

Tues 16 Mar  
Champion Hurdle Day

Wed 17 Mar  
Champion Chase Day

Thurs 18 Mar  
World Hurdle Day

Fri 19 Mar  
Gold Cup Day

Jewson Novices' Handicap Chase Pertemps Final Ryanair Chase World Hurdle Byrne Group Plate Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Handicap Chase

## Thursday 18 March

### Jewson Novices' Handicap Chase

My three against the field are Rivaliste, who has been deliberately kept back since early December to protect his mark for last year's winning stable, and will not be ridden so aggressively this time. China Rock who has the solid pattern race form, which I like for this race. And Daves Dream who I think Henderson may have had this race in mind for, as was just qualifying him on his last two starts, and the trainer's runners in this race are to be noted. I worry that Sunnyhillboy could be on the small side for a big track, and they may have shown the handicapper too much of their hand with Hey Big Spender.



*Rivaliste deliberately kept back since early December*

### Pertemps Final



*Pertemps Final*

Alfie Sherrin is going to start at a very short price for this handicap, and could be a class above his rivals. But that means there is plenty of value about. Silk Affair is interesting, being a winner at last season's Festival, and she isn't that much higher in the handicap. She really caught the eye at Sandown last time in a handicap where the last two Pertemps Final winners were also unplaced. She is a 5yo, which is a negative but, in truth, not that many with big chances have run.

As it is, I will be backing a couple of last-time-out winners on the day, given horses with such a profile have won more handicap hurdles than not since 1993 from less than 20% of runners. I'm leaning towards Fredo and Prince Erik in this respect, who won qualifiers for this race last time out. Neither appears to have been done any great favours by the handicapper, but both were undeniably very easy winners of those qualifiers. Smoking Aces is another last-time-out winner to consider, and strikes me as a horse crying out for this step up to three miles so I can also see myself backing him.

## Ryanair Chase

After Voy Por Ustedes ran in the Game Spirit Chase I gave up on him. But Alan King has definitely not lost his faith, and is convinced he will improve a lot for the run, and step back up to 2m5f at his favoured time of the season. Plus, first-time blinkers would also make him more interesting if they go down that route. He is still the top-rated horse in the race and although I will be surprised if he wins, I think he can make the first three so is each-way value.

Given the choice, I'd be with Poquelin over Tranquil Sea. To be honest, I just don't see Barbers Shop as a winner with Scotsirish as the best 20/1+ shot as his form with Tranquil Sea entitles him to be shorter. Schindlers Hunt and Planet Of Sound both strike me as the types to continually come up short at this level.



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## World Hurdle



*Big Buck*

I can only see Big Buck's beating himself rather than the opposition, and believe that to be most unlikely. Time For Rupert is an each-way alternative and I am sure he will run well. Hopefully well enough to finish second or third, as I feel he has more improvement in him than his Cleeve Hurdle conqueror Tidal Bay, and will also meet him on 4lbs better terms. I wouldn't put anyone off Katchit each-way either, because little separated him and Time For Rupert in the Cleeve, and reports of his homework since have been most encouraging. Plus, he never runs a bad race at Cheltenham.

Powerstation would be the best of the 25/1+ shots as he has placed at the Festival three times before, and looks like getting his decent ground but he is cracking on a bit now. Both bets are trading at shorter odds than advised, notably the Katchit without the favourite advice.

## Byrne Group Plate

The key to Tarotino is good ground, and he looks like he will come close to that here on Thursday, a race they have trained him for since he got stuck in the mud in the Paddy Power Gold Cup. He had a good run over an inadequate 2m behind Kalahari King just to get him back on a racecourse, and now it's all systems go. My other fancy is a gut feel. I am convinced that the J P McManus team have been training Song Of Songs with this race in mind all season, and he has dropped to an eye-catching 138. He didn't stay over 2m5f at the Festival over hurdles when he came to win the race at the final flight two years ago, but he is older and hopefully stronger now. I believe they don't go so fast over fences so should get home better, plus the ground also looks like being more suitable.



*The key to Tarotino is good ground*

## Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Handicap Chase

The Alners' record in this race is top drawer, and Shillingstone has trained for it since winning at Newbury on Hennessy day. He had his prep at Sandown a few weeks back, as did one of his previous winners of this race, whilst the other also ran at Sandown on his penultimate start. Mark Walford, not Simon Allwood, rides. Others I have time for are Fleet Street, Qhilimar and Finger Onthe Pulse and will consider those on the day, especially the latter if he runs; Tom Taaffe has done very well to get him in here off 137 given he was off just a 2lbs lower mark when beating Barbers Shop in the Jewson. Now he is racing off a 13lbs lower mark than when fancied for last season's Festival Plate where he was sixth.



*Finger Onthe Pulse might be worth considering on the day*