th & 15th December

Friday

12.25 Bangor – Class 4 | Handicap Chase | 2m 4.5f | Heavy | 6 ran

1st – STORM WIZARD

Venetia has a fine record in Bangor Handicap Chases, especially under the following...V Williams | Bangor Handicap Chases | Nov-Feb | 5yo-9yo | no more than a 3lb claimer = 13/34 | 38% S/R | +£103.44 BFLSP – W&P 19/34 | 56% S/R, this one qualifying on that angle. Not hard to think there's plenty more to come from this one given he's started chasing life on a lowly handicap mark (won here off OR 97).

12.10 Cheltenham – Class 3 | Novices' Hurdle | 2m 1f | Good to Soft | 8 ran

3rd - PIPESMOKER

I thought there was plenty to like about this 4yo on hurdling debut, particularly his fast and fluent jumping. He did get a shade outpaced around two out before staying on strongly up the hill and he's worth marking up a few pounds on the bare result. He could be interesting going forward with this effort under his belt.

12.45 Cheltenham – Class 2 | Novices' Chase | 3m 2f | Good to Soft | 5 ran

2nd – IMPERIAL AURA

Fired in some superb jumps at some of his fences whilst also managing to put himself right at the ones he didn't meet quite correctly. It was, however, another Kim Bailey Chaser at Cheltenham that failed to win (now 2/66) and there is just something his string do not like about the track. With that stat in mind this was probably a decent effort and he looks sure to win more chases this season.

3rd – AYE AYE CHARLIE

Not sure why they continue to race him at Cheltenham as he's now 0/10, 1p at the track and all three of his Chase starts have come over the demanding undulations. The track just doesn't seem to bring out the best in him and they need to get him over fences somewhere else (anywhere else!).

UR – STONEY MOUNTAIN

A tricky race to give him his chasing debut in and signs are that he's maybe not really a fan of the track (form of 0-P-U on his three starts at Cheltenham). He'll be better judged away from here in slightly easier company (for all he could turn out to be a very good staying chaser in time).

2.30 Cheltenham – Grade 3 | Handicap Chase | 3m 2.5f | Soft | 11 ran

4th - SINGLEFARMPAYMENT

Continues to frustrate, although he didn't quite have prime conditions to attack (if such things do indeed exist for a horse such as he!). This was only his second start of the season and on start 1 & 2 of a season he is now 0/12, his form suggesting that he's most likely to be winning on starts 2 or 3 of a season. Rough (very rough!) prime conditions are... LH tracks | 3m - 3m2f | G3 level & below | 2+ starts in season | DSLR 16-45 = 252111 (3/6, 2p – all 3 career wins). You wouldn't bet your life on him winning under those conditions mind you...

3.40 Cheltenham – Class 2 | Handicap Hurdle | 3m 0.5f | Soft | 11 ran

2nd – ASK BEN

Met little pockets of trouble at all the wrong times in this (in between the last two flights) but he finished strongly and still rates as one that looks like he's got a decent prize in him from his current mark (OR 136). He looks all about stamina.

3.30 Doncaster – Class 4 | Handicap Hurdle | 3m 0.5f | Good to Soft | 7 ran

2nd – COPPER GONE WEST

Tim Vaughan has an interesting record at Doncaster with his hurdlers...T Vaughan | Doncaster Hurdles | 5yo-6yo | SP 9/2 or less = 14113211 (5/8, 2p – all 5 career wins).

Saturday

12.45 Cheltenham – Class 2 | Novices' Chase | 2m 5f | Soft | 6 ran

2nd – GOOD BOY BOBBY

I thought this was a solid effort and a 1.25L defeat to Mister Fisher, giving that one 5lbs, will probably turn out to be decent form come seasons end. I have an inkling he may just fall a smidge below the very top level, although at this stage, as always, I'd be very open on that thinking.

3rd – BEAKSTOWN

Yet to set the world alight over fences but worth noting that both his wins to date have come on Good ground and all three of his chase starts to date have come on Good to Soft or softer ground.

1.20 Cheltenham – Class 2 | Handicap Chase | 2m 0.5f | Soft | 8 ran

2nd – EAMON AN CNOIC

Was well backed for this but again I just feel these weren't quite prime conditions for him. I'd have plenty interest in him under the following... LH Tracks | 13 or less runners | Race worth 15k or less | DSLR 31+ = 111F11 (5/6 - all 5 career wins), maybe stretching the prize money parameters to 20k or less if all other conditions are met.

3rd - BALLYWOOD

A decent effort but the ground going soft all over probably just blunted him enough for this contest (all 3 of his wins have come on Good ground). A less severe track and better ground would probably be ideal for him and long-term he could be interesting for Aintree in the spring.

6th - DESTRIER

Faded badly up the hill when looking to hold every chance and I wonder if he just wants a slightly easier track to show his best, as he's now been beaten on both starts on Very Undulating tracks.

1.55 Cheltenham – Grade 3 | Handicap Chase | 2m 5f | Soft | 13 ran

6th – NOT THAT FUISSE

Well-backed for this but the evidence suggests he wants quicker ground to show his best – 4/9 on Good compared to 0/8 on softer – with absolute prime conditions looking to be along the lines of... Good | 11 or less runners | C3 level & below = 12211P1 (4/7, 2p – all 4 career wins)...although maybe remaining flexible on class level & field size until we see him run in a C2+ large field handicap on good ground over fences (did run 6th in 2018 Greatwood Hurdle on Good ground in an 18-runner field).

