



2007 CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL POCKET BETTING GUIDE



Matt Williams has one of the best racing trading brains around. In the guide that follows, he openly shares his views and opinions by picking us out horses to back and lay both pre-race and in-running. I hope you'll enjoy this unique insight to give you a head start during the Festival.

**Best of luck,
Russ**

If you're a punter, even at a recreational level, and you're not up for the Cheltenham Festival, then you're going to be missing out on the most eagerly awaited renewal in recent memory and, believe me, the 2007 version promises to deliver at every level. As always, opinions will be divided, and this year punters are faced with serious questions in each of the championship races. More importantly, getting it right at this meeting means a lot more to most of us, than getting it right at Plumpton on a soggy Monday afternoon.

Is Detroit City going to be able to defy the hoodoo of five-year-olds in the Champion Hurdle? Does Voy Por Ustedes really have the class to win a Queen Mother Champion Chase? Will Black Jack Ketchum turn out to be the festival banker we all believed him to be before his disappointing fifth in the Cleeve Hurdle at Cheltenham in January? Is Kauto Star really the best staying chaser since the great Arkle?

All of these are difficult questions to answer and what follows is only my opinion - you'll have your own - but I hope to pinpoint various trading opportunities, and perhaps point you in the right direction of a value punt or ten along the way!

Matt Williams

Tuesday

Anglo Irish Bank Supreme Novices' Hurdle

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winner's Age	5, 6, 5, 4, 6, 8, 6, 6, 5, 5
Winner's SP	25/1, 5/1, 10/1, 9/2, 14/1, 7/4f, 3/1f, 7/2f, 20/1, 6/1
Fate of Favourite	3 rd , Fell, 2 nd , Unseated, 3 rd , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 13 th , 5 th
Winning Distance	8, 10, 7, 17, 3/4, nk, 10, nk, 6, nk
Previous run	1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 3 rd , 1 st

The Michael O'Brien-trained De Valira jumps well and has a high cruising speed - two qualities he showed when winning a Grade 2 hurdle at Leopardstown in December. To be honest, I'm struggling to picture a scenario that won't see him trading below his pre-race mark at some stage in running even allowing for his recent disappointing run. I've a feeling he was probably well short of fitness behind 50/1 shock winner Orbit O'Gold last time. Clopf, trained by Edward O'Grady who knows what it takes to win this race, makes slightly more appeal in the outright market. Interestingly, this race should prove a cracker for in-running players as it's produced two tight finishes in the last three renewals.

Main Fancy

Noel Meade's charge is taken to justify the hype surrounding him before he met with defeat at Fairyhouse in December.

Clopf

Back-to-Lay

Should cruise into contention and allow his pre-race backers to secure a cheap no-lose position.

De Valira

In-Running Back

My Turn Now has bundles of stamina and if he's close enough to the leaders turning for home, he'll be doing all his best work at the finish. Granted, he took a heavy fall when bang in contention in the Tolworth Hurdle at Sandown, but he's had plenty of time to get his confidence back up and he's an outsider to be reckoned with from an unfashionable yard.

My Turn Now

In-Running Lay Kicks For Free

Paul Nicholls's runner will probably trade quite big pre-race, but he's a strong-traveler and I expect him to turn into the home straight going as well as anything. Things become a lot tougher for him thereafter though, and he'll be gasping for air on the run-in.

Irish Independent Arkle Chase

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winner's Age	7, 6, 5, 5, 7, 8, 6, 5, 7, 5
Winner's SP	7/1, 11/2, 13/2, 11/1, 8/1, 11/2, 5/4f, 9/1, 7/1, 15/2
Fate of Favourite	PU, Fell, 10 th , 5 th , 3 rd , 2 nd , 1 st , Fell, 7 th , 7 th
Winning Distance	20, 1/2, Shd, 2 1/2, 8, 4, 11, 1, 1, 1 1/4
Previous run	2 nd , 2 nd , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , Fell, 1 st , 1 st , 3 rd , 1 st

This is all about Fair Along and whether or not he's going to be able to dominate from the off. If he is left alone on an easy lead, expect his in-running odds to crash fairly sharply. However, the opposite is true should Lennon, a confirmed lunatic front-runner, take him on early doors. Alan King has several options for My Way De Solzen, but if he turns up for this, and the vibes are the Arkle is his favoured option, he should play a big part in any punting strategy.

