

TIMEFORM

Your complete guide to the

ROYAL ASCOT MEETING



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Introduction

Welcome to the 2018 Royal Ascot magazine presented by Timeform which features previews and tips for the big races over the course of the week. With the meeting—which enjoys a 10% increase in prize money to £7.3 million this year—broadcast to 175 countries, the organisers are keen on enticing global superstars, with the Queen Anne Stakes, Diamond Jubilee Stakes and King's Stand Stakes all won by foreign-trained horses in the last decade.

Indeed, last year's winner of the King's Stand, **Lady Aurelia**, who was following up her win in the Queen Mary Stakes when winning 12 months ago, is back to defend her crown. She is trained by Wesley Ward, who can boast an excellent record at this meeting (nine winners since 2009), and is set for a mouth-watering clash with Timeform's joint highest-rated horse in training **Battaash**. The bookmakers are finding it hard to split the pair in the ante-post markets, and it promises to be a fast and furious clash on the opening day.

The Queen Anne Stakes kicks off proceedings, and **Rhododendron** appears to hold leading claims following her victory in the Lockinge Stakes last time, though French raider **Recoletos** is unbeaten this year and shouldn't be underestimated. Continuing with the international theme, the winner of the Queen Anne, along with the horses who are successful in the Prince of Wales's Stakes, Norfolk Stakes and Diamond Jubilee Stakes, will all earn automatic berths to the Breeders' Cup at Churchill Downs in November. The leading three-year-old milers clash in the St James's Palace Stakes later on Tuesday's card, where the unbeaten **Without Parole** is likely to prove popular.

Timeform's other joint highest-rated horse in training **Cracksman** takes centre stage on Wednesday and the John Gosden-trained colt will prove very hard to beat in the Prince of Wales's. He never looked happy at Epsom last time, but did well to reel in a well-ridden rival and much better is expected of him now returned to the venue of his devastating Champion Stakes victory. Sir Michael Stoute's late-maturing **Poet's Word** will likely give him most to think about.

The 2016 winner **Order of St George** seemingly has plenty in his favour again in Thursday's Gold Cup. He didn't get the clearest passage when narrowly beaten 12 months ago and seems sure to go close, though the up-and-comer in the staying division, **Stradivarius**, could potentially improve past him in what looks set to be a fascinating renewal. Stradivarius, along with **Idaho** and **Torcedor**, is one of three horses in the race who are still eligible for the WH Stayers' Million, a prize of £1 million that will be awarded to the connections of a horse that has won one of four recognised prep races in May, and goes on to win the Ascot feature, the Goodwood Cup and the Lonsdale Cup at York.

The Commonwealth Cup on Friday appears to be one of the most open renewals since its inception in 2015, with **Sioux Nation** vying for favouritism **with Equilateral**. They both arrive on the back of impressive wins, though it is the former, successful in the Norfolk Stakes at this meeting last year, who has more substance to his form. Ballydoyle also hold sound claims in the Coronation Stakes later in the day with **Clemmie**, who shaped better than the bare result on her return last time. A sister to dual-Guineas winner Churchill, she should have plenty more to offer at a mile this season.

Finally, the Diamond Jubilee is the feature race on Saturday. Timeform top-rated **Harry Angel** is bidding to record his first win at Ascot but there are challengers aplenty, including Australian raider **Redkirk Warrior**, who has looked better than ever in his two victories at Flemington this year. **Merchant Navy**, who finished a neck behind Redkirk Warrior in March before making a winning start for Aidan O'Brien last month, is very much another to consider in a very interesting—and international—renewal.

The team of handicappers at Timeform also bring you their best bets from three of the handicaps at the meeting, so head over to the [Betfair Sportsbook](#) to place your bets!

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2018 Royal Ascot Meeting
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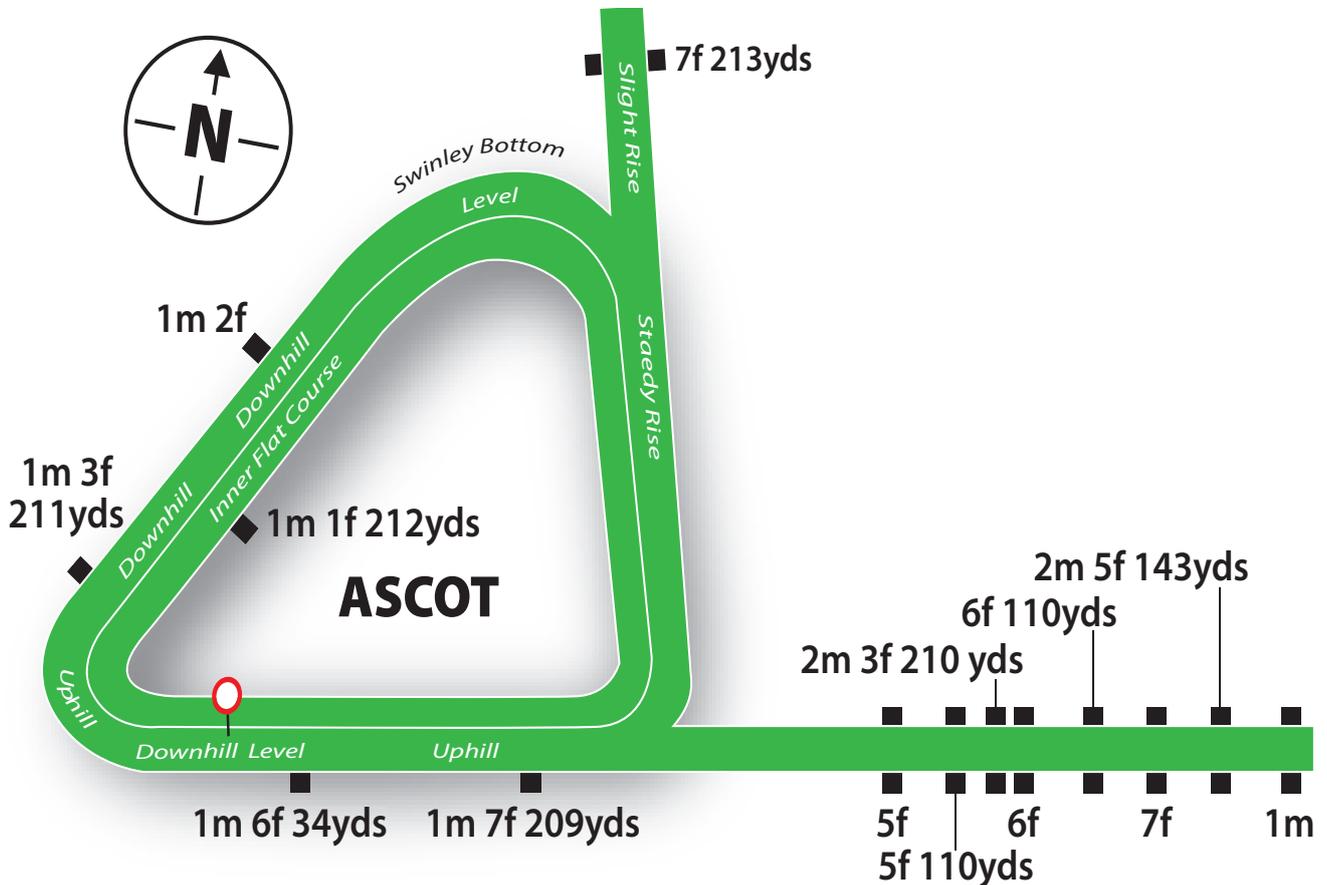


