



2019
Cheltenham Festival

Racing TVi

FULL RUNNING ORDER

Champion Day - Tuesday, March 13 (Old Course)

- 1.30pm *Sky Bet Supreme Novices' Hurdle* (Grade 1) 3300m
- 2.10pm *Racing Post Arkle Novices' Chase* (Grade 1) 3200m
- 2.50pm *Ultima Handicap Chase* (Grade 3) 5000m
- 3.30pm *Unibet Champion Hurdle* (Grade 1) 3300m
- 4.10pm *OLBG Mares' Hurdle* (Grade 1) 4000m
- 4.50pm *Close Brothers Novices' Handicap Chase* (Listed) 4100m
- 5.30pm *National Hunt Chase* (Amateur Riders' Novices' Chase) (Grade 2) 6400m

Ladies Day - Wednesday, March 14 (Old Course & Cross Country)

- 1.30pm *Ballymore Novices' Hurdle* (Grade 1) 4200m
- 2.10pm *RSA Insurance Novices' Chase* (Grade 1) 4900m
- 2.50pm *Coral Cup Handicap Hurdle* (Grade 3) 4200m
- 3.30pm *Betway Queen Mother Champion Chase* (Grade 1) 3200m
- 4.10pm *Glenfarclas Cross Country Chase* 6000m
- 4.50pm *Boodles Fred Winter Juvenile Handicap Hurdle* (Grade 3) 3300m
- 5.30pm *Weatherbys Champion Bumper* (Grade 1) 3300m

St Patrick's Thursday - Thursday, March 15 (New Course)

- 1.30pm *JLT Novices' Chase* (Grade 1) 4000m
- 2.10pm *Pertemps Network Final* (Grade 3) 4800m
- 2.50pm *Ryanair Chase* (Grade 1) 4200m
- 3.30pm *Sun Racing Stayers' Hurdle* (Grade 1) 4800m
- 4.10pm *Brown Advisory & Merriebelle Stable Plate* (Grade 3) 4200m
- 4.50pm *National Hunt Breeders Supported by Tattersalls Mares' Novices' Hurdle* (Grade 2) 3400m
- 5.30pm *Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Amateur Riders' Handicap Chase* 5200m

Gold Cup Day - Friday, March 16 (New Course)

- 1.30pm *JCB Triumph Hurdle* (Grade 1) 3400m
- 2.10pm *Randox Health County Handicap Hurdle* (Grade 3) 3400m
- 2.50pm *Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle* (Grade 1) 4800m
- 3.30pm *Magners Cheltenham Gold Cup* (Grade 1) 5300m
- 4.10pm *St James's Place Foxhunter Chase* (Amateur riders) 5300m
- 4.50pm *Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap Hurdle* 4100m
- 5.30pm *Johnny Henderson Grand Annual Handicap Chase* (Grade 3) 3300m

The Cheltenham Festival – history and highlights

An iconic sporting event and the highlight of the British jumps racing season every year, the Cheltenham Festival is the meeting for which many owners, trainers and jockeys have been waiting ever since Gold Cup day last year.

In excess of 260,000 racegoers will flock through the gates to witness the very best performers in action, a true pilgrimage for fans of the sport and socialites alike.

Hundreds of millions of pounds will be wagered over the four days of action, with the likes of Altior, Buveur D'Air and Native River all bidding for repeat victories in the championship contests.

All of the modern-day greats of jumps racing from Arkle to Desert Orchid and Night Nurse to Kauto Star have etched their names into the sport's record books at this meeting.

This year, it is Altior who is in line to join their ranks as he bids to extend his remarkable winning sequence to include a fourth Festival success. Trained by Nicky Henderson, Altior bids to follow up his seven-length success in last year's Betway Queen Mother Champion Chase.

