

NTF Weekend Notes – 2019 Cheltenham Festival Days 3 & 4

Day 3 - Thursday

1.30 JLT Novices' Chase – Grade 1 Novices' Chase – 2m4f – Good to Soft – 10 ran

Blindly following runners from this next time out when running again in the same season isn't quite a profitable play – 12/47 | 26% S/R | -£3.31 BFLSP – 2% below expectation – and those entering a handicap next time out (before end of season) are a rather poor 0/10, 1p. Concentrating on the following, however, could be the way to go...ran in JLT LTO | Non-Hcp Chase | 3/5 starts in current season...which gives...10/23 | 43% S/R | +£14.45 BFLSP – W&P 15/23 | 65% S/R – 36% above expectation. Won't make you rich but it does seem the place to find next time out winners from the JLT.

1st – DEFI DU SEUIL

For a wee man he can fairly jump his fences and he looked comfortable and in control throughout this contest. This took his record off a break of 60 days or less to 1211111111 (9/10 – compared to 1/4 off longer breaks) and he clearly relishes being on the go. I'd expect him to be a Ryanair horse rather than a Gold Cup horse next season.

2nd – LOSTINTRANSLATION

Jumped for fun on the front end as always and although this was far from a poor effort it does irk me that he's only won 2 of his 11 starts. He'll appreciate the step up to 3 miles when it comes but I think, unfortunately, talk of him being a Gold Cup contender is wide of the mark, a future Gold Cup winner would have found his way to the winners enclosure plenty more times in 11 starts than this lad has and that, I fear, will always be his downfall. In his defence he has always been beaten by what look like exceptionally good novices but again a future Gold Cup winner would have found a way to defeat these types. I actually wonder if a couple seasons down the line he'll turn out to be a Grand National horse.

4th – KILDISART

A solid enough effort and I wonder if the drop back in trip by a furlong to 2m4f just found him out enough. 3 of his 4 career wins have come over 2m5f and he is 22111 over 2m4.5f – 2m5f and he was doing a lot of his best work in the closing stages of this contest. He was only raised 1lb for this effort to OR 148 so he could yet be of interest in open handicap company.

5th – VINNDICATION

Now 0/2 at G1 level and although it's clearly still early enough days for him I do feel he's just not quite a G1 player, a bit of a Charbel type character if you will. Both his defeats have also come over

2m4f trips and given that he is an unbeaten 4/4 over 2m4.5f+ trips I'd also start thinking that he's a 3 miler in the making for next season, possibly in handicaps.

6th – REAL STEEL

Now 0/5, 0p going Left-handed (3/5 RH tracks) and he's quite possibly at his happiest going the other way round. Could well bounce back in something at Fairyhouse or Punchestown (both RH tracks).

7th – CASTAFIORE

Nothing to really suggest she's a G1 player (first try in a G1) and her handicap mark of OR 139 is surely worth exploring now.

2.10 Pertemps Final – Grade 3 Handicap Hurdle – 3m – Soft – 24 ran

A low strike-rate for those running next time out before the end of the season – 8/102 | 8% S/R | - £10.01 BFLSP – 22% below expectation – and those going on to run at Aintree are 1/48 | 2% S/R (the winner being Pinau De Re in the National, who had a warm-up in this).

14th – AARON LAD

Led as they jumped 2 out but was headed turning for home and he weakened up the hill. That's no real surprise though as he's best with a run under his belt (4/11 DSLR 30 or less – 0/4 DSLR 60+ - this was DSLR 90) and he's also better in smaller fields (0/4, 0p in fields of 15+). I wouldn't be 100% convinced the horse is done improving yet and he's possibly worth looking out for under the following... 14 or less runners | DSLR 30 or less | Not Heavy = 111122322 (4/9, 5p – all 4 career wins).

2.50 Ryanair Chase – Grade 1 Chase – 2m5f – Good to Soft – 12 ran

A surprisingly low strike-rate with next time out runners in same season from the Ryanair – 7/49 | 14% S/R | -£20.49 BFLSP – 21% below expectation. That can, however, be tightened up if you concentrate only on the following... ran in Ryanair last time out | 2m5f or shorter | SP 5-1 or less = 6/14 | 43% S/R | +£9.23 BFLSP – W&P 10/14 | 71% S/R – 20% above expectation.