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Ascot Track & Stats



The round course is a right-handed, galloping, triangular circuit of 14f, with a run-in of 2½f. Ascot also has a straight mile course, which tends to drain better than the round course. There is also an inner Flat course which allows the option of switching the Champion Stakes from the regular course in the event of testing ground. Generally speaking, prominent racers fare significantly better than those held up over 5f, but the opposite is true over 7f/1m, while on the round course those that race in the first half of the field over 10f have a better record than those caught further back.

MOST SUCCESSFUL TRAINERS AT EPSOM 2013-2017

Trainer	Wins	Runs	%	Trainer	Wins	Runs	%
John Gosden	39	259	15.06%	John Gosden	39	259	15.06%
Aidan O'Brien, Ireland	29	181	16.02%	Aidan O'Brien, Ireland	29	181	16.02%
Mark Johnston	29	319	9.09%	Mark Johnston	29	319	9.09%
Sir Michael Stoute	25	177	14.12%	Sir Michael Stoute	25	177	14.12%
Richard Hannon	24	291	8.25%	Richard Hannon	24	291	8.25%



Ribchester won the Queen Anne Stakes in course-record time 12 months ago

Queen Anne Stakes

The Queen Anne Stakes, a Group 1 over a mile for older horses, is the traditional curtain-raiser at Royal Ascot. Frankel won the race by 11 lengths from another top-class miler in Excelebration in 2012, while other turf legends such as Goldikova, Canford Cliffs and Solow have also featured on the recent roll of honour. Who will add their name to the list this time around?

The favourite at the time of writing is the Aidan O'Brien-trained **Rhododendron**. She finished runner-up in both the 1000 Guineas and the Oaks (outstayed in latter, beaten five lengths by Enable) last year, and went on to register her second top-level win in the Prix de l'Opera at Chantilly. Dropped back to a mile for the first time since the Guineas, she produced a clear career-best effort when winning the Lockinge Stakes at Newbury last time, and this looks the obvious next step; she must be high on the shortlist.

He may be seven now, but **Lightning Spear** looked better than ever when beaten just a short head by Rhododendron on his return at Newbury, agonisingly close to going one better than the previous year, for all that he had the race run to suit. A game winner of the Celebration Mile at Goodwood (for the second consecutive year) last season, he also finished third behind Tepin in this race in 2016 and looks a leading contender once again, as he attempts to make a belated breakthrough at Group 1 level.

Deauville (fifth), **Accidental Agent** (sixth) and **Suedois** (seventh) all belied big odds to get within a few lengths of the principals in the Lockinge, but two horses who finished further down the field will perhaps be of more interest here. **Beat The Bank** won five of his seven starts in 2017 and cannot be discounted if bouncing back from his Newbury flop, entitled to improve with that first outing for seven months under his belt. **Limato**, on the other hand, still needs to prove his effectiveness at this trip (0/3), but he is a high-class performer on his day and will be suited by the fast ground he looks likely to encounter here. The Henry Candy yard is in much better form than when he was well held in the Lockinge, too.

Century Dream was supplemented on the back of a comfortable victory in the Diomed Stakes at Epsom and is respected provided the going does not come up really fast, while the US-trained **Yoshida** proved better than ever when winning a soft-ground Grade 1 at Churchill Downs last time. That form is difficult to assess in the context of this race, but he is clearly very smart.

The Saeed bin Suroor-trained **Benbatl** won the Hampton Court Stakes at this meeting last year, and has taken his form to a new level in 2018, winning the Dubai Turf at Meydan (by three and a quarter lengths from Vivlos) when last seen in March. A repeat of that career-best performance

should at least be good enough to see him in the shake up here, though the concern is that it came over a slightly longer trip, and he might just be vulnerable to a speedier rival for win purposes.