If successful, he would be providing Henderson with a record-equalling sixth Champion Chase victory. It's not as if he is the trainer's only big gun to fire too, with Buveur D'Air out to land the Champion Hurdle for the third consecutive year and a host of other exciting prospects such as Champ, Santini, Angels Breath, OK Corral and On The Blind Side all set to go off as leading favourites for their selected targets in the big novice races.

FESTIVAL FACTS

£4.5m Total prize money at the Cheltenham Festival is up again this year

21,120 ft The race distance for the National Hunt Chase, the longest contest of the meeting
(or 643,748 cm)

7 Ruby Walsh holds the record for the most races won at any Cheltenham Festival, having scored seven victories in 2009 and 2016

6 The record for the most consecutive wins at the Festival is held by Quevega, who took the OLBG Mares' Hurdle every year between 2009 and 2014

28 Racing TVi is the place to go for every single one of the 28 Cheltenham Festival contests. Tune in and you won't miss a jump

5 Number of times Willie Mullins has been crowned champion Cheltenham Festival trainer already this decade

Tuesday's star performer – Buveur D'Air



His preparations may not have gone entirely to plan this season, but Buveur D'Air nevertheless heads to the Cheltenham Festival carrying plenty of confidence as he bids to land the Unibet Champion Hurdle for the third time, a feat that has been achieved just five times previously.

Nicky Henderson's eight-year-old started his campaign so well, registering an ultra-impressive victory from Samcro when retaining the Grade 1 Fighting Fifth Hurdle at Newcastle, but shock defeat followed behind stablemate Verdane Blue in the Christmas Hurdle at Kempton.

He was at least back to winning ways quickly when sauntering to a two-length success at Sandown last month and connections have indicated this year's preparations have gone smoothly, unlike 12 months ago where he toughed it out despite reportedly being under-par on the day.

Victory in this contest will arguably require a new career-best from Buveur D'Air though, with stern opposition arising in the form of smart Irish mares Apple's Jade and Laurina, trained by Gordon Elliott and Willie Mullins respectively.

Apple's Jade has produced some of the most impressive performances by any horse so far this season, winning her four races by a combined distance of 71 lengths, and she commands the utmost respect despite suffering defeat at the Festival last year.

Laurina took the Mares' Novice Hurdle 12 months ago and remains unbeaten for Mullins. Although it is hard to know just how good she could be following a cautiously-planned campaign, she possesses a potent mix of speed and slick jumping. It promises to be one of best races of the week.

Champion Hurdle key stats

- Perhaps defeat in the Christmas Hurdle wasn't a disaster for Buveur D'Air – only two of the last 26 winners at Kempton went on to do the double in this race.
- Five-year-olds have a poor record in this race. Before Katchit (2008) a total of 73 five-year-olds tried and failed and a further 28 have been beaten since.
- Irish-trained runners have a good recent record, being responsible for 12 of the last 20 winners.

Tuesday's other highlights

It's a roar like no other as the tapes go up for the first contest of the Festival, the 3300m Sky Bet Supreme Novices' Hurdle. Trained by Nigel Twiston-Davies, the unbeaten Al Dancer is likely to be sent off favourite.

The Nicky Henderson-trained Angel's Breath is another big player although the gelding will need to improve upon the form he showed in last month's defeat at Kempton. Elixir De Nutz, Mister Fisher, Grand Sancy and Thomas Darby have all shown form strong enough to see them figure.

The Racing Post Arkle Challenge Trophy (3200m) is always a fast-and-furious affair, in which previous Cheltenham form is an important asset, with 14 of the last 16 winners having scored before at the track. Lalor would be a poignant winner for Kayley Woollacott, who took over the training of the horse after the death of her husband, Richard. The gelding scored over course-and-distance in November and would be one of most popular winners of the week.

TRAINER IN FOCUS –

Willie Mullins

TOTAL CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WINNERS: 61

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 29-241 (12%)

BIGGEST FESTIVAL HOPE: BENIE DES DIEUX

Willie Mullins is one of Ireland's most successful and decorated National Hunt trainers, yet there is still one race that continues to elude him – the Magners Cheltenham Gold Cup.