4th - MONALEE

Not sure he every really looked likely to land this and again I just have that worry that he's liable to find at least one too good for him at the top levels (1/8 at G1 level – 2/11 at G1/G2 level). He's possibly also at his strongest in Nov-Feb period (5/9 compared to 0/7 in March-April).

8th - FOOTPAD

The ground just dried up too much for him here, I think it's as simple as that. He's now 1/9 on Good to Soft or quicker compared to 7/9 on softer ground. In fairness he travelled and jumped sweetly enough throughout the race but when Ruby Walsh went to get serious on him he just couldn't find that extra gear needed. He's just not had his ground yet this season.

PU -CHARBEL

Now 0/10, 0p at G1 level and he just doesn't perform at the top level.

PU – SUB LIEUTENANT

Now 0/18 at G1 level and he was nothing more than a pace-setter here. If he runs away from G1 level he's always worth a second glance, especially under the following... Chase/Hurdle | G2 level & below (race worth 25k or less to winner) | RH track = 27113211211 (6/11, 3p – 6 of 7 chase/hurdle wins).

3.30 Stayers Hurdle – Grade 1 Hurdle – 3m – good to Soft – 18 ran

Certainly more beneficial to follow those that finished in the top 5 in this next time out (in current season) – Top 5 finish in Stayers = 6/26 | 27% S/R | -£0.57 BFLSP – W&P 17/22 | 77% S/R | | 6th or worse finish in Stayers = 1/33 | 3% S/R | -£26.39 BFLSP – W&P 5/33 | 15% S/R. An interesting angle to keep in mind is...Top 5 in Stayers Hurdle LTO | OR 163+ = 6/10 | 60% S/R | +£11.43 BFLSP – W&P 10/10 | 100% S/R – 40% above expectation. That would bring in Paisley Park, Sam Spinner & Faugheen from this year's renewal.

1st – PAISLEY PARK (*Star performer)

Clearly the force in the staying hurdle division and probably by some way, hard to see what would beat him at present.

4th – BAPAUME

Not sure exactly where he fits into the wider picture but you feel there's a decent pot in him somewhere.

6th – BACARDYS

Probably doesn't really stay these trips as he's now 0/6, 0p over 2m5f+ trips. If you look at him over 2m4f and below | Not Chases...you get a form line of...111F3131 (5/8, 2p – all 5 career wins).

7th – SUPASUNDAE

Thought this was an odd run from the 9yo as he went from travelling well to nothing very quickly and fairly laboured home up the hill. In fairness he's never actually won over 3m+ (0/4, 3p) and

maybe when it's a true pace at play he just doesn't get home. As a 9yo he's also maybe just starting to feel the pinch of being to the well once too often in some tough races...maybe...

10th – KEEPER HILL

Not a G1 animal (0/3, 0p at G1 level) and he's now out with his prime months (7/13 Nov-Feb compared to 0/6, 0p in March-April). May need to drop a shade from his mark of OR 144 before being competitive in handicaps again.

4.10 Brown Plate Hcp Chase – Grade 3 Hcp Chase – 2m5f – Good to Soft – 22 ran

Nothing overly strong on the next time out in current season angle but possibly worth considering...Aged 6yo-10yo | 5-7 starts in last 365 days | 2m1f – 3m1f | SP 14-1 or less | Ran in Brown Plate LTO...which gives you...10/31 | 32% S/R | +£40.09 BFLSP – W&P 13/31 | 42% S/R – 70% above expectation.

1st – SIRUH DU LAC

Has improved hand over fist since going chasing and has improved even further this season, posting improved figures with each run, with this effort being yet another career best on the figures. He's been put up to OR 150 for this but he never wins by far and could yet end up defying that mark. He seems to jump for fun and he could yet turn out to be a non-handicap graded performer come next season, possibly even over 3 miles.

2nd – JANIKA

Now finished second on all 3 starts since coming over from France, all 3 runs are solid pieces of form though. I just wonder if he maybe really wants 3 miles?

5th – DIDERO VALLIS

A solid run from the 6yo over what is his ideal sort of trip (1322151 over 2m2.5f – 2m5.5f) although he would maybe just have preferred a smaller field to try and hold off from the front (he's 0/4 in fields of 16+). If you look at him under the following...2m2.5f – 2m5.5f | 13 or less runners...you get a form line of 11221 (3/5, 2p – all 3 career wins) and if meeting with those conditions any time soon I'd expect to see him go well, his mark of OR 135 looks within range for him.