Recoletos also did most of his racing at three over longer trips, winning four times at around a mile and a quarter and signing off with a creditable fourth behind Cracksman in the Champion Stakes here. He showed a fine change of gear when recording a first Group 1 win in the nine-furlong Prix d'Ispahan at Longchamp last time, though, and rates a very intriguing raider from France, still unexposed over a mile and with connections having earmarked this race as his target some time ago. He shades the vote from Rhododendron at the prices, quotes of around 5/1 more than fair.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)	
LIGHTNING SPEAR	140
RHODODENDRON	140
BEAT THE BANK	139
BENBATL	139
LIMATO	138

Selection	Bet now
RECOLETOS	

Queen Anne Stakes- Past Winners						
2017	Ribchester	4-9-0	11/10f	Richard Fahey	William Buick	16 ran
2016	Tepin	5-8-11	11/2	Mark E. Casse	Julien Leparoux	13 ran
2015	Solow	5-9-0	11/8f	Freddie Head	Maxim Guyon	8 ran
2014	Toronado	4-9-0	4/5f	Richard Hannon	Richard Hughes	10 ran
2013	Declaration of War	4-9-0	15/2	Aidan O'Brien	Joseph O'Brien	13 ran



Lady Aurelia will be attempting to repeat her wide-margin victory in the King's Stand Stakes last year

King's Stand Stakes

The King's Stand Stakes, a Group 1 over five furlongs for horses aged three and over, features two dual winners on its roll of honour since the turn of the century, namely Equiano and Sole Power. Profitable came off second best behind Lady Aurelia when trying to follow up his 2016 win 12 months ago, and this year the emphasis will be firmly on the Wesley Ward-trained filly, as she attempts to add her name to the record books...

Lady Aurelia is already a dual winner at this meeting, having also won the Queen Mary Stakes in devastating fashion over C&D two years ago. She nearly broke the course record when winning this race (by three lengths) last year, and though beaten in two subsequent starts that season, she produced another top-class effort when a nose second to Marsha in the Nunthorpe Stakes at York, shaping like the best horse on the day (did too much too soon). Entitled to come on for her reappearance at Keeneland, the vibes from her trainer have

been very positive in recent days, and she commands respect given her fine course record.

In the shape of **Battaash**, however, she is set to face a far classier rival than any she encountered in this race 12 months ago. Currently the world's joint top-rated with Timeform, Battaash has met Lady Aurelia once before—when managing only fourth in the Nunthorpe after boiling over beforehand—but it would be unfair to judge him on that run, so impressive was he when winning his four other starts that season (including the Prix de l'Abbaye by a wide-margin). He gave

weight and a beating to some thriving rivals on his return in the Temple Stakes at Haydock, and would appear to hold obvious form claims provided the occasion does not get to him here.

Washington DC, **Kachy** and **Mabs Cross** were Battaash's closest pursuers at Haydock, but you suspect that if they were ever going to beat Charlie Hills' charge, then that was their chance. That being said, Mabs Cross does make some each-way appeal given the marked progress she has made in three starts this term. This represents by far the stiffest task of her career to date, but she is consistent and genuine, and there is no reason why she shouldn't give another good account.

This will be just a second start at five furlongs for the Charlie Appleby-trained **Blue Point**, but he certainly looked to have the necessary gears when chasing home the high-class Ertijaal in a Group 2 at Meydan in February. Third in the Commonwealth Cup at this meeting 12 months ago, he clearly goes very well at this track (also won a listed race and a Group 3 here last term) and can be forgiven a below-par run in Hong Kong last time, with connections feeling that they got the tactics wrong on that occasion.

Aidan O'Brien is yet to win this race and will saddle four runners as he attempts to get on the board, with **Battle of Jericho**, **Declarationofpeace** and **Different League**

joining Washington DC in the line-up. Even their best form leaves them with plenty to find, however, and of more interest are the foreign raiders **Buccherio** and **Finsbury Square**. The former is a smart sprinter in his native US and should have the brazen speed to show up for a long way here, while French challenger Finsbury Square cannot be discounted, either, if building on his successful stable debut in a Group 2 at Chantilly last time.

To sum up, a mouth-watering clash between Battaash and **Lady Aurelia** is in prospect here. Given her record at this meeting, this venue and occasion may just tilt the scales in Lady Aurelia's favour this time. She has been simply electric in two previous wins over C&D, and it will likely take something special to come between her and a Royal Ascot hat-trick.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

BATTAASH	146
LADY AURELIA	144
BLUE POINT	134
KACHY	133
WASHINGTON DC	131

Selection

Bet now

LADY AURELIA

King's Stand Stakes - Past Winners

2017	Lady Aurelia	3-8-9	7/2	Wesley Ward	John Velazquez	17 ran
2016	Profitable	4-9-4	4/1	Clive Cox	Adam Kirby	17 ran
2015	Goldream	6-9-4	20/1	Robert Cowell	Martin Harley	18 ran
2014	Sole Power	7-9-4	5/1	Edward Lynam	Richard Hughes	16 ran
2013	Sole Power	6-9-4	8/1	Edward Lynam	Johnny Murtagh	19 ran



Barney Roy made the breakthrough at Group 1 level in last season's St James's Palace Stakes

St James's Palace Stakes

Aidan O'Brien has won the Irish 2000 Guineas a record 11 times since taking over at Ballydoyle in 1996, with five of those winners going on to taste victory in the St James's Palace Stakes, a Group 1 over a mile for three-year-olds. O'Brien's runners came up short in the latest renewal of the Curragh Classic, however, and instead it is a horse trained by Ken Condon who will be attempting to complete the double this year...

Many people considered **Romanised**'s Irish Guineas win at 25/1 to be proof that the Classic generation of milers is a below-average crop this time round, but it would be unwise to dismiss it as a fluke. A useful two-year-old, Romanised took his form to another level on his first try over a mile at the Curragh, doing well to overhaul a trio that raced much closer to the pace. There were no hard-luck stories on the

day and he is well worth his place in this line-up—his second to Masar in last year's Solario Stakes at Sandown also looks strong form now.

