



ROYAL ASCOT



DAY 3 PREVIEW

THURSDAY 20 JUNE

RACE 1

THE NORFOLK
STAKES (GROUP 2),
5F

PRIZE MONEY
£150,000

RACE 2

THE KING
GEORGE V STAKES
(HANDICAP),
1M 3F 211Y

PRIZE MONEY
£110,000

RACE 3

THE RIBBLESDALE
STAKES (GROUP 2),
1M 3F 211Y

PRIZE MONEY
£250,000

RACE 4

THE GOLD CUP
(GROUP 1),
2M 3F 210Y

PRIZE MONEY
£650,000

RACE 5

THE BRITANNIA
STAKES (HERITAGE
HANDICAP),
1M (STR)

PRIZE MONEY
£120,000

RACE 6

THE HAMPTON
COURT STAKES
(GROUP 3),
1M 1F 212Y

PRIZE MONEY
£150,000

RACE 7

THE BUCKINGHAM
PALACE STAKES
(HANDICAP),
7F

PRIZE MONEY
£110,000

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THE GOLD CUP (GROUP 1)

RUNNER BY
RUNNER GUIDE

BY SKY SPORTS RACING PUNDIT KATE TRACEY



The feature race at Royal Ascot is the **GROUP 1 GOLD CUP** where stamina and class are put under the microscope like nothing else. There are no hiding places for this year's runners with a strong line-up. I've looked at each of the runners, assessed their chances and concluded with my verdict on the race.

CAIUS CHORISTER



Plenty of eyes will be on the colourful character that is Clive Washbourn, owner of Caius Chorister in case the mare proves successful and the resulting celebrations that would ensue. These outbursts of elation have become synonymous with Washbourn and he has amassed a following all of his own due to this. His five-year-old mare signed off last season with a first Stakes success when easing clear in a Group 3 at Saint-Cloud over 1m6f. However, her form has improved in two starts this season when a head second to Coltrane in the Sagaro Stakes and a head second to Sweet William in the Henry II Stakes. This improvement has come from stepping up to 2m and she now gets a 3lb sex allowance from her male rivals after racing off levels the last twice.

COLTRANE



The superstar stayer who is never dubbed as a superstar stayer. Coltrane has been a stalwart of the staying division for many years and despite being a seven-year-old, his consistency remains. A big plus point in this gelding's favour is his Ascot record. He's run at the track six times, winning three and finishing second twice. His only lesser run at Ascot was when fifth of eight in the Long Distance Cup on his final start of last season. Coltrane was just a length second in this race last year behind Courage Mon Ami who would have been a big player again had he made the race. The Ascot record was further enhanced last time out when retaining his title in the Sagaro Stakes over 2m, displaying a typically gutsy attitude.

ENEMY



Having a good record at Ascot can count for plenty and another horse who has previously gone well at this track is Enemy. He hasn't run at Ascot since April 2022 when he was third in the Group 3 Sagaro Stakes. However, on the two previous occasions at the course, he showed good form. He's still rated 110 which speaks volumes of his ability however, he's been difficult to weigh up these past two seasons and this task looks beyond him.

GREGORY



It's been well documented that Wathnan Racing have been splashing the cash prior to Royal Ascot and have a strong team throughout the week. Last season the operation was in its infancy, and it had a very 'boutique' feel in its approach with selective buying for the Royal meeting. This approach was rewarded with success thanks to Courage Mon Ami in this race last year and Gregory in the Queen's Vase. The former has failed to make the final line-up in a bid to retain his crown, but Gregory takes up the mantle for the blue, gold and red team. Following his Royal Ascot success, Gregory ran creditably without further improvement in two subsequent outings last season. This was a similar case for his reappearance when third behind Giavellotto and Vauban at York. It was a decent starting point and a significant step up in trip might bring out the best in him.