Main Fancy

He's just too big a price from a yard that knows how to win this race.

Buena Vista (each-way)

Back-to-Lay

Back him pre-race, but be prepared to take an early loss if he gets involved in an early tussle for the lead.

Fair Along

In-Running Back

He's won a World Hurdle, but has the speed to trouble the best of these and he'll keep finding for pressure.

My Way De Solzen

Smurfit Kappa Champion Hurdle

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winner's Age 6, 6, 6, 7, 8, 7, 9, 7, 8, 8
 Winner's SP 9/1, 7/1, 3/1f, 4/9f, 8/15f, 10/1, 9/2, 33/1, 7/2 jf, 7/4f
 Fate of Favourite 2nd, PU, 1st, 1st, 1st, PU, 3rd, 2nd, 1st, 1st
 Winning Distance 2 1/2, 5, 12, 3 1/2, 4, 3, 11, 5, nk, 1
 Previous run 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 2nd, 1st, 1st

In my opinion, the best race of the entire meeting. Either Brave Inca or Detroit City will win it, but the supporting cast is strong and I reckon the potential for in-running carnage is massive. You've got the likes of the Noel Meade-trained pair Harchibald and Iktitaf bottling it on the run-in, Hardy Eustace putting up a brave but hopeless fight and Straw Bear returning to something like his best to give them all a fright - well, that's how I see it anyway.

Main Fancy

Take a look at the ages of the last ten winners and you'll see that five year olds have a terrible record in the race. However, he ticks virtually every other box and has won at the festival before (last year's Triumph Hurdle). His recent Agfa Hurdle win, when he may have been in need of the race, should have put him bang on for the big day.

Back-to-Lay

I've got a theory about him being suited best by a left-handed track. He could easily trade a lot shorter than his pre-race mark at some stage in-running and he appeals more than the other established 'bridle' horses.

In-Running Back

Both do their best running when maximum pressure is applied, and their pre-race backers will be kicking themselves that they didn't get involved with the in-running action, because either could win, after trading much bigger at some stage in-running.

Detroit City

Take a look at the ages of the last ten winners and you'll see that five year olds have a terrible record in the race. However, he ticks virtually every other box and has won at the festival before (last year's Triumph Hurdle). His recent Agfa Hurdle win, when he may have been in need of the race, should have put him bang on for the big day.

Straw Bear

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Detroit City and Brave Inca

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Wednesday

Ballymore Properties Novices' Hurdle

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winner's Age 6, 5, 7, 6, 6, 6, 6, 5, 5
 Winner's SP 8/1, 6/5f, 2/1f, 2/1f, 5/4f, 12/1, 6/1, 12/1, 17/2, 17/2
 Fate of Favourite 10th, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 4th, 2nd, 2nd, 5th, 2nd
 Winning Distance 3/4, 1, 14, 9, 8, 3 1/2, 1, 1/2, 3/4, 2 1/2
 Previous run 2nd, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 2nd, 2nd, 1st, 1st

Noel Meade is not afraid to speak his mind when it comes to racing matters and his assertions that Aran Concerto is potentially the best horse he has ever trained comes as high praise indeed. Forgetting the hype, though, he has looked seriously impressive on more than one occasion this season and deserves his position at the head of the betting. Wichita Lineman boasts strong claims too, but I've a feeling connections will duck this race in favour of the three-miler and anyone wanting to back him should wait until they see his name in the final declarations. For me, the one horse who stands out above all others is Hairy Molly (25/1 at the time of writing), winner of the Champion Bumper here twelve months ago.