U S Navy Flag and **Gustav Klimt** were second and third, respectively, at the Curragh, and the former's supporters here will likely be clinging on to how he fared in a busy two-year-old campaign. Indeed, he got better with racing in 2017, recording victories in the Middle Park

and Dewhurst towards the end of the season, and the hope is he will do the same again this time round. Incidentally, his full sister Roly Poly bounced back from defeat in the Classics to record a trio of Group 1 wins last term.

Gustav Klimt ran to a similar level at the Curragh as when sixth in the 2000 Guineas at Newmarket, but did so in contrasting fashion, promising more than he delivered on the most recent occasion. Having failed to go on from an encouraging victory on his return at Leopardstown, he is in danger of becoming disappointing and has a bit to prove now. Stablemate **Threeandfourpence** was fourth at the Curragh, but he still has just a maiden win to his name after seven starts and would be an unlikely winner here.

The Roger Teal-trained **Tip Two Win** was four places ahead of Gustav Klimt when sent off 50/1 at Newmarket, excelling himself up in grade and following two good paydays in Doha with another much closer to home. He holds leading form claims here in the absence of Saxon Warrior and Guineas third/Derby winner Masar and, like Romanised, it would be folly to rule him out just because he was a big price last time, that having more to do with him not representing a big name than anything else.

French raider **Wootton** is interesting, clearly much better than he was able to show when fourth in the French 2000 Guineas at Longchamp last time (pulled hard in a slowly-run race). He had looked a high-class miler in the making

prior to that and could have even more to offer if ridden with less restraint, whereas **King's Shield**, who was sixth at Longchamp (one place behind U S Navy Flag), and **Chilean** both have plenty to find on form, and don't appear to have the same scope for improvement.

One horse who has not yet revealed his full potential is the John Gosden-trained **Without Parole**, and it is he who makes most appeal from a betting perspective. Admittedly, he was a little underwhelming when maintaining his unbeaten record in a soft-ground listed race at Sandown (by three quarters of a length from **Gabr**) last time, but he was reportedly short on work going into the race (setback ruled him out of the 2000 Guineas), and a much better display is expected back on firmer ground here, deeply impressive in similar conditions at Yarmouth the time before (recorded excellent timefigure).

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

ROMANISED	137
TIP TWO WIN	136
U S NAVY FLAG	134
GUSTAV KLIMT	133
WITHOUT PAROLE	131p

Selection

Bet now

WITHOUT PAROLE

St James's Palace Stakes - Past Winners

Year	Horse	Age	Weight	Trainer	Jockey	Distance
2017	Barney Roy	3-9-0	5/2	Richard Hannon	James Doyle	8 ran
2016	Galileo Gold	3-9-0	6/1	Hugo Palmer	Frankie Dettori	7 ran
2015	Gleneagles	3-9-0	8/15f	Aidan O'Brien	Ryan Moore	5 ran
2014	Kingman	3-9-0	8/11f	John Gosden	James Doyle	7 ran
2013	Dawn Approach	3-9-0	5/4f	Jim Bolger	Kevin Manning	9 ran

Highland Reel showed a typically game attitude to win the Prince of Wales's Stakes 12 months ago



Prince of Wales's Stakes

Favourites have enjoyed mixed fortunes in recent years when it comes to the Prince of Wales's Stakes, a Group 1 over ten furlongs for older horses. Four horses have justified the odds in the last decade, but the only three to be sent off at odds-on in that time frame were all beaten, including the great Treve, who was only third behind the John Gosden-trained The Fugue in 2014. Gosden is the one with all the pressure to deal with this year, however, with his Cracksman set to go off a red-hot favourite...

Third in the Epsom Derby and second in the Irish equivalent at the Curragh, **Cracksman** went on to establish himself as a bona-fide top-class performer in the second half of last season, winning his final three starts in the Great Voltigeur Stakes at York, the Prix Niel at Chantilly and the Champion Stakes over C&D (most impressively, by seven lengths from **Poet's Word**). He picked up where he left off in the Prix Ganay at Longchamp in April, and stretched his winning sequence to five when

scrambling home against a well-ridden rival in the Coronation Cup back at Epsom last time. Well below his best that day, the return to this more galloping track should be in his favour—the scene of his most authoritative performance to date—and he very much stands out on form, so looks sure to take all the beating if fully recovered from those exertions just 19 days on.

Poet's Word enjoyed a productive 2017, winning a Group 3 at Goodwood before

finishing runner-up in both the Irish Champion Stakes at Leopardstown and the Champion Stakes over C&D. He added another Group 1 second to his collection when beaten three lengths by **Hawkbill** in the Dubai Sheema Classic at Meydan on return, and didn't need to improve when resuming winning ways in the Brigadier Gerard Stakes at Sandown last time, justifying short odds with the minimum of fuss. Admittedly, he has it all to do if he's to reverse last year's form with Cracksman, but he looks an improved performer this season and the biggest danger to that rival as a result.

Hawkbill was impressive in winning both his starts in Dubai and has proven his effectiveness at this track when landing the Tercentenary Stakes (now Hampton Court Stakes) over C&D in 2016, a season in which he also won the Coral-Eclipse at Sandown. A fine servant to the Charlie Appleby yard (won six times in pattern company overall), he is clearly better than when well-held behind Cracksman in the Coronation Cup last time and rates among the likelier place contenders here if bouncing back.

Cliffs of Moher (second) and **Eminent** (fourth) finished either side of Cracksman in last year's Derby, but their careers have not taken quite the same upwards trajectory as that of John Gosden's charge since. Cliffs of Moher got back to winning ways when winning the Mooresbridge Stakes at Naas last month, but

was unable to take advantage of what looked a good opportunity when second in the Tattersalls Gold Cup at the Curragh last time, while Eminent ran no sort of race on his return at Chester. He was later found to have a fibrillating heart and has something to prove now as a result.