7th – AZZERTI

A decent enough effort considering he look best going the other way round (he's 0/10 LH tracks – 5/11 RH tracks) and he's not too fond of very undulating tracks (0/6, 1p). His prime conditions look to be... RH | G/S or softer | DSLR 45 or less | NOT V undulating tracks = 171311 (4/6, 1p – all 4 career wins).

9th – SOME BUCKLE

First run for his new trainer (R Bandey, not a trainer I know too much about I must admit... time to do some digging...) and this was a solid enough run off a 325-day break under conditions he won't have fully appreciated (never been a horse to enjoy a large field, Graded level or a testing track). He was dropped 2lbs to OR 138 for this and he could be interesting for his new yard if turning up under the following... LH track | Flat-Slightly Undulating | 11 or less runners | C2 level & below...where he has form of 131P1213 (4/8, 3p – all 4 career wins).

10th – TEMPLEHILLS

Far from prime conditions for him but he was dropped 2lbs for the run to OR 138, which always helps. Prime conditions remain... 2m4f-2m6f | <20k to winner | 10 or less runners = 11P1111 (6/7 - all 6 career wins) and he'll be of interest when dropped in grade.

12th – BIGMARTE (*one to follow)

Things not gone to plan so far for the 8yo this term (form of 6-P-4-3-0) but he was dropped another 2lbs for this effort and he's now gone down 6lbs since the start of the season and is starting to look dangerously well handicapped. Hard to pinpoint rock-solid prime conditions but he may be worth considering under the following... NOT Very-Undulating tracks | 12 or less runners | carrying 11-07 or less = 121113121 (6/9, 3p – all 6 career wins).

15th – VOIX D'EAU

A long way removed from his prime conditions - LH | HCP | 2m3f-2m4.5f | Good-G/S | 11 or less runners | race worth 30k or less = 11332P3111 (5/10, 3p - all 5 career wins) – but he was dropped a handy 4lbs for this effort and OR 135 should comfortably be within range for them if they can find him a suitable race under prime conditions.

5.30 Kim Muir Hcp Chase – Class 2 Hcp Chase – 3m2.5f – Good to Soft – 23 ran

Not a race that has produced a wealth of next time out winners (when returning before end of season), with 5-year stats of...6/101 | 6% S/R | -£20.63 LSP – W&P 19/101 | 19% S/R – 46% below expectation (don't be fooled by LSP, there was a 50-1 winner in there). Horses that finished in the first 9 in Kim Muir have returned the following stats...1/41 | 2.5% S/R | -£39.38 LSP. Horses that ran in a Class 1 next time out returned the following...1/60 | 1.5% S/R | -£9.00 LSP – W&P 5/60 | 10% S/R – 74% below expectation (winner was 50-1 winner of Irish National).

4th - CRIEVEHILL

Far from having prime condition to race under here - Soft/Heavy | C3 or less Hcps | Field of 9 or less | DSLR 30 or less = 124211 (3/6, 1p - all 3 career wins), worth considering in C2 races if all other conditions met – so his 12L 4th is probably better than it looks and he's probably running better than the bare form suggests in general in recent runs, as none have really been close to his prime conditions.

9th – TOUCH KICK

Surprised he was as short as 11-1 for this as he really needs to be going right-handed to show his best (5/10 RH compared to 0/6 LH).

15th – ITS ALL GUESSWORK

I thought he was jumping immaculately out the back in this but he was never once put into the race to make use of that slick jumping and I just wonder if this run was all about keeping him ticking over for some other target (he is entered in the Irish National albeit he is a long way down on the list of entries).

Day 4 - Friday

1.30 Triumph Hurdle – Grade 1 Juvenile Hurdle – 2m1f – Soft – 9 ran

Certainly best to follow those Triumph runners that stay down the Non-Handicap route (9/46 | 20% S/R) than the Handicap route (1/15 | 7% S/R) on their next start this season. A solid overall NTO profitable angle is tricky to find, however.

5th – QUEL DESTIN

Suspect Nicholls won't hang about too much with this lad and fire him over fences right away next season, being that he's already got 11 hurdle starts on the CV. He looks the type that should take to fencing without much issue.

