

ANDY RICHMOND'S IN RUNNING NOTES 25th August 2012

YORK 2.30 – Melrose Stakes 1M 6F

IN-RUNNING OBSERVATIONS

Unfortunately no three-year-olds have made it into the Ebor for yet another year, but here we have what we could term the Classic generation Ebor and this Melrose Stakes is always taking a careful note of as the winner often goes on to score in Group company, the 2010 Mount Athos providing a really good case in point.

We have 17 going to post this year as Ace of Valhalla is a non-runner, the topweight Gospel Choir is one of two Sir Michael Stoute runners in the line-up and he's already shown some useful and progressive form and more importantly he should get a really good tow into this race with four likely front runners able to take him into the race and just remember that he does find plenty for pressure and responds in a very likeable manner. That trait has already fooled IR layers on three occasions as for all three victories he has traded well above his SP – don't get fooled here. You could also put Sir Graham Wade into that responsive category although he will be ridden more conservatively and his mark is beginning to look a little high now and I'm still wary of his trainers continuing poor record with his Knavesmire runners.

Guarantee will be tracking the leaders travelling strongly and he is still improving and holds a St Leger entry. His bare form so far won't be good enough to win this but I suspect there is plenty of improvement to come and has shown a very willing attitude in his races so far and has found plenty when coming under pressure. Biographer is certainly progressing along the right lines and dug very deep to win at Ffos Las last time out, where he would probably have benefitted from a stronger gallop and a strong pace would see him in the mix here.

Monshak is another from the Stoute camp and he looks another who will be improving for this likely stronger pace and she did well to overcome the run of the race last time out at Chester, where she was the first horse on the card to win from a hold-up position, so defying a pace bias on that occasion. She was very gutsy there and once again traded well above her SP and that may happen again here especially on quicker ground.

If there was a horse that was unlucky last time out then it was Cardinal Walter who shaped well in a Goodwood handicap that was won by Sir Graham Wade – but he suffered a double dose of interference on that occasion and if Spencer can get him settled as he can be keen and gain a clearer passage this time he could go close. As I write Goldolphin have been having a good day and they have Future Security in this race and we can also file him in the growing group that could well do far better than their form so far with a stronger gallop. He can be slow to stride but that should help him get settled – he has responded well to pressure with his two victories having seen him trade at 34.0 and 95.0 IR after starting at single figures SP's.

Three of the lower weighted horses look likely to be amongst those racing prominently – those would be Daneking, Choisan and Flashman and that will be good news for the group that would like or need a much stronger gallop.

PACE MAP

FRONT RUNNERS: BEYOND CONCEIT, DANEKING, CHOISAN, FLASHMAN

PROMINENT: GOSPEL CHOIR

CHASE LEADERS: RULE BOOK, MYSTERIOUS MAN, COURTESY CALL

TRACK LEADERS: GUARANTEE, BIOGRAPHER, COCKNEY SPARROW

MIDFIELD: SIR GRAHAM WADE

HELD UP: GABRIAL THE GREAT, MONSHAK, CARDINAL WALTER, GABRIAL'S STAR, FUTURE SECURITY

BETTING ANGLE

Improvers aplenty here and the likelihood of a decently run race but as we have seen it is possible to come from last to first to win here and I have a feeling it will be one of the hold-up gang that prevails here. Gospel Choir is the likely favourite but I'm not so sure that this colt is the smoothest of travellers being more of a grinding galloper who finds plenty for pressure and for my money he will trade above that likely 6.0 SP at a few points in the race – the evidence is there from the previous starts. That's not to say that he can't win but he it will be a gutsy more than impressive win to my mind if it does happen.

We mentioned a few that would be suited by a stronger gallop; in that group would be Guarantee, Biographer, Future Security, Monshak and Cockney Sparrow. The first named of those is eye-catching and won last time out in the style of a fast-improving horse, albeit one who responds well to pressure. I'm going to suggest backing half of your stakes at 8.6 or better and then using the other half to back him IR at a double-figure price early in the race. You should then be looking to trade your total stake back at around 4.1 with further lays at 2.56 and 1.81 to produce a profit whatever happens. Monshak is the other out of that group that is of particular interest and I wouldn't put anyone off playing on him in a similar manner to Guarantee.

I normally spurn so called unlucky horses but Cardinal Walter draws me in here and if Spencer can get plenty of cover which he should be able to do from the 11 draw and get him settled then he may well make up for the luckless run at Goodwood last time out. I'm going to want at least 10.0 or better to support him and if that price is obtained I'll be trading out for the stakes at 4.6 (or thereabouts) and adding some extra insurance at around the 2.62 marker.



**All the pace map and IR information is obtained via the Proform Professional software - (www.proformprofessional.com)*

YORK 3.05 – Lonsdale Cup 2M

IN-RUNNING OBSERVATIONS

A race that usually goes to a fancied runner – nine of the last ten winners of the Lonsdale were priced at 7-1 or less and the favourite has finished 13211231 in the last eight years and all of that augurs well for Saddler's Rock after his emphatic success in the Goodwood Cup three weeks ago. This race appears to have a similar set-up to that race with Thimaar this time playing the Electrolyser role as a pace-setter. On that occasion it was Saddler's Rock who was ridden most much closer to the pace and barely moved above his 3.25 SP and that could be the same case here especially as the long York straight is perfect for the way that the Irish challenger unwinds his strong finishing run.

Against him he has some that have been smart performers, amongst those Cavalryman and Ibicenco, the former won in cosy fashion last time out but he could be playing catch-up here from the hold-up brigade and with Saddler's Rock being raced more prominently he may have too much to do. Ibicenco ran a very encouraging race in the Henry II Stakes and he comes here off a break – he looks to be one with a little bit of improvement in him especially at this trip, he could have the run of the race here alongside Saddler's Rock especially as there are plenty of hold-up horses in this race.