The field is completed by **Desert Encounter** and **Royal Julius**, both of whom have plenty to find on form in a race that looks likely to be dominated, as the market suggests, by **Cracksman**. Indeed, it is hard to find any chinks in his armour, for all that he was less impressive when winning the Coronation Cup on his most recent start. Circumstances conspired against him more than anything on that occasion, and a return to his top-class best here should see Timeform's joint-highest rated horse record a fourth Group 1 victory of his career.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

CRACKSMAN	150
HAWKBILL	139
POET'S WORD	138
CLIFFS OF MOHER	137
DESERT ENCOUNTER	135

Selection

Bet now

CRACKSMAN

Prince of Wales's Stakes - Past Winners

2017	Highland Reel	5-9-0	9/4	Aidan O'Brien	Ryan Moore	8 ran
2016	My Dream Boat	4-9-0	16/1	Clive Cox	Adam Kirby	6 ran
2015	Free Eagle	4-9-0	5/2f	Dermot Weld	Pat Smullen	9 ran
2014	The Fugue	5-8-11	11/2	John Gosden	William Buick	8 ran
2013	Al Kazeem	5-9-0	11/4	Roger Charlton	James Doyle	11 ran



Last year's Gold Cup won by Big Orange (white cap) was one of the most thrilling races of the season

Ascot Gold Cup

The Gold Cup is the traditional highlight on Ladies' Day and was won 12 months ago by Big Orange following a protracted duel with the 2016 winner, Order of St George, in what was widely-regarded as one of the races of the season. Sadly, Big Orange will be missing from this year's line-up after suffering a suspensory injury, but there is still a high-class renewal in prospect, with Order of St George set to face off against some new pretenders...

Order of St George is the obvious place to start, as he is arguably unlucky not to be bidding for a hat-trick of Gold Cup wins this time round, having conceded first run to Big Orange last year before staying on strongly to be beaten just a short head. He added further big-race wins to his tally in the Irish St Leger at the Curragh and the Long Distance Cup here later that campaign, and has looked as good as ever in winning both his starts so far this

term. 2 lb clear on Timeform's weight adjusted-ratings, it will likely take a high-class performance to prevent him from regaining his crown.

The John Gosden-trained **Stradivarius** could be capable of just that, however, such is the progress he has made in his relatively short career to date. His wins last season included the Queen's Vase at this meeting and a defeat of his elders in the Goodwood Cup, but it was his successful return in the Yorkshire Cup (by three lengths from

Desert Skyline, **Max Dynamite** fourth) that was arguably his most impressive performance so far. Still full of running at the line, this significantly longer trip shouldn't inconvenience him on that evidence, and he cannot be ruled out with the prospect of more to come.

French raider **Vazirabad** has long been considered an ideal candidate for this race. A winner of four of his six starts last season, including the Prix du Cadran at Chantilly, he showed the benefit of his return when winning a third consecutive renewal of the Dubai Gold Cup at Meydan in March, and had plenty in hand when following up in the Prix Vicomtesse Vigier at Longchamp (also for third year running) last time, idling a bit as usual once hitting the front. His chance would be severely compromised should the ground come up really fast, however.

Torcedor won a minor event at Leopardstown and the Vintage Crop Stakes at Navan in the first half of 2017, before finishing behind Order of St George in three subsequent starts that season, fifth in this race and second in both the Irish St Leger and the Long Distance Cup. He disappointed on his return in Dubai, but proved better than ever when winning the Sagaro Stakes here last time and looks sure to give another good account, for all that he has a bit to find with the principals on form.

Of the rest, **Sheikhzayedroad** has acquitted himself well in the last two renewals of this

contest (third in 2016) and should again run his race without being good enough, while last year's Doncaster Cup winner Desert Skyline was conceding 3 lb to Stradivarius when second at York and is likely to relish the extra emphasis on stamina here. **Idaho**, on the other hand, is yet to race beyond one and three-quarter miles, but he can boast some high-class form to his name and should be thereabouts if staying this far.

In summary, Order of St George is hardly a bombproof favourite (odds-on when second in this race 12 months ago), and it could be worth taking a chance on **Stradivarius** instead. He created a deep impression when making a winning reappearance at York, and his laid-back style should give him every chance of staying this trip.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

ORDER OF ST GEORGE	140
IDAHO	138
VAZIRABAD	135
STRADIVARIUS	134p
TORCEDOR	132

Selection

Bet now

STRADIVARIUS

Gold Cup - Past Winners

2017	Big Orange	6-9-2	5/1	Michael Bell	James Doyle	14 ran
2016	Order of St George	4-9-0	10/11f	Aidan O'Brien	Ryan Moore	17 ran
2015	Trip To Paris	4-9-0	12/1	Ed Dunlop	Graham Lee	12 ran
2014	Leading Light	4-9-0	10/11f	Aidan O'Brien	Joseph O'Brien	12 ran
2013	Estimate	4-8-11	7/2f	Sir Michael Stoute	Ryan Moore	14 ran



Caravaggio finished best of all to win a high-class renewal of the Commonwealth Cup in 2017

Commonwealth Cup

The Commonwealth Cup is the newest race at Royal Ascot, having replaced the Buckingham Palace Stakes in 2015. A Group 1 over six furlongs for three-year-old sprinters, it was won 12 months ago by the Aidan O'Brien-trained Caravaggio, though it was the runner-up Harry Angel who ended the season with the higher Timeform rating. Which of this year's runners can put down an early claim to being the best sprinter of their generation?