Main Fancy

Hairy Molly (each-way)

He badly needed the run on his reappearance at Leopardstown last month, but his guts and stamina will make him a tough nut to crack and if he's on the premises rounding the home turn, I expect him to go very close.

Back-to-Lay

Aran Concerto, Hairy Molly and Catch Me

Aran Concerto simply oozes class and could easily turn this into a procession. Hairy Molly likes to race prominently and never stops trying. Catch Me is classy, but not sure he's got the battling qualities to win this and if you're looking to back him pre-race, you should be ready to trade out at some stage in running.

In-Running Back

Ringaroses

Don't expect to see him up there in the early part of the race but, with Timmy Murphy doing the steering, he could travel well into the race and I doubt there is a better staying pedigree in the line-up.

Royal & SunAlliance Chase

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age	7, 8, 6, 7, 7, 7, 8, 7, 5
Winners SP	7/1, 13/2, 11/8f, 16/1, 9/2, 33/1, 15/2, 25/1, 5/1, 14/1
Fate of Favourite	2 nd , 3 rd , 1 st , Fell, 4 th , 5 th , 3 rd , 2 nd , PU
Winning Distance	8, 2 1/2, 1 1/2, dist, 1 1/4, 2, 1 3/4, 1 1/4, 3, 6
Previous run	2 nd , 3 rd , 1 st , 1 st , 2 nd , 2 nd , 1 st , 2 nd , 2 nd , 1 st

The Paul Nicholls-trained Denman is short enough in the betting for my money and, if the price allows, I'll be looking to oppose him pre-race and in running. I've looked at his races over fences this season, and his hurdle races from last year (including when he finished runner-up behind Nicanor over 2m5f at the festival) and I've come to the conclusion that he is by no means guaranteed to stay the trip.

Lay

Denman

With a single-figure field looking a distinct possibility, rather than searching to find one horse to beat Nicholls's much hyped novice, we should really push the boat out by opposing him every which way we can.

Back-to-Lay

Caitin Alainn

Took a peach of a fall at Cheltenham in January, but she showed enough to suggest she's got the potential to outclass her rivals and provided she puts in a clear round, her in-running odds will shorten and shorten.

In-Running Lay

Denman

He may look like the winner 1/2 mile from home, so that's the time to lay him - before stamina comes into play.

Seasons Holidays Queen Mother Champion Chase

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age	7, 10, 10, 9, 8, 8, 9, 7, 11, 8
Winners SP	9/1, 9/1, 7/2, 7/2, 7/2, 7/2, 7/4f, 7/4f, 15/8, 6/4, 16/1
Fate of Favourite	3 rd , 5 th , 6 th , 2 nd , 3 rd , 1 st , 1 st , unseated, 1 st , Fell
Winning Distance	5, 2 1/2, 4, 1 1/4, Shd, 3, 7, 9, 2, 9
Previous run	2 nd , Fell, 1 st , 1 st , 3 rd , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st

Newmill enjoyed the run of the race when winning last year's renewal, but an in-form Ashley Brook will prove a thorn in his side as they go head-to-head for the early lead. The race could easily be set up for something finishing from off the pace. Well Chief has it all to prove returning from a lengthy layoff, but he has the best form of anything if back to his best and you couldn't rule him out. Voy Por Ustedes boasts solid credentials and looks the pick of the lot to me. Nickname has been making the most of some soft opportunities in Ireland and all the value has been squeezed out of his price but, to be honest, I still wouldn't back him if the 16-1 was still available.

Main Fancy

Voy Por Ustedes

Alan King won't have had him 100 per cent yet this season, but it hasn't stopped him winning some good races.

Back-to-Lay

Ashley Brook

Loves Cheltenham and his ability to go flat out from start to finish will make him a tough nut to crack.