7th – GOOD MAN PAT

Seems to prefer smaller fields and his prime conditions look to be along the lines of... LH track | DSLR 60 or less | 9 or less runners = 1112 (3/4, 1p – all 3 career wins).

8th – BRELAN D'AS

A blunder 3-out finished his chances although you'd be hard pushed to say he was travelling like the winner prior to that mistake. Starting to have a little concern over Geraghty since he came back from injury in October, especially when he's not got a fancied horse under him. His stats since returning from injury on a horse that DIDN'T start as fav read...3/42 | 7% S/R | -£24.19 BFLSP, 45% below expectation...and he doesn't (yet) seem back to anywhere near his previous levels.

9th – CLONDAW CASTLE

On this evidence he simply didn't stay on his first attempt beyond 2m1f. Either that or he just doesn't enjoy Cheltenham (7-4-9 on his 3 starts at the track).

3.05 Cheltenham – Grade 2 | International Hurdle | 2m 1f | Soft | 8 ran

1st – CALL ME LORD

Opens up plenty of options now he's confirmed he can go left-handed. On the G1 front I'd be leaning towards Aintree in the spring over 2m4f although it remains to be seen if this form holds up.

5th – PENTLAND HILLS

Travelled like much the best horse in the race up until the landing side of the final flight, where his race fitness (this was first run of the season) took its toll. You'd like to have seen a stronger finish, no doubt, but there was plenty to like about the run up until the closing stages and he maybe just needed this outing to sharpen him up for the season (he was very free throughout the contest).

7th – ELIXIR DE NUTZ

Ran a solid race for much of the contest but was another that faded up the hill on seasonal debut (and first run for 343 days). You'd like to think he'll come on a ton for this and I actually wonder if going chasing may now be the best option.

3.40 Cheltenham – Class 2 | Handicap Hurdle | 2m 4.5f | Soft | 16 ran

2nd – INDEFATIGABLE (*One to follow)

Travelled fantastically well into this from out the back but once again this season just didn't quite have the finish in her to get home in front. All three runs this term have come on Soft ground so there's a chance she possibly wants better ground to get her head in front again (3/7 on G/S or better – 0/4 on Soft or worse) and when she does get that ground she's on a mark she should have no problem taking advantage of (OR 137).

1.00 Doncaster – Class 3 | Handicap Chase | 2m 3f | Soft | 6 ran

3rd – PAIN AU CHOCOLAT

Always likely to need his first run back and he's now 0/6, 1p off breaks of 121+ days. He's on a winnable mark at present (OR 139, may go down for this) and he's worth looking out for under the following... 2m4f & below | C2 level & below (13k or less to the winner) | Dec-Apr | OR 140 or less | DSLR 21-75 = 7/11, 1p (all 7 career wins).

3.20 Doncaster – Class 2 | Handicap Chase | 3m | Soft | 4 ran

1st – MY OLD GOLD

Nicky Richards has a tidy record in Doncaster Handicap Chases under the following conditions... N Richards | Doncaster C2 – C4 Handicap Chases | 4-6 starts in last 365 days = 6/10 | 60% S/R | +£43.03 BFLSP – W&P 8/10 | 80% S/R. This one was a qualifier.

12.00 Hereford – Class 4 | Handicap Chase | 3m1.5f | Soft | 7 ran

1st – ONE STYLE

Always worth looking out for a Venetia Williams chaser at Hereford, especially under the following...V Williams | Hereford Handicap Chases | 11 or less runners | 0-8 Chase starts | No more than a 5lb claimer = 12/30 | 40% S/R | +£55.60 BFLSP – W&P 13/30 | 43% S/R, this was one of two qualifiers on the card for Venetia.

2.20 Hereford – Class 2 | Handicap Hurdle | 2m 4.5f | Soft | 5 ran

1st – BURROWS PARK

Venetia also has a fine record in Handicap Hurdles at Hereford...V Williams | Hereford Handicap Hurdles | Good to Soft – Soft | November – March | SP 14-1 or less = 10/28 | 36% S/R | +£51.20 BFLSP – W&P 14/28 | 50% S/R, this 7yo being a qualifier.

Sunday

1.20 Carlisle – Class 3 | Novices' Limited Handicap Chase | 2m 5f | Heavy | 5 ran

2nd – CLOUDY GLEN

Another one of those races where the removal of fences (in this case all those fences in the home-straight) had an impact on the outcome of a race and you have to think that this lad would have been winning had they had any jumping to do in the home-straight.

1.45 Southwell – Class 4 | Novices' Hurdle | 2m 4.5f | Heavy | 5 ran

1st – KEEN ON

Nicky Henderson has a fine record in non-handicap hurdles at Southwell under the following conditions... N Henderson | Southwell non-handicap hurdles | Males | 0-2 Hurdle starts | SP 9/2 or less = 14/19 | 74% S/R | +£15.90 – W&P 17/19 | 89% S/R, this one being a qualifier.