It is another Aidan O'Brien-trained runner, **Sioux Nation**, who heads the betting at the time of writing, and unsurprisingly so given the manner of his victory in the Lacken Stakes at Naas (by one and a quarter lengths from **Fleet Review**) last time, giving weight and a beating to some smart rivals. Sioux Nation's record when racing on ground firmer than good is a formidable one, and he proved when winning the Norfolk Stakes at this meeting last year that he is well

suited by the straight course at Ascot; his sire Scat Daddy also boats a good strike rate at the track.

Invincible Army made a winning return in the Pavilion Stakes over C&D (by one and a half lengths from **Eqtidaar**) last month, and lost little caste in defeat when beaten a nose by **Sands of Mali** in the Sandy Lane Stakes at Haydock last time. Invincible Army had been around three lengths behind that rival in the Gimcrack last year, but they were separated by the narrowest

margin at Haydock, and it would be no surprise were he to reverse the placings here, with the return to this stiffer track likely to suit.

Sands of Mali commands plenty of respect in his own right, though, such is the rate in which he is progressing this season (won both of his starts in pattern company). A likeable sort, he showed a real will to win on Merseyside last time and looks sure to give another good account, for all that he will likely find it harder to make all given the bigger field/stiffer track he must contend with.

Emblazoned (third), **Actress** (fifth), **Heartache** (sixth) and **Unfortunately** (seventh) could also reoppose from the Sandy Lane, with Heartache perhaps most interesting of that quartet. A smart two-year-old (won the Queen Mary at this meeting), she shaped as if the run would bring her on plenty after eight months off, and deserves another chance over six furlongs.

One of the best backed horses in recent weeks has been the Charlie Hills-trained **Equilateral**, who made a striking impression on his reappearance when winning a minor event at Doncaster by eight lengths, travelling powerfully and forging clear late on. The time of that race was more than half a second faster than some useful older handicappers managed later on the card and he remains unexposed, though he looks short enough in the betting on what he has achieved so far.

At a bigger price, **Main Desire** is worth mentioning following her victory in a listed race at York (by a neck from **Hey Jonesy**) last month. She hadn't been seen since winning at the same meeting 12 months earlier (injured while being prepared for the Queen Mary), and didn't need to improve significantly, but it was still a good performance. This will be the stiffest track she has raced on, but there is hope in her pedigree that this extra furlong will be within her grasp.

Last year's Albany Stakes winner over C&D, **Different League**, and **Raid**, who should appreciate this shorter trip than when eighth in the 2000 Guineas at Newmarket, are others to note, but it is the former's stablemate **Sioux Nation** who appeals as the most likely winner. The form of his latest win at Naas sets the standard, and he has proven himself to be most effective in the conditions he looks likely to encounter here.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

SIoux NATION	131
U S NAVY FLAG	131
INVINCIBLE ARMY	130
SANDS OF MALI	130
UNFORTUNATELY	127

Selection

Bet now

SIoux NATION

Commonwealth Cup - Past Winners

2017	Caravaggio	3-9-3	5/6f	Aidan O'Brien	Ryan Moore	12 ran
2016	Quiet Reflection	3-9-0	7/4f	Karl Burke	Dougie Costello	10 ran
2015	Muhaarar	3-9-3	10/1	Charles Hills	Dane O'Neill	18 ran



Winter added the Coronation Stakes to her wins in the English and Irish 1000 Guineas last season

Coronation Stakes

The English, French and Irish equivalents of the 1000 Guineas are often the best points of reference when trying to find the winner of the Coronation Stakes, similarly a Group 1 run over a mile and open to three-year-old fillies. However, identifying which of the three Classics will hold the key this year is easier said than done; the winners of all three races are set to clash in a red-hot renewal of the Coronation, as well as several of the beaten horses...

The three races all had surprise winners, too, with **Billesdon Brook** becoming one of the biggest-priced Classic winners in Flat racing history when winning the 1000 Guineas at Newmarket at 66/1. That performance represented a marked step up on anything she had done previously, but there didn't appear to be any fluke about it, and the form is working out well—runner-up Laurens has won both her subsequent starts in Group 1s, including the Prix

de Diane at Chantilly on Sunday. Supplemented for this race at a cost of £45,000, Billesdon Brook really shouldn't be underestimated.

The form of that effort rates much higher than what **Teppal** achieved when winning the French 1000 Guineas at Longchamp (by a short neck from **Coeur de Beaute**). David Simcock's filly has done everything asked of her so far, however, unbeaten in three starts, and she may yet prove capable of better given her record

of run-to-run progression. She should at least uphold the placings with **Coeur de Beaute**, **Capla Tempress** (fourth) and **Could It Be Love** (eighth), and cannot be ruled out.

Could It Be Love went on to finish second under an enterprising ride (attempted to make all) in the Irish 1000 Guineas at the Curragh, and the winner, **Alpha Centauri**, deserves plenty of credit for being the only one to run her down that day. Second in the Albany Stakes at this meeting 12 months ago, that latest effort represented a clear career-best effort and she is one of the leading form contenders granted her optimum conditions here (disappointed in two starts on soft), which she looks likely to get as things stand.

Clemmie could only manage ninth at the Curragh, but she shaped as if needing the run on her first start since winning the Cheveley Park Stakes at Newmarket in September (missed the 1000 Guineas after a setback), and the suspicion is that we will see a different horse here. Indeed, she was expected to sweep all before her this year such was the impression she created over six furlongs at two—the first of Galileo’s progeny to win a Group 1 at that trip—and she should have plenty more to offer over a mile this year (sister to dual Guineas winner Churchill).

Others to note include **Threading**, who won the Lowther Stakes at York as a juvenile before disappointing in the Cheveley Park and Nell Gwyn Stakes (on return after seven months off).