The 62-year-old once again proved the man to follow when sending out eight winners in 2018, but is still looking for a first Gold Cup despite a couple of near-misses. He plans to run four this year, each with legitimate claims of ending that drought.

However, despite his huge success at the Cheltenham Festival in recent years, Mullins says he will be sending a slimmed-down team to the meeting, reflecting the fact that his season has been quieter than might have been expected at home.

The ground – quicker than is usually the case during the winter as a result of drier and warmer weather – has led to frustration for the trainer and the likes of Faugheen, Un De Sceaux and Footpad have all had endured stop-start campaigns as a result.



Laurina, Sharjah and Melon head a strong team for Mullins in the Champion Hurdle, but may have a task to beat Apple's Jade and Buveur D'Air, however the trainer will be represented by his usual strong team in the novice and mares' events.

Wednesday's star performer – Altior



Arguably the most famous horse to be appearing at the Festival all week long, all eyes will be on Altior on Wednesday as he bids to win at the Festival for the fourth year in succession and also make it back-to-back victories in the 3200m Betway Queen Mother Champion Chase.

The gelding endured a troubled preparation last season, yet still forged clear for another impressive success and barring any accidents, it is very hard to see anything other than victory for Nicky Henderson's nine-year-old. It has been business as usual for Altior in his three starts so far this term, comfortably seeing off a number of familiar rivals as well as some of last year's top novice chasers.

Of course, there is no such thing as a certainty in racing and with plenty of prize money on offer, none of the opposition will be planning to participate in a victory parade for Altior.

Among those looking to end Altior's unbeaten 17-race winning sequence will be a Willie Mullins representative, with the trainer set to choose between Min or Footpad. The former finished second to Altior at the Festival in both 2016 and 2018. Familiar names such as Un De Sceaux and God's Own could also be considered but perhaps it will be Yorkshire-trained Lady Buttons who lays down the biggest challenge. Phil Kirby's mare is unbeaten this season and yet to race against Altior.

Champion Chase key stats

- A light campaign seems to be an advantage heading into this race. The last 21 winners of this race had all raced no more than four times previously during that season.
- Only one winner since 1993 has returned at more than 11-1 and short-priced horses have a good record in the race.
- Six horses have done the Tingle Creek/Champion Chase double already this century. Altior bids to become the seventh.

Wednesday's other highlights

There could be no more aptly-named Festival winner this week than Champ, the horse named by JP McManus after the jockey with whom he shared so much Cheltenham glory, Sir Anthony McCoy. Unbeaten and impressive so far this season, Champ lines up in the 4200m Ballymore Novices' Hurdle.

Battleoverdoyen represents last year's winning connections and he leads a strong Irish challenge, flanked by the rapidly-improving City Island, trained by Martin Brassil.

The RSA Chase (4800m) often points toward future Gold Cup potential and the recent roll of honour includes Bobs Worth and Lord Windermere. Gordon Elliot's Delta Work took the Pertemps Final at the Festival last year and has made a seamless transition to larger obstacles. Topofthegame could be best of the British challenge.

TRAINER IN FOCUS –

Nicky Henderson

TOTAL CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WINNERS: 60

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 39-333 (12%)

BIGGEST FESTIVAL HOPE: ALTIOR

Eleventh-hour drama over Santini's participation in the RSA Chase would have left many trainers tearing their hair out, but Nicky Henderson has seen it all before.

Five times the champion trainer in Britain, Henderson began training in 1978 and has a formidable record at this meeting with 60 Festival winners in the bag, including seven victories in the Champion Hurdle and a leading chance to make it eight with Buveur D'Air this year.

Altior is another to have already made a notable contribution to Henderson's Cheltenham tally and his participation at the meeting comes with the additional pressure of being one of the most popular horses in training. Of course, Henderson has done it all before with the likes of Sprinter Sacre and See You Then.