Weatherbys Champion Bumper

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age	5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 5, 6, 6
Winners SP	11/4, 6/1, 9/1, 50/1, 14/1, 14/1, 2/1f, 7/1, 7/2f, 33/1
Fate of Favourite	4 th , 13 th , 2 nd , 16 th , 2 nd , 2 nd , 1 st , 14 th , 1 st , 12 th
Winning Distance	2, 5, 2 1/2, 1 1/2, 3 1/2, nk, 1/2, 2 1/2, nk, hd
Previous run	1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 4 th , 1 st , 1 st , 2, 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st

It can pay to follow the money in this race, but I'm not one for taking short prices about anything in a line-up which boasts so much potential. Obviously, the likes of Cork All Star will prove popular on the day, but I want to throw

an arrow at the Henrietta Knight-trained Cave Hill, who impressed me when he won a decent bumper at Hereford in November, beating the highly regarded Alan King-trained Greenbridge and I could easily see him running a huge race at a big price.

Main Fancy

Cave Hill (each-way)

Keep a few quid back for the day of the race market as, like the rest of them, he is by no means a guaranteed runner at this stage

Back-to-Lay

Cave Hill

Thursday

Ryanair Chase

Trends (last 2 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age 10, 10
 Winners SP 9/2, 10/3f
 Fate of Favourite P, 1st
 Winning Distance 1/2, 1 1/4
 Previous run 2nd, 3rd

Monet's Garden had his season de-railed in the King George, when he disappointed behind Kauto Star, but this is his big chance to put those painful memories behind him. Trainer Nicky Richards will take heart from his fantastic second in last year's Arkle. However, Cheltenham hasn't favoured the grey in the past and I'd be tempted to look elsewhere for the winner. Exotic Dancer would be a confident selection if the Gold Cup wasn't tempting his connections, and My Way De Solzen, another of the ante-post market leaders, has already been mentioned in most of the races I've looked at!

Main Fancy

Taranis

He's a spring horse, prefers decent ground and still has the potential to be a champion at the specialist trip of 2m5f.

In-Running Back

Thisthatandtother

Course and distance winner who just keeps galloping and you'd want him on your side if he's anywhere near the lead turning for home.

Lay for a Place

Our Vic

A class act on his day, but tremendous blowout potential after his Cotswold Chase exertions.

Ladbroke's World Hurdle

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age 6, 7, 7, 8, 6, 7, 8, 7, 6, 6
 Winners SP 8/1, 20/1, 16/1, 40/1, 11/2, 13/8f, 9/4f, 9/2, 5/1, 8/1
 Fate of Favourite 4th, 5th, 5th, 2nd, 6th, 1st, 1st, 2nd, 2nd, 3rd
 Winning Distance 3/4, 2 1/2, 2, nk, 1, nk, 3/4, 1 1/2, 3, hd
 Previous run 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 2nd, 2nd, 1st, 2nd, 2nd, 1st, 1st

Black Jack Ketchum was trading at odds-on for this race before his Cleeve Hurdle fifth and the 3.5 available on Betdaq could turn out to be a gross overreaction on behalf of some cynical layers. From a trading point of view, this is by far the most interesting race of all four days and punters should concentrate exclusively on Black Jack Ketchum to guarantee a no-lose position. If you back him now, I think you're taking an unnecessary risk, as there is a dark cloud hanging over the horse at the moment. No, wait for the day of the race and if the ground is good, have your maximum on him with a view to trading out of your position in running.

Let's say that Jonjo O'Neill's stable star is trading at around 2.8-3 on the day. That's tremendous value, because as long as he stays on his feet, it's almost impossible not to see him trading long odds-on at some stage. He finished well beaten in the Cleeve Hurdle, yet was still matched at 1-3 coming down the hill and on better ground, his stamina will take him to the final hurdle at least. Both Inglis Drever and Mighty Man are lazy types and ought to trade a lot bigger in-running.