KYPRIOS



The standout stayer of the past few years has been Kyprios. Aidan O'Brien's six-year-old won this race in 2022 on similar ground to what he's likely to face this time around. That season he went unbeaten six from six and looked like he might even be able to emulate the great Yeats in time. It hasn't been totally plain sailing subsequently however, as he missed the first half of last season through a set back and was then beaten as a short priced favourite on both outings. However, the winning thread has certainly been regained this year with two successes, in Listed and Group 3 company respectively. He's a difficult horse to weigh up in terms of his wellbeing as he will only ever do as much as is required of him.

THE GOLD CUP (GROUP 1)

RUNNER BY RUNNER GUIDE

CONTINUED

PRYDWEN



If this season's translation from all-weather form to the turf is anything to go by, then Prydwen should also be given plenty of respect in here. His form has surged to new heights this season, winning his last two. The penultimate success came when dominating the Marathon Handicap on All-Weather Finals Day, yet he improved again, despite a 6lb rise when taking a valuable 2m Handicap at Southwell 53 days ago. Clearly a step out of handicap company into the premier staying prize is a big ask but he's worthy of his place in the line-up.

SWEET WILLIAM



Often stayers can be enigmatic characters and that is certainly the case with Sweet William. The homebred of Normandie Stud has as many foibles as he does ability however, when he's good he's very good. He was certainly at his best in a first-time visor on his latest start when winning the Group 3 Henry II Stakes by a head from the reopposing Caius Chorister in second. He stays very well and has proven his ground versatility also. Second in the Ebor on good to firm on the back of his success on heavy going at Goodwood in a 1m6f Handicap is testament to his adaptability. For all he isn't the most straight forward, he is a highly talented and consistent type who can't be underestimated.

TRAWLERMAN



One runner who already has a verdict over Kyprios is Trawlerman who claimed that scalp in the Group 2 Long Distance Cup on British Champions Day. His reappearance was satisfactory in Meydan on 30th March where he finished third in the Group 2 Dubai Gold Cup. He was drawn high on that occasion which meant he raced wide early before slotting into a prominent position where he raced keenly. He was likely fresh for his first start in five months and the two who finished in front of him had race fitness on their side. It's noted though that his jockey that day, Kieran Shoemark stated to the stewards that Trawlerman was unsuited by the firm ground which is interesting given his previous good record on ground described as fast.

TRUESHAN



It remains to be seen whether Trueshan will take up his place in this race with the ground being quick at Royal Ascot at the start of the week. This race has been cursed for Trueshan who needs softer going and hasn't had that for the past three years meaning he's been a nonrunner on all three occasions. Alan King and co will be doing their rain dances on Wednesday afternoon into Thursday morning as if conditions were correct for the gelding, he'd have a cracking chance. The wind surgery turned his season on its head last term after talks of going down the jumping route were even bounded about following lacklustre displays in the spring. A second wind operation followed before this season but he's yet to reach the same heights in two outings so far.

VAUBAN



Trainer, Willie Mullins can seemingly do no wrong whatever the code of racing. His star dual-purpose performer is Vauban who took the Copper Horse Handicap by storm at the Royal meeting last year from his stablemate and subsequent Ebor winner, Absurde in second. It all went wrong for Vauban in the Melbourne Cup where he simply didn't give his running despite being a well backed favourite. He is a buzzy type so perhaps the lengthy travel to Australia as well as plenty of time spent in new surroundings didn't suit him so he can be easily forgiven. His comeback run in the Group 2 Yorkshire Cup Stakes more than earns him a place in this line-up however, there are still stamina doubts that remain for him.

VERDICT

The horse with the most ability is certainly Kyprios but he's not entirely straight forward and it's difficult to know just how good he still is. Therefore, I would be happy to let him win at his current price without backing him. The horse whose price I can't ignore is that of **COLTRANE** for an each-way play. He was a narrow second in the Gold Cup last year and his Ascot record is incredibly good. He is a solid play as a stalwart of the staying division at the highest level.