Might Bite is out to repeat his Magners Cheltenham Gold Cup success of two years ago, but arguably the trainer's strongest hand will come in the novice division as he saddles a host of exciting young horses with the potential to be the stars of the future.



One of those attracting particular attention is Epatante in the Mares' Novice Hurdle, a five-year-old who will be having only his third run for the stable but who is described by Henderson as being "very, very nice".

Thursday's star performer – Paisley Park



Paisley Park has already produced one of the most memorable moments of the British jumps season, his victory in January's Grade 2 Cleeve Hurdle sparking joyous scenes in the Cheltenham winner's enclosure. His owner, Andrew Gemmell, blind from birth, could not hide his joy as he heard the commentator calling Paisley Park home and those watching on loved every minute too as he celebrated the success of his beloved horse, who had just put down a considerable marker for this race.

Gemmell has owned horses for 21 years but Paisley Park is unquestionably the most successful horse to race in his colours, with the gelding's victory in the Grade 1 JLT Hurdle at Ascot in December handing trainer Emma Lavelle and jockey Aidan Coleman their first victories at the highest level.

The seven-year-old has improved markedly since finishing well beaten at this meeting last year, moving up the ranks since winning a handicap at Aintree back in October. Paisley Park is a thorough stayer, who often needs some encouragement in the early stages of his races, but he has packed a truly powerful finish in all of his recent races.

Should he fall short, there are a number of fascinating other contenders in the 4800m Sun Racing Stayers' Hurdle. Supasundae won at the Festival in 2017 before finishing second in this race in 2018 and this likeable and consistent performer must go close again.

Fellow Irish contender Faugheen, the Champion Hurdle hero of 2015, hasn't quite been the same since injury intervened at this stage three years ago, but has shown considerably more sparkle since being moved up in distance. If he can get into a good rhythm in the early stages, he unquestionably has the raw talent to bring the house down again.

Stayers' Hurdle key stats

- Only six of the 46 modern-day renewals of this race have been won by a horse aged nine or older with six and seven-year-olds scoring in 21 of the last 28 years.
- The winner of the Cleeve Hurdle frequently acquits themselves well here – nine of the last 10 Cleeve winners finished in the first four in this race.
- Previous Cheltenham Festival form, ideally in a Grade 1, is a big positive. Several ex-Champion Hurdle candidates have successfully moved up in distance to this contest.

Thursday's other highlights

The action moves across to the New Course on Thursday and it is the JLT Novices' Chase (4000m) that gets us underway. Since being introduced in 2011, Willie Mullins has dominated this event with four wins from eight renewals, and his likely representative Real Steel is sure to be popular.

Among the British hopes, Colin Tizzard's Lostintranslation has done little wrong despite only winning one of his four starts this season and is closely matched with Philip Hobbs' Defi Du Seuil, a winner at the Festival two years ago. Both head into the race with leading claims.

The likely line-up for the Ryanair Chase (4200m) is less clear. However, Footpad and Monalee are among the most obvious candidates and both hold leading claims, not least considering that their respective trainers, Willie Mullins and Henry De Bromhead, have won the last three renewals of this race between them. Second to Presenting Percy in last year's RSA Chase, Monalee scored takingly at Gowran Park last month.

JOCKEY IN FOCUS –

Bryony Frost

TOTAL CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WINNERS: 1

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 7-27 (26%)

BIGGEST FESTIVAL HOPE: FRODON



One of British jumps racing's most engaging and exciting stars, having emerged to take British jumps racing by storm in the last couple of years, Bryony Frost bids to make even more headlines at the Cheltenham Festival aboard regular partner Frodon.

The 23-year-old jockey scored at the Festival as an amateur in 2017 and hasn't looked back since, bagging a Grade 1 on Black Corton months after turning professional, and building up a fine relationship with Frodon, who is set to line up in the Ryanair Chase.