Back-to-Lay

Black Jack Ketchum

It's a no-brainer

Friday

JCB Triumph Hurdle

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4
 Winners SP 10/1, 9/1, 14/1, 11/4f, 7/1f, 16/1, 20/1, 20/1, 9/1, 7/2f
 Fate of Favourite Fell, 9th, 4th, 1st, 1st, 1st, PU, 3rd, 10th, 3rd, 1st
 Winning Distance 4, 1, 1 ¼, 8, 2, 11, hd, 2, hd, 5
 Previous run 2nd, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 2nd, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st, 1st

Katchit has taken the four-year-old division by storm this season and with a heart as big as his, you just know he'll be there or thereabouts. Having said that, I'm yet to be convinced he can continue his hot run of form going into the festival and I'll be looking to the Philip Hobbs-trained Liberate to bolster his trainer's impressive record in the Triumph. He was a strong stayer on the flat with Sir Mark Prescott (a fabulous source for recent festival winners) and wouldn't have been suited by a test of speed at Kempton last time. Degas Art is the only horse to lower Katchit's colours this season but, as talented as he is, there is something iffy about his attitude and I could easily see him boiling over before the start. The Jonjo O'Neill-trained Mountain has been aimed at the race all season and looked an above average recruit when winning on his hurdling debut at Sandown.

Main fancy

His double-figure odds look mighty tempting.

Back-to-Lay

Has already demonstrated his love affair with Cheltenham and his ability to travel.

In-Running Back

Liberate

Totesport Gold Cup

Trends (last 10 renewals with most recent in bold)

Winners Age

Winners SP

15/2

Fate of Favourite

Winning Distance

Previous run

7, 9, 10, 9, 8, 7, 8, 9, 7, 7
 9/2, 20/1, 25/1, 16/1, 9/2, 7/1, 13/8f, 8/11f, 4/1f, 7

6th, PU, 3rd, 3rd, 4th, PU, 1st, 1st, 1st, 11th

4, 9, 1 ¾, 1, 5, 1 ¾, 10, ½, 5, 2 ½

1st, Fell, PU, 3rd, 1st, 2nd, 1st, 1st, 1st, 2nd

Going into Cheltenham, no horse has consumed my thoughts more than Kauto Star. Anyone trying to get a decent angle into the Gold Cup needs to ask themselves one question, will Paul Nicholls's freak jump around Cheltenham? He made two howlers en route to King George glory at Kempton in December and I'm 100 per cent certain he'd have been chewing the dirt had he made the same mistakes at Prestbury Park. When you consider his fall in the Champion Chase a year ago, how can you justify backing him at 6-4? You can't. It's not just about him staying on his feet, either, he can't afford to put a foot wrong and we are not talking about a lob around Fontwell, here, as Cheltenham's fences are just about the stiffest around.

Main Fancy

He has been rated below Exotic Dancer after a string of disappointments this season, but we all know that's nonsense, as the champ has been aimed at one race all season and everything else has been a waste of time. He'll be bouncing come Gold Cup day, and if he gets his favoured good ground, watch him go.

Lay

Kauto Star

Whereas he was able to walk through them at Kempton, it'll be like hitting a brick wall at 35mph at Cheltenham and I'm mad keen to draw a line through his name, thus eliminating a huge percentage of the book.

Lay for a Place

Kauto Star

If he does get beat, it's more than likely that it will be his jumping that lets him down.

Back for a Place

Hedgehunter

The forgotten horse of the race who may be a bit of value for another podium finish.

Other races

- If Ouninpohja lines up for the County Hurdle, I'd be fancying him strongly.
- Whyso Mayo won well at Thurles on his reappearance when only 90 per cent fit, he'll go close defending his crown.

Specials

- Paul Nicholls is a short price for the top trainer title, but I'd much prefer to side with Philip Hobbs. He's got some serious chances... Detroit City, Fair Along and Liberate, to name just three.
- Let's go for the double by putting Richard Johnson up for the top jock award. He'll be riding most of Hobbs's and will probably ride at least three winners which will be enough to take the crown - it's good advice, take it!