EXPERT TIPS

BY SKY SPORTS RACING PUNDIT JAMES FLAHERTY



16.25 | THE GOLD CUP TRAWLERMAN EACH WAY



The Gold Cup is the feature and the race (or the market at least) revolves around Kyprios, winner of the race two years ago. He missed the race last year but returned at the end of the season, finishing second in the 2m race here on Champions Day. **TRAWLERMAN**, the horse that got the better of Kyprios on that occasion, looks the main danger to me and I think he is overpriced. The pair pulled thirteen lengths clear of the third that day and while Trawlerman failed to build on that in Meydan since, I think he is worth another chance. He was a much-improved horse last season when returning from Dubai and there is every chance that he could still be going the right way as a stayer. He had two facile wins before the one here in October, which was his first Group success. That win on Champions Day was quite remarkable given how keen he was. He then looked beaten when passed but battled back to regain the lead close home. It suggests that this trip could be possible, especially if he settles better. There also doesn't seem to be too much pace on here so perhaps he could dictate. In my opinion, he is clear of the remainder, and I have him second favourite. I've never really been a fan of Gregory or Sweet William, while Vauban has a bit to find at this level, even though he looked like a Cup horse in the making at this meeting last year. I think Trawlerman is solid each-way, or back him in the without Kyprios market.

17.40 | THE HAMPTON COURT STAKES KING'S GAMBIT



I expect **KING'S GAMBIT** to follow up his emphatic success in the London Gold Cup. I thought before the race that this was a Group horse, and he did nothing to change my mind. One will struggle to find an easier winner of a big flat handicap this season. It was an authoritative display, and one might have thought it was an average renewal given his superiority. Persica has already franked the form though and I simply must keep with King's Gambit now. The stable won this race in 2015 with Time Test, who had also won the London Gold Cup off a mark of 93 prior to it. He looked like he could turn out to be a top-level performer at Newbury and while he may need to be to win this Group 3, he is a clear standout. His form has real strength to it, even before Newbury and he should continue to improve through the season.

18.15 | THE BUCKINGHAM PALACE STAKES FRESH EACH WAY



I think these 7f handicaps at Ascot are a bit of a specialist discipline and the same horses tend to run well in them time and time again. Northern Express has a good record in them, but the one that stood out to me at the weights was **FRESH**. He caught the eye a couple of times at the end of last season, and I am just wondering if this has been a long-term plan. There are certainly plenty of positives, including his record over course and distance with form figures of 34110000. While the recent figures might suggest he has gone off the boil, he was only beaten around six lengths on the last two of those. All of those runs came off higher marks than his current 92, with the wins coming off 98 and 102. That success off 102 in September 2022 was his last win, but he has put in several good efforts in defeat since, including a close fifth in last year's Wokingham off 101. He has been largely campaigned over six furlongs since, but I think this is his best trip. He poked the eye out in the big handicap at the Curragh on Irish Champions weekend last September and has improved with each start this year. He ticks plenty of boxes and it isn't hard to see him go close, assuming his draw doesn't prove to be a hindrance.

HANDICAP HOTSHOTS

BY SKY SPORTS RACING PUNDIT TONY ENNIS



PONIROS



92

3-Y-O BAY COLT
TRAINER: R M BECKETT
OWNER: AMO RACING LIMITED
JOCKEY: DAVID EGAN

SIRE: GOLDEN HORN (UK)
DAM: RUE RENAN (IRE)
DAM'S SIRE: LOPE DE VEGA (IRE)

PONIROS is another Ralph Beckett handicapper that I think can at least make the frame in the King George V Stakes. The Golden Horn colt went into my tracker after running a massive race in what still looks like the strongest 3yo ten-furlong handicap run so far this season. The Amo Racing owned colt made a big move early in the straight and looked the winner at one stage before finding the classy King's Gambit too strong. I can't work out why Chantilly who was one place behind Poniros that day is shorter in the market for this and therefore Poniros must be the play. The form of that London Gold Cup at Newbury continues to look strong.