Of the other runners Askar Tau is a very tricky customer who races on and off the bridle, Glen's Diamond frequently dwells at the start and High Jinx who was a late defection from the Ebor is a strong traveller but this is his first step into Group company and can he travel as well in this better class?.

Simenon was slightly disappointing in the Goodwood Cup where he didn't travel as well as usual and he has plenty to find with the favourite and is likely to give away a start also. Times Up is another strong traveller but is he really up to this class and his stable is still in questionable form.

PACE MAP

FRONT RUNNER: THIMAAR

PROMINENT: SADDLER'S ROCK

CHASE LEADERS:

TRACK LEADERS: IBICENCO, SOLAR SKY

MIDFIELD: GLEN'S DIAMOND

HELD UP: ASKAR TAU (races lazily), CAVALRYMAN, HIGH JINX, LOST IN THE MOMENT, SIMENON, TIMES UP

BETTING ANGLE

Without stating the obvious it's fairly hard to find something to take on the favourite here and with Saddler's Rock at around 2.5 there is little elasticity in that price and he does seem to be travelling well in his races now especially he is ridden a little more prominently.

Of the others likely to start in single figures I could see Cavalryman easily topping a likely SP of 5.5 in the early stages and it was Ibicenco that was the one horse that was a shade overpriced and if you can grab some double figures prices or better I would have a small bet with a view to not getting too complicated and trading out at around half the odds obtained and hoping that Saddler's Rock has a off day to leave you with a free bet.



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YORK 3.40 – Ebor Handicap 1M 6F

IN-RUNNING OBSERVATIONS

Sadly no three-year-olds again this year but a race with plenty of interest and like the previous ten runnings at York I expect the winner to come from off the pace and whilst the draw used to play a much bigger part in the Ebor I'm still a little wary of those drawn very low.

Much of the interest in the race centres around the Sir Mark Prescott trained Motivado who has just about scrapped into the race off what is perceived to be a good mark and he is all the rage in the betting which has a rather lopsided feel about it. Yes he was impressive last time out but he has disappointed twice at York and I wouldn't be surprised to see him in a pocket at some point in the race and having to use himself to get out of trouble – if you do want to back him I would far rather do so in-running as he hasn't really struck me as a smooth travelling type on all his runs.

Camborne and Qahriman are trained by two trainers equally adept as Prescott at getting their horses to win big handicaps and in Luca Cumani we have a trainer with an excellent record in this race. His Qahriman has already won over this C&D but is drawn 1 and he'll need to drop in and hope the breaks come for him. Camborne is something of a quirky type often slowly away he can travel well but then displays some idle tendencies and although he won well at Ascot last time out he does have a fairly tough task here at the weights and it won't surprise me to see him flicker above that SP at some point in the race – especially as he does look quirky at times.

Beaten by Camborne last time was Hammerfest and he's seen run a very good race in Listed company at Deauville, nearest at the finish without coming under too much pressure or being shown the whip. He's a smooth traveller in his races and look to be nicely weighted here and I'm not at all concerned by his wide draw.

Running through the rest of the runners I can offer the following IR comments on them:

Steps To Freedom – can travel strongly, but is often slowly away

Crackentorp – of the longer prices has a good record at York and from his track position he offers a little back-to-lay scope

Alkimos – can often be slowly way and that could well compromise his chance here

Icon Dream – is a tricky customer and I would be careful of him in a finish if he gets there as he has been beaten at 2.24 and 1.52 in his last two starts – one to be wary of in a tight finish

Number Theory – travels strongly in his races, but is he a Haydock specialist? – Does respond well to pressure though.

Tominator – another very strong traveller and appears to enjoy these big field handicaps although he might find one of two of these with a little bit too much toe for him

PACE MAP

FRONT RUNNER: BOB LE BEAU, SENSE OF PURPOSE

PROMINENT: AREA FIFTY ONE, ROYAL DIAMOND

CHASE LEADERS: DREAMSPEED

TRACK LEADERS: CRACKENTHORP, HAMMERFEST

MIDFIELD: HURRICANE HIGGINS

HELD UP: STEPS TO FREEDOM, CAMBORNE, WILLING FOE, ALKIMOS, ICON DREAM, BLUE BAJAN, NUMBER THEORY, TOMINATOR, ROCK A DOODLE DOO, MOTIVADO, HARRISON'S CAVE, QAHRIMAN

BETTING ANGLE

Motivado is going to be all the range here but he offers little scope as a back-to-lay proposition and I still think he may find some trouble in this race and although it's limited evidence his two York outings have been disappointing.

Both Camborne and Qahrman will have their supporters and rightly so – the former is a tricky customer though and I can see him also giving backers a chance to grab a better price from his likely track position especially if he blows the start again. The Cumani runner is one that I really like especially as his attitude is very very good and he responds well to pressure and I can see him staying on strongly at the end and go close to giving Luca Cumani another success in the race but the one runner that I really like is the John Hammond runner Hammerfest. I'll be looking to back him at around the 13.0 mark and trading out the stakes gently on this smooth and classy traveller who is underestimated here.

If you obtained the price suggested I would then lay half the stakes back at around 5.5 – the other half at 3.5 and take some further insurance at 2.56 to an extra stake.

There are numerous others in with a chance in this handicap and I can see it being a horse sweeping through off the pace that wins it but I am going to keep it simple and stick with Hammerfest who has been a long time fancy for this race and looks to have had a an excellent preparation.



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