Cheltenham Views Trading Guide Update

Plans change almost daily now the Cheltenham Festival is looming and injuries, as well as other factors, effect the decision making process. Hedgehunter, who was put up as a live Gold Cup outsider is now going to miss the race and Hairy Molly, who I had nailed down as a potential winner of the Ballymore Properties Novices' Hurdle, looks like he'll be going for the Brit Insurance over three miles instead. If the conditions are very testing, I could see connections reverting to the original Ballymore Properties plan, so perhaps the best thing to do, if you haven't got stuck in already, is to wait until the day of the race market to open. Whatever race they go for, I fancy him to run well.

Since the Trading Guide was written, Well Chief has bolted up in the Game Spirit Chase at Newbury and it seems everyone is making him their Cheltenham banker. Don't be going overboard just yet, as Voy Por Ustedes fell early doors in that race and Ashley Brook, the tearaway front-runner, wasn't 100 per cent according to his connections. So, what did David Pipe's horse actually beat? Nothing is the right answer and he is grossly flattered by his odds, in my opinion. The 'bounce factor is an issue with him now and the

Champion Chase is going to be very competitive with Newmill back in top form, and Voy Por only needing a clear round to go close.

Denman's recent Newbury romp caused his Royal & SunAlliance Chase price to collapse but, rather like Well Chief's Game Spirit win, what did he beat? It was a 3-runner race, with Standin Obligation running a shocker and, main market rival, Mr Pointment's jumping was shoddy to say the least. Again, he was flattered by this, as he was made to look a champion by two let downs on the day. It'll be a different story at the festival and I'm happy to stick with my lay of Paul Nicholls's horse - I might be wrong, but don't mind paying to find out.

For me, Well Chief's price is far too short and I'm not yet prepared to hand him the Champion Chase title off the back of his bloodless Game Spirit success. Voy Por Ustedes fell that day and Ashley Brook, who according to his trainer wasn't right, ran below-par, so you've got to ask the question, what has the Pipe horse beat? Not much is the answer. Yes, he is the form pick and there won't be a Moscow Flyer or Azertyuiopt to worry about, but defending champ Newmill is no chump and Voy Por Ustedes has the class to trouble anything over two miles. Well Chief could win, but I'll be looking to lay him at around the 2.6-mark on the day if his price holds up.

Liberate is still my Triumph Hurdle pick at this stage but, news is, this horse needs good ground to be seen at his best and if it keeps on raining like it is at the moment, he won't get it - definitely something to keep in mind.

Now the entries are out for the handicaps, I'd like to nominate two that I think will be well shorter than their current price on the day, first up, the Nicholl's-trained Saintsaire, who is being aimed at the Grand Annual. Connections have done well to resist some big prizes (was due to run in the VC Chase before it was abandoned) with this lad, as he is a different horse after a long layoff and the fact he's been off for a while is a monster positive. He is currently trading around the 6-1 mark, and I'll be disappointed if traders can't secure a no-lose position by laying him back (I'd rather let it ride, myself) at around the 3-1 mark on the day.

The Tom Taafe-trained Finger OnThe Pulse has a World Hurdle entry, but connections are almost certainly going down the Coral Cup route with him and, at the current 33-1, I'm struggling to find a better value bet over the four days of the festival. Granted, he was poor at Kempton last time, but I

understand he endured a torrid journey over on the ferry and connections are keen to give him a bit more time to get used to the surroundings at Cheltenham, so the 33-1 is simply massive value for a class act in a handicap.

Did you know...

- Noland was matched at an incredible 799/1 in-running on Betdaq in last year's opener.
- 0% Commission on all bets matched after the 'off'.
- Newmill was matched at 67/1 for last year's Champion Chase on Betdaq 7 days before the race.
- Betdaq is the only exchange to offer multiple bets on racing.
- Betdaq offers 20% better odds on average. Why win less?

BETTING NOTES