She bounced back with a wide-margin win in a listed race back at York last time and may yet do better still, a nice type physically who has looked an exciting prospect away from the undulations of Newmarket. **Veracious** also deserves a mention, an impressive winner of a maiden at Newmarket in October. This looks a stiff ask for her return having also been forced to miss the 1000 Guineas through injury, though.

An interesting renewal of the Coronation Stakes in prospect, with the winners of the English, Irish and French Guineas all set to clash, though that trio will have it all to do if **Clemmie** arrives here in peak form. She looked an excellent prospect when reeling off a hat-trick on her final three starts as a juvenile, and Aidan O’Brien’s filly looks sure to take plenty of beating if coming on as expected for last month’s return at the Curragh.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

CLEMMIE	132p
BILLESDON BROOK	131
ALPHA CENTAURI	130
HAPPILY	129
TEPPAL	126p

Selection

Bet now

CLEMMIE

Coronation Stakes - Past Winners

Year	Winner	Age	Sex	Trainer	Jockey	Runners
2017	Winter	3-9-0	4/9f	Aidan O'Brien	Ryan Moore	7 ran
2016	Qemah	3-9-0	6/1	Jean-Claude Rouget	Gregory Benoist	13 ran
2015	Ervedya	3-9-0	3/1	Jean-Claude Rouget	Christophe Soumillon	9 ran
2014	Rizeena	3-9-0	11/2	Clive Brittain	Ryan Moore	12 ran
2013	Sky Lantern	3-9-0	9/2jf	Richard Hannon	Richard Hughes	17 ran



Idaho provided Aidan O'Brien with a sixth winner at last year's meeting in the Hardwicke Stakes

Hardwicke Stakes

The Hardwicke Stakes, a Group 2 run over a mile and a half for older horses, is named in honour of the 5th Earl of Hardwicke, who served as the Master of the Buckhounds in the 19th century. However, it is Sir Michael Stoute who has had them all on the run in this contest in recent years. Indeed, he's the leading trainer in the race with 10 wins, the latest of which came courtesy of HM The Queen's Dartmouth in 2016, and this year's renewal once again revolves around another Freemason Lodge inmate...

Crystal Ocean is a typical late-maturing type who was progressive at three, winning the Gordon Stakes at Goodwood before finishing half a length second to Capri in the St Leger at Doncaster on his final start that campaign. Crystal Ocean has won both starts this term, too, including when taking his form to a new level in the Aston Park Stakes at Newbury last time, winning by six lengths from Second Step.

A top-class colt in the making, this looks the obvious next step and he really should take all the beating before going on to contest races such as the King George later this year.

Closest to Crystal Ocean, in terms of Timeform's ratings, is **Idaho**. He won this race last year (by half a length from **Barsanti**) before finishing third to Enable in the King George over the same C&D on his next start. Following a

fruitless trip to Dubai in March, Idaho won the Ormonde Stakes at Chester (by three and a half lengths from Danehill Kodiak) in May, but produced a lacklustre effort behind Cracksman in the Coronation Cup at Epsom last time. The return to this more conventional track should suit, although he could yet step up in trip for a crack at Thursday's Gold Cup.

Barsanti's second in this race 12 months ago represented a career-best effort, and he shaped as if as good as ever after 10 months off when winning a listed race over C&D last time. He should continue to give a good account, while the same owner's **Defoe** improved with racing in 2017, completing a four-timer in the Geoffrey Freer Stakes at Newbury. He has been better still this year, winning the John Porter Stakes back at Newbury and the Jockey Club Stakes at Newmarket. Unsited by the emphasis on speed when only second in the Tattersalls Gold Cup at the Curragh last time, the return to a mile and a half here will suit and he's well worth another chance.

Of the rest, **Cliffs of Moher** and **Poet's Word** are scheduled to run in Wednesday's Prince of Wales's Stakes, so it's probably better to focus on **Red Verdon**, who ran creditably without the headgear when second in the Henry II Stakes at Sandown last time, beaten six lengths by Magic Circle. It's probably best to focus on him winning the well-contested battle

for second rather than the distance he was beaten by the winner, though the drop back from two miles here may count against him.

Rare Rhythm completes the field. A very smart performer, he won the Nad Al Sheba Trophy at Meydan (by one and three quarter lengths from Vazirabad) in March, and was only one and a quarter lengths behind the same rival when third in the Dubai Gold Cup there next time. He needs to improve on his respectable fourth to Waldgeist in the Grand Prix de Chantilly last time, though, if he's to challenge the main contenders here.

To conclude, this looks fairly straightforward for **Crystal Ocean**, who is strongly fancied to provide his yard with further success in this contest. Last year's runner-up Barsanti is yet to run a bad race and should also be involved.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

CRYSTAL OCEAN	141p
IDAHO	139
DEFOE	136
CLIFFS OF MOHER	135
RARE RHYTHM	134

Selection

Bet now

CRYSTAL OCEAN

Hardwicke Stakes - Past Winners

2017	Idaho	4-9-1	9/2	Aidan O'Brien	Ryan Moore	12 ran
2016	Dartmouth	4-9-1	10/1	Sir Michael Stoute	Olivier Peslier	9 ran
2015	Snow Sky	4-9-1	12/1	Sir Michael Stoute	Pat Smullen	7 ran
2014	Telescope	4-9-1	7/4f	Sir Michael Stoute	Ryan Moore	10 ran
2013	Thomas Chippendale	4-9-0	8/1	Lady Cecil	Johnny Murtagh	8 ran



The Tin Man gained a second Group 1 win on this track in the Diamond Jubilee Stakes 12 months ago

Diamond Jubilee Stakes

Like the King's Stand Stakes on Tuesday, the Diamond Jubilee has become a truly global affair since Australian raider Choisir won both races in 2003, with runners trained in Hong Kong, the US and Australia (again), all featuring on the roll of honour in the intervening period. There looks likely to be a few unfamiliar names to UK racegoers in this year's renewal, too, though it is a far more regular visitor to Ascot who heads the betting at this stage...