When they first teamed up, Frost was taking 5lb off the chaser's back as he struggled to mix it with the likes of Might Bite and Top Notch, but ever since they have continued to rise up the ranks together, including three victories at this course.

After taking the Cotswold Chase at the track last time out, holding off Gold Cup hope Elegant Escape in a thrilling finish, Frost said: "I say it all the time, he's a complete pleasure to ride. I haven't ridden a horse with a heart like him. I can't say how awesome he is."

Looking forward to the Festival, she went on: "We are at our favourite track and we will go and do what we can, and whatever will be, will be. I know he will always give me 110 per cent."

Friday's star performer – Presenting Percy



The statistics may say that horses don't come to Cheltenham and win the Magners Cheltenham Gold Cup without having jumped a single steeplechase fence in public during the whole season, but connections of Presenting Percy have always enjoyed doing things differently.

Uncertainty surrounds the exact reason as to why Presenting Percy has only been seen once on the racecourse since his success in last year's RSA Chase, winning over hurdles at Gowran Park in January. Perhaps things didn't go to plan with his training, or perhaps trainer Pat Kelly – who knows the horse better than anyone – simply believes the horse is best kept fresh.

Kelly prefers to keep his own counsel on such matters, but happily, owner Philip Reynolds, for whom Kelly has now delivered a Festival winner in each of the last three seasons, is a little more lugubrious.

"Pat has always said he's a really special horse," he said. "Whether he's special enough to win a Gold Cup, I don't know, but he's as special a horse as I've had around me or am ever likely to have."

As ever, the 5300m contest is packed full of the smartest performers in the sphere, including last year's winner Native River, one of three contenders from Colin Tizzard's team, and the hugely-progressive Clan Des Obeaux, impressive winner of the King George VI Chase at Kempton.

Another fascinating contender is 2017 winner Might Bite, wholly out of shape in two appearances so far this season, but clearly capable of bouncing back if Nicky Henderson has been able to re-ignite the fire in his enigmatic performer.

Gold Cup key stats

- It is 30 years since a horse last won the Gold Cup without having had at least one run over fences earlier in the season.
- While previous Cheltenham Festival form is important, Native River was the first horse for more than a decade to win the Gold Cup having competed unsuccessfully in the race in the previous year.
- Sixteen of the last 18 winners came into the contest having had no more than 12 starts over fences.

Friday's other highlights

Not all talented Flat performers go on to make the grade over jumps. Indeed, some of the most brilliant hurdlers were barely able to win a race on the Flat.

However, when a horse comes along who has both smart Flat form and a sound jumping technique, the combination can prove a potent one and judged on the evidence seen so far, JCB Triumph Hurdle favourite Sir Erec looks to fit that bill.

A very smart stayer on the Flat, it was only months ago that Sir Erec was in action on Champions Day at Ascot, but he was done well since being switched to hurdles, winning two from two and most recently taking the Spring Juvenile Hurdle, a key trial for this contest.

The third Grade 1 on the card, the Albert Bartlett Novice Hurdle and jumping experience has proved important so far with every previous winner having had at least three previous starts over obstacles.

TRAINER IN FOCUS –

Joseph O'Brien

TOTAL CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL WINNERS: 0

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 1-20 (5%)

BIGGEST FESTIVAL HOPE: SIR EREC



Joseph O'Brien's achievements in racing are quite remarkable for a 25-year-old. As a jockey, he rode more than 30 Group 1 winners, including two Epsom Derbies, while he has already made a huge impact in just a couple of years as a trainer.

Before starting out under his own name as a trainer, O'Brien studied under the tutelage of his father, Aidan, and was given all the credit for the success of Ivanovich Gorbатов in the JCB Triumph Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival in 2016. He would, of course, dearly like to now train a Festival winner under his own name.