2.10 County Hurdle – Grade 3 Handicap Hurdle – 2m1f – Good to Soft – 24 ran

A race that can produce next time out winners (returning before end of season), with 6-year stats of...18/123 | 15% S/R | +£3.68 BFLSP – W&P 44/123 | 36% S/R – 12% above expectation. No real strong angle within that to consider though.

2nd – WE HAVE A DREAM

Good to see him get his season back on track these last two runs after going a shade AWOL on his first 3 starts. This effort was comfortably a career best and word is he goes chasing next term, which looks the correct decision.

5th – LISP

A solid effort without really looking likely that he was going to pick up and win. He seems to be at his peak in the Nov-Jan period (211221 compared to 38F5 in other months) and he may well have plateaued for now. He could become interesting again in the winter if dropping back down the weights.

22nd – PINGSHOU

Didn't really take to fences at the start of the season and fair to say he's shown little on his return to hurdling on his last 2 starts. He has now, however, been dropped to OR 137 under both codes so if they can revitalise him then that's surely a seriously exploitable mark, considering he was rated 150 at his peak (prior to being off for 572 with injury). Both his wins have come on Good ground and when returning within 30 days of his last run so that's something worth considering and he could be one of those worth a dart at tasty odds in a handicap somewhere.

2.50 Albert Bartlett Hurdle – Grade 1 Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle – 3m – Soft – 20 ran

A race that can produce next time out same season winners...13/53 | 24% S/R | +£58.53 BFLSP – W&P 27/55 | 49% S/R – 11% above expectation. You can find all those 13 winners using three filters...Ran in Albert Bartlett LTO | 6 or less starts in season | Aged 5yo-7yo | top 2 1 of last 3...which gives...13/42 | 31% S/R | +£71.53 BFLSP – W&P 22/42 | 52% S/R – 35% above expectation.

Looking further ahead and looking at those that run in a CHASE next time out (which will be NEXT season) and concentrating on those aged 6yo or 7yo and had between 5 & 7 career starts you get a form line of...1611111122 (8/11 | 73% S/R | +£13.03 BFLSP – W&P 9/11 | 82% S/R).

2nd – COMMANDER OF FLEET

I reckon if Jack Kennedy had got after this lad earlier he quite possibly would have proven victorious. Despite that quibble it was still a decent effort and he looks an exciting chasing prospect for next term.

5th – LISNAGAR OSCAR

Never really looked 100% comfortable in this and I never felt he was ever really in a position to strike. He's had a fine season to date though and should make plenty of an impact when sent chasing in the 2019/20 season.

3.30 Gold Cup – Grade 1 Chase – 3m2.5f – Good to Soft – 16 ran

Winners should come from this before seasons end...10/56 | 18% S/R | +£24.33 BFLSP – W&P 21/56 | 38% S/R = 8% above expectation. You can narrow that to a bit of a workable angle by looking at the following...Ran in Gold Cup LTO | OR 158+ | Won 1 of last 3 starts | DSLR 16-45 | 3-6 starts last 365 days...which gives...9/24 | 38% S/R | +£54.35 BFLSP – W&P 16/24 | 67% S/R – 58% above expectation.

1st – AL BOUM PHOTO

No denying this was a serious effort from the 7yo and he could have been called the winner from some way out. My initial reaction is that he's a very good horse but if the novice staying crop from this season turn out to be as good as they look then he may not be quite good enough to fend them off. With hindsight there are probable excuses for those in behind, without taking anything away from him at all, I do still think he's a very good staying chaser, and with next seasons Gold Cup looking like being a stronger affair I just feel, at this early stage, he may struggle to win back to back Gold Cup's, something that is bloody difficult anyway, regardless of the opposition.

2nd – ANIBALE FLY

Clearly ridden to pick up the place pieces and he's just one of those types (a Sir Rembrandt or a Take The Stand or a Harbour Pilot type) who runs well in the Gold Cup without ever really looking likely to win it. These types seem to come around from time to time and they almost sacrifice their winning chances just to make sure their place chances are not compromised. Doesn't bolster or knock the form, they just turn up in the race and run their own little Gold Cup.