Ascot has not been a happy hunting ground for **Harry Angel** so far, however, with the four-year-old yet to taste victory in four previous starts at the track. He showed himself to be a top-class sprinter with wins in the July Cup at Newmarket and Sprint Cup at Haydock last season, and there was plenty of encouragement to be taken from his return in the Duke of York Stakes (gave weight and a beating to some very smart rivals), but his poor record over this C&D must be a concern for those looking to take the short odds.

The pick of the foreign raiders appears to be **Redkirk Warrior**, for all that he started his career with William Haggas before heading to Australia (via a stint in Hong Kong). Interestingly, both his wins for Haggas came over a mile and a quarter (including at this venue), but he has been transformed into a high-class sprinter for these connections, winning Group 1s over both five and six furlongs this year. His win in the Newmarket Handicap at Flemington last time represented a clear career-

best effort, and he cannot be discounted if reproducing that level of form here.

Merchant Navy was just a neck behind Redkirk Warrior when third in that Flemington contest, and he made an impressive start for his new yard when conceding weight all round in the Greenlands Stakes at the Curragh (by a length from **Spirit of Valor**) last time. That run is expected to bring him on in terms of fitness, despite it being the best of his career to date on ratings, and he commands respect for the Aidan O'Brien stable that won this race with another Australian recruit Starspangledbanner in 2010.

Proven effectiveness over this stiff six furlongs is a major asset, and that could just tilt things in **The Tin Man's** favour. Indeed, his win in this race (by a neck from Tasleet, **Limato** third, **Librisa Breeze** fourth) last year was his third over C&D, and he shaped as if retaining all his ability when making a winning return in a listed race at Windsor (by three quarters of a length from **D'bai**). Another bold bid is on the cards, with the runner-up having given the form a boost when winning a Group 3 at Haydock last time.

Librisa Breeze had several of these behind when winning the Champions Sprint Stakes over C&D on his final 2017 start, but that success came on much softer ground than he looks likely

to encounter here, while US raider **Bound To Nowhere** had his limitations rather exposed when fourth in the Commonwealth Cup at this meeting 12 months ago. Of more interest is the French-trained **City Light**. He completed his hat-trick in a Group 3 at Longchamp last time and is very much a sprinter on the up, so shouldn't be dismissed too lightly.

In summary, it could pay to take Harry Angel on with one at a bigger price given his poor record at the track, with last year's winner **The Tin Man** making most appeal at around 10/1. Admittedly, others in the race have superior form, but he has fewer questions to answer than most in the circumstances, highly effective over C&D and likely to be spot on after his encouraging reappearance at Windsor.

Timeform Ratings (weight adjusted)

HARRY ANGEL	143
REDKIRK WARRIOR	138
MERCHANT NAVY	137
LIBRISA BREEZE	136
THE TIN MAN	136

Selection

Bet now

THE TIN MAN

Diamond Jubilee Stakes - Past Winners

2017	The Tin Man	5-9-3	9/2	James Fanshawe	Tom Queally	19 ran
2016	Twilight Son	4-9-3	7/2	Henry Candy	Ryan Moore	9 ran
2015	Undrafted	5-9-3	14/1	Wesley Ward	Frankie Dettori	15 ran
2014	Slade Power	5-9-4	7/2f	Edward Lynam	Wayne Lordan	14 ran
2013	Lethal Force	4-9-4	11/1	Clive Cox	Adam Kirby	18 ran

Handicappers To Follow

Timeform's team of handicappers highlight four horses to follow at Royal Ascot...

COEUR DE LION – Ascot Stakes (17:00) Tuesday 19th June

Alan King

Willie Mullins has won three of the last six renewals of this race and his five runners this time round are respected, accordingly. The one who appeals as the best bet at this stage, however, is the Alan King-trained Coeur de Lion. He ran a cracker when second at Chester last time, staying on strongly in the final furlong and only beaten a neck by one who had got first run. A 3 lb rise for that run looks fair, and the switch to this more galloping track is expected to suit; he looks attractively priced at around 8/1.

MUBTASIM – Royal Hunt Cup (17:00) Wednesday 20th June

William Haggas

Finding a horse that's likely to excel in a strongly-run, large-field scenario can be half the battle in a race such as the Hunt Cup, and Mubtasim ticks plenty of boxes as a horse that may well come into his own under such circumstances. He's without a win since his two-year-old season, but the best effort of his career to date was achieved at this track, when third in last year's Jersey. Nearest at the finish that day, he is well worth a chance over a mile and rates a most interesting contender despite his big weight, likely to be dropped out before hopefully weaving his way through late.

SAM GOLD – Britannia Stakes (17:00) Thursday 21st June

Roger Varian

The Britannia is always one of the hottest three-year-old handicaps around, with so many lightly-raced and progressive sorts in opposition, and this year looks no different. The one that makes most appeal at this stage is the Roger Varian-trained Sam Gold, who looks set to sneak in towards the bottom of the weights from a BHA mark of 91. Improving all the time, he was most impressive when winning at Doncaster last time and it would be no surprise if he were to prove better than a handicapper in time, representing a yard that has done very well with similar types in the past.

GILGAMESH – Wokingham Stakes (17:00) Saturday 23rd June

George Scott

Dreamfield is already as short as 4/1 for this race and it is easy to see why, with a mark of 103 possibly underplaying his ability by some way. However, with 28 runners and plenty of luck in-running often involved, it is very hard to recommend backing a horse in the Wokingham at such a price, and instead it could pay to side with Gilgamesh. A lightly-raced four-year-old, he is still progressing on the evidence of this season, value for extra when winning a seven-furlong handicap at York last time, and his impressive cruising speed suggests that he could be even more effective back at six

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