O'Brien's leading chance comes in the shape of Sir Erec, a high-class stayer on the Flat when trained by his father last year. He has done nothing wrong in two victories over hurdles so far and will go off favourite for Friday's JCB Triumph Hurdle.

He may already have a winner on the board by then with Fakir D'Oudaires an obvious candidate in the Sky Bet Supreme Novices' Hurdle that starts the meeting on Tuesday.

Like Sir Erec, this four-year-old is two from two over jumps for O'Brien, most recently powering up the hill at this track to land a Grade 2, the trainer's first Cheltenham winner.

Your guide to top jockeys in action at the 2019 Cheltenham Festival

Racing TVi

Ruby Walsh

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 58

LEADING CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL JOCKEY:

2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 18-70 (26%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: LAURINA, MIN, BENIE DES DIEUX

Walsh has played a part in some of the meeting's most iconic moments throughout the last 15 years, at times playing both friend and foe of the punters. His partnership with champion Irish trainer Willie Mullins has proved hugely successful and considerably more long standing than many other similar arrangements in the sport.



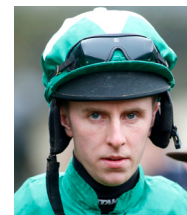
Mark Walsh

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 1

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 4-29 (14%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: ESPOIR D'ALLEN, RHINESTONE

Principal jockey for JP McManus in Ireland, Walsh has been as busy as ever this season and has partnered a number of the leading green-and-gold contenders in the build-up to the Festival. He will have to step aside now on some for Barry Geraghty, but is nevertheless sure to still have a strong book of rides when the dust settles.



Barry Geraghty

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 36

LEADING CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL JOCKEY:

2003 & 2012

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 35-205 (17%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: BUVEUR D'AIR, CHAMP, EPATANTE

Retained rider for leading owner JP McManus and bags of big-race experience to call upon as a result. With many of the McManus team only having their final targets confirmed in the final days before the meeting, he can at least be sure of getting the leg-up only on horses who are showing the right signs to their trainers.



Paul Townend

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 8

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 8-73 (11%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: BACARDYS, KEMBOY

As second-string rider for Willie Mullins, Townend knows the majority of his mounts will come from horses Ruby Walsh has overlooked, but Townend is a talented jockey who ended up with two winners from the same source at last year's meeting and is likely to have plenty of chances to add to that tally.



Richard Johnson

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 22

LEADING CHELTENHAM FESTIVAL JOCKEY:

2002

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 34-257 (13%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: NATIVE RIVER, LALOR

Firmly on course for another jockeys' championship this season and may well do better than last year's tally of one Festival victory (thanks to Native River) with the Philip Hobbs team in far better form now than was the case 12 months ago.



Jack Kennedy

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 5

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 5-22 (23%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: BATTLEOVERDOYEN, APPLE'S JADE

Relationship with trainer Gordon Elliott and owner Gigginstown House Stud saw the talented teenager team up with Apple's Jade in November 2017 and it's proved a highly-successful partnership, the mare winning six of her eight starts under Kennedy. Can she put it up to Buveur D'Air in the Unibet Champion Hurdle?



Davy Russell

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 18

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 14-79 (18%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: PRESENTING PERCY, DELTA WORK

Having ridden at least one winner at the meeting every year since 2016, Russell's first loyalty lies with Pat Kelly and understandably so, given that he will be aboard one of the leading Gold Cup fancies. However, Russell is sure to pick up plenty of other rides too, including from the Gigginstown team.



Nico de Boinville

FESTIVAL WINS SO FAR: 7

CHELTENHAM PERFORMANCE OVER LAST FIVE SEASONS: 20-103 (19%)

POSSIBLE HOPES: ALTIOR, SANTINI, ANGELS BREATH

Stable jockey to Nicky Henderson and about the only rider who can legitimately say that anything less than at least one winner will be a disappointment, given Altior's record heading into the Champion Chase. Has a fine record at the Cheltenham Festival and the big-race atmosphere clearly doesn't bother him.