3rd – BRISTOL DE MAI

Is he actually improving with age or is he another of those NTD horses that are not as easy to pin down to prime conditions as they first seem? On the one hand you think he doesn't really handle the track but on the other hand you see he's placed on 3 of his 4 runs at the track. The only think you can be really sure about is the fact he loves Haydock!

4th – NATIVE RIVER

The signs do appear to be that his victory in last seasons Gold Cup has 'left its mark', given how he's run in his three starts since that win (3 solid efforts but never really looked like winning any of them). This was an excellent effort, no doubt, but you feel he's always going to be susceptible to younger legs nowadays and the value call probably is to take him on.

5th – CLAN DES OBEAUX

Hmmm...mistake running him in the rescheduled Denman Chase meaning his warm-up run ended up too close to the Gold Cup (DSLR 27)? Or he doesn't actually enjoy climbing the hill (0/5 at the track)? Both feasible reasoning for the defeat and it will be interesting to see if he turns into 'just' a flat-track bully (5/10 on flat/slightly-undulating tracks – 1/7 on very undulating tracks). Absolute bang prime conditions may be...Flat/Slightly Undulating tracks | Good to Soft & softer ground = 1131511 (5/7, 1p – 5 of 6 career wins).

6th – ELEGANT ESCAPE

Not a bad effort but backs up the theory that he just isn't a G1 player (0/7 at G1 level). Think he'll prove hard to place off OR 162, he's probably caught in no-mans-land now.

8th – PRESENTING PERCY

A run like this was always on the cards after the preparation he had and the effort was of no real surprise. Must be a chance that they are bugging up a damn good horse by not allowing him to run (and when they do, not allowing him to run in the right races, i.e. hurdles) and you do start to think that we may never get to see him at his peak again.

PU – BELLSHILL

At the end of the day Cheltenham maybe just isn't the place for him (form of 003P at track). Wouldn't read too much into the 'effort' and he'll be worth considering for the Punchestown Gold Cup again (3 from 3 at track – 8/9 on RH tracks).

PU – MIGHT BITE

There was a 'bit' more life in the run than his last two starts but at the end of the day he ran in a similar manner... ran well to a point before bottoming out badly when things got tough. This was his first run off a wind-up but clearly his wind is not the issue. I'd be surprised if he was able to capture a G1 again.

PU – THISTLECRACK

Was always likely to struggle in a race like this and I still feel his best chance of another top-level success would be in something like the Betway Bowl at Aintree, where's he's likely to meet with a smaller field.

4.50 Grand Annual – Grade 3 Handicap Chase – 2m0.5f – Good to Soft – 19 ran

No real NTO angle to tuck into here...

3rd – BRELAN D'AS (*one to follow)

A fine effort considering I'm far from convinced he's at his best on very undulating tracks (0/7, 1p V Und tracks – 3/6, 2p on easier tracks). He was only raised 2lbs for this and OR 138 looks more than workable for him and it would be no surprise to see him go a couple places better in one of the handicaps at Aintree or Ayr.

11th – LE PREZIEN

Needs Soft/Heavy to perform to his best so he was always likely to struggle here. On the plus side he was dropped 2lbs for this and is now below his last winning mark on OR149. I'd have his prime

conditions as...2m2f or below | Heavy or Soft | OR 150 or below = 1111211 (6/7, 1p – all 7 career wins).

5.30 Martin Pipe Handicap Hurdle – Class 2 Handicap Hurdle – 2m4.5f – Good to Soft – 24 ran

Good chance of a few winners coming out of this, with 6-year next time out stats reading... 15/95 | 16% S/R | +£52.14 BFLSP – W&P 34/95 | 36% S/R = 4% above expectation. Tightening that up a bit you get...ran in Martin Pipe Hurdle LTO | Chase or Hurdle race (Not at Aintree) | Horse aged 5yo-8yo | 4-9 starts in last year...which gives 13/48 | 27% S/R | +£76.82 BFLSP – W&P 23/48 | 48% S/R – 34% above expectation.

12th – MR ANTOLINI

Doesn't seem to stay these trips (0/8 over 2m3f+) and he's also at his best on RH tracks (4/17 RH tracks – 0/8 LH tracks). He was dropped 1lb for this to OR 139 and he could be of interest under the following...RH tracks | 2m2f or below = 4/14, 4p – all 4 career wins...especially if getting a claimer on top to reduce the burden further.