ENGLISH OAK



99

4-Y-O BAY COLT
TRAINER: E WALKER
OWNER: WATHNAN RACING
JOCKEY: JAMES DOYLE

SIRE: WOOTTON BASSETT (UK)
DAM: FOREST CROWN (UK)
DAM'S SIRE: ROYAL APPLAUSE (UK)

ENGLISH OAK goes for the Buckingham Palace Stakes and I strongly fancy Ed Walker's likeable colt to run a huge race in the straight seven furlongs contest. The son of Wootton Bassett was ultra impressive at Haydock over this trip last time when scooting clear once he got some daylight. The trainer has been in fabulous form over the last fortnight and whenever asked about this horse in interviews he seems to be very excited! It's interesting that connections rate him highly enough to give him a July Cup entry and there's every chance he will be running in Group races by the end of the campaign. Again he will need luck in running and be on the right side of the draw, but he does look a highly promising horse for the big spending Wathnan racing operation.

HOLLIE DOYLE

Sky Sports Racing ambassador Hollie Doyle is hoping the rain comes for her Gold Cup hope Trueshan at Royal Ascot on Thursday and discusses the prospects of her four other rides on day three.



THE MAN | THE NORFOLK STAKES | 14:30



I always enjoy riding for Newmarket trainer Richard Spencer and owner Phil Cunningham and I'm on their colt THE MAN in the Group 2 Norfolk Stakes. The Royal Meeting's been on the cards for him since he made a winning debut at Southwell in April when he overcame his greenness for Kieran Shoemark. By Mehmas, he comes from a good family and can hopefully run much better than his big odds suggest he will. Aidan O'Brien's hot favourite Whistlejacket, a son of No Nay Never, sets a demanding standard after beating subsequent Group winner Arizona Blaze in Listed company last time.

EAST INDIA ROCK | THE KING GEORGE V STAKES | 15:05



EAST INDIA DOCK looked a colt with a bright future when bolting up at Salisbury by nearly 10 lengths last month and ran well in better company at Doncaster last time. James Fanshawe's gelding is a lot higher in the weights in an ultra-tough handicap but has the credentials to run well in the King George V Stakes. The drop back to 1m4f looks ideal and I'm happy with my draw in stall 1. Hopefully he copes with faster ground than he's previously encountered.

TRUESHAN | THE GOLD CUP | 16:25



It's a familiar story for TRUESHAN as we watch the weather on the build-up to the Group 1 Ascot Gold Cup. Racing fans know only too well that he needs at least good ground to perform to his best and I'm sure his devoted trainer Alan King won't want to risk him on anything quicker. I've been happy enough with his two runs this season following a second wind operation and feel he can build on his third in the Henry II Stakes at Sandown if conditions are in his favour. It's a strong renewal with Aidan O'Brien's Kyprios well fancied to add to his win in the Gold Cup two years ago but I'm surprised that last year's runner-up Coltrane is as big a price as he is. Andrew Balding's seven-year-old and Trueshan have fought out some tough battles and he's a horse I always respect. He won first time up on home turf in the Sagaro Stakes at Ascot in May and goes on the quicker ground.

COGITATE | THE BRITANNIA STAKES | 17:05



My Britannia Stakes mount COGITATE is a colt I know well after winning on him on debut at Newbury last July and I'm looking forward to him at Ascot. Charles Hills' son of Churchill has a nice profile for this race. He's lightly raced and unexposed and was unlucky to bump into the exciting Night Raider over 7f at Southwell on his re-appearance. He's bred to appreciate 1m on a stiff track life this so I'm looking forward to a bold show from what could be a good draw in stall 1.

BILLYJOH | THE BUCKINGHAM PALACE STAKES | 18:15



It's a step into the unknown for Mick Appleby's BILLYJOH in the closing cavalry charge, the Buckingham Palace Stakes. He's a solid and reliable sprinter who won over 6f at Ascot last season and has been unlucky a few times on sand and turf, but has never run over 7f. A big field like this might suit him and I'm happy enough with my high draw in stall 19. My only concern is the likely fast ground as he's a Mayson who has produced his best on going that doesn't have the word 'firm' in it.

TIMEFORM TIPS

RACE

1

1st **WHISTLEJACKET** (13)

2nd **SHAREHOLDER** (10)

3rd **LOOM** (6)

RACE

2

1st **GILDED WATER** (6)

2nd **GOING THE DISTANCE** (4)

3rd **GALLANTLY** (13)

RACE

3

1st **DIAMOND RAIN** (2)

2nd **KALPANA** (6)

3rd **YOU GOT TO ME** (13)

RACE

4

1st **KYPRIOS** (3)

2nd **GREGORY** (9)

3rd **TRAWLERMAN** (6)

RACE

5

1st **VOLTERRA** (21)

2nd **QIRAT** (19)

3rd **MICKLEY** (23)

RACE

6

1st **KING'S GAMBIT** (7)

2nd **FIRST LOOK** (5)

3rd **BRACKEN'S LAUGH** (3)

RACE

7

1st **ENGLISH OAK** (11)

2nd **DIVINE LIBRA** (18)

3rd **AWAAL** (3)



Diamond Rain wins the Haras De Bouquetot Fillies' Trial Stakes



Kyprios wins the Gold Cup during day three of Royal Ascot

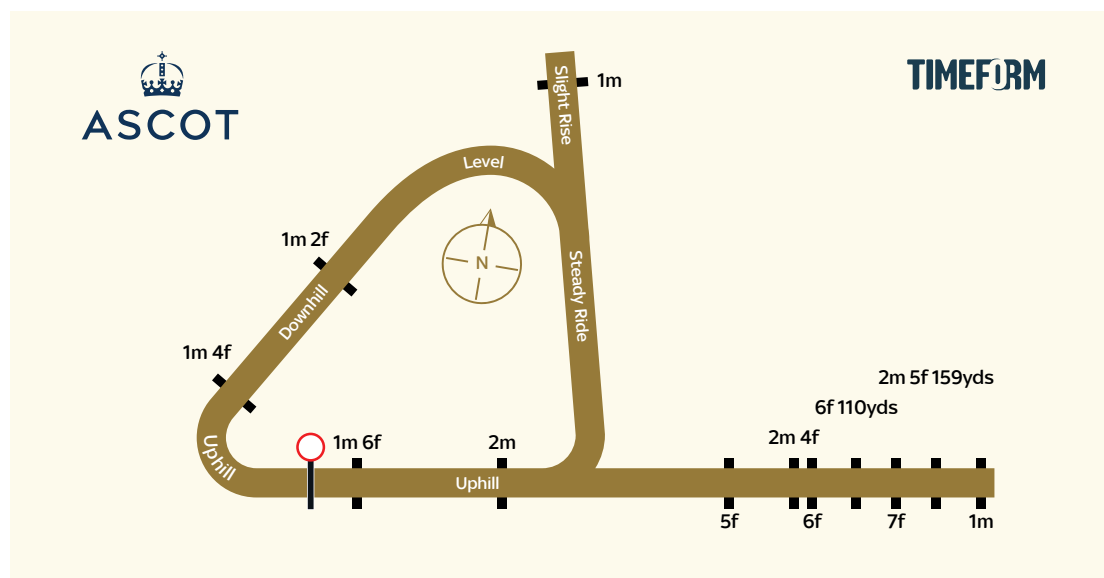


Gregory wins the Queen's Vase during day two of Royal Ascot

GUIDE TO ASCOT

By Classic-winning jockey and Sky Sports Racing presenter **Jason Weaver**

“ Because the run-in on Ascot’s round course is relatively short, positioning - jockeyship in other words - is key. It goes without saying that in steadily-run races you want to be towards the sharp end but, whatever the pace, you can get into trouble trying to come through rivals late on. We’re still learning about the straight course, following the relaying a few years back, but in my view it’s more pace-dependent than draw-dependent. Given the right pace to chase, I reckon you can win from anywhere. ”



The round course is a right-handed, triangular circuit of fourteen furlongs, with a run-in of 2 furlongs. There is a straight mile course and the Old mile course which joins the round course in Swinley Bottom. Despite the downhill run into Swinley Bottom and relatively short run-in from the final turn, Ascot is galloping in character. Since the redevelopment, the turn into the straight has become more sweeping and those ridden prominently can be difficult to peg back. Nowadays, the ground in the straight drains quicker than the rest of the course, meaning going descriptions can vary.

