

Dates for your Diary

Don't miss out on our fantastic pre Cheltenham celebrity night.

CHELTHENHAM CELEBRITY PANEL/ TRAP TO LINE LAUNCH

WALTHAMSTOW GREYHOUND STADIUM

GOODWOOD SUITE

Thursday 1st March - 6.30pm Start

Cheltenham/Greyhound Panel 6.30pm - 7.45pm

Charlie Mann, Noel Fehily, Tanya Stevenson, Jonathan Hobbs, Mark Wallis

BUFFET

CASH BAR

Greyhound Racing 7.45pm - 10.30pm

Members £30 (£25 In The Pink)
Guests £45

BRING 2 PAYING GUESTS AND COME FOR FREE!!

NB We are going to see Bagan at Charlie Mann's stable on Friday and then on to Newbury Races. Why not book a hotel and stay overnight and join us on Friday.

Don't get left in the traps!



Get your card marked for Cheltenham & a host of winners on the night!

Come to our pre-Cheltenham celebrity panel and Trap to Line launch night at Walthamstow Greyhound Stadium on Thursday 1st March - 6.30pm start.

See back page for details.



Newsletter Contents

It is traditional at this time to take stock of the past year and look forward to the year ahead and this Newsletter is no exception. We hope you enjoy this Edition's articles and wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous 2007. We will do our best at Centaur to make the last part of this greeting come true.

Page 2	Christmas/New Year Highlights
Page 3	News on our Horses/Greyhounds
Page 4 & 5	Early thoughts on the Cheltenham Festival
Page 6 & 7	Feature on Going Racing in France
Page 8	Launch of Trap to Line/Cheltenham Panel Night

Christmas and New Year Highlights

Christmas Crackers

Kauto Star's decisive win in the King George at 3 miles following his successes in the Betfair Chase (3 miles) and the Tingle Creek (2 miles) make him the most versatile top class chaser we have had for many years. A win in the Gold Cup would entitle him to be billed "The Best Chaser Since Arkle"

Other highlights over the festive season were:

- Brave Inca's battling defeat of Iktitaf on unsuitable ground. He surely is amongst the bravest hurdlers of all time and we look set for a battle royal between him and the young pretender Detroit City at Cheltenham.
- Black Jack Ketchum's return to the track looking as good as ever. Will connections be tempted to go for the Champion Hurdle?

Our Final Tipping Performance for 2006

Racing Service

They say that everything comes to he/she who waits. After the most topsy-turvy year by far in our 7 year history we finished with a blitz of winners in November and December. Final outturn was £11,600 profit to a level £100 and over £8,000 to advised stakes. I shouldn't need to tell you that you cannot get returns like this anywhere in the investment market but unfortunately many clients, who join us from the racing market lack the necessary discipline to achieve these profits. If you fit this category, consider opening a managed account where we bet for you.

Bismark

Another successful year for the Bismark, recording a profit of £4,800 to a level £300 stake after a mid-year blip. This service has now won for 5 successive years and is an excellent investment vehicle with a strike rate of 70%.

In The Pink

After an excellent start I am afraid In The Pink fell away badly losing £1,360 to recommended stakes on the year. We are moving to a new line up of trainers and contacts in 2007 and have reduced the annual fee by a third.

Multiplier

The year was very much a game of two halves. A very poor first half of the year then a bounce back ending up with a small profit. Very close to a six figure win on a number of occasions.

Sports Service

Once again Steve's golf selections were responsible for this service showing an annual profit of around £1,300 to a level £100. We are increasing the number of soccer selections in 2007.

Maxnet

Again a game of two halves. An excellent first half of the year with a 90% strike rate. Then, after Italy's last second winner against Australia in the World Cup it all seemed to go wrong in the second half of the year. Final outturn was a profit of £1,350 to a level £300 stake.

Centaur at the Races (cont)

Racing Schedule

The French racing schedule has evolved over time and is very much based on a pragmatic view of the weather. The highest level of French racing takes place in or around Paris. However, in the depths of Winter, jump racing moves south (see Pau) and in the height of summer, the cream of flat racing takes place in the equable climate of Deauville. What will happen with global warming is anyone's guess. Generally (and there are a number of exceptions) racing in the provinces takes place when the weather is better and/or around a bank holiday. This is particularly true of the courses that hold only one or two meetings a year (something like the programme for Cartmel). Prize money is superb in France. Winning one race at the main tracks is often enough to cover training costs for a year.

Atmosphere

This is one of the less positive aspects of French racing. With the exception of literally a handful of very high profile races (eg Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe) racing is not well attended and this is shown most starkly at the big Paris tracks, which have the facility to take many thousands of spectators but often only get a couple of thousand. The Saturday before the "Arc" sees a mouth-watering collection of Group 1 and 2 races yet Longchamp seems empty and those that are there are 90% Brits!

Surprisingly those that attend racing do not seem that passionate about the result and this allied with the small crowds means that atmosphere is sadly lacking at the big locations. However, the provincial tracks come into their own here. The courses are smaller and more intimate and tend to race at the weekend meaning there are good crowds, often with a big family presence. The racing may be lower quality but the joie de vivre is there!

Facilities/Catering

With plenty of state funding (thanks in part to the tote monopoly), facilities at the tracks are very good indeed. Every course will have at least one very good stand affording a good view over the course. The Paris tracks are particularly sumptuous and Auteuil has a most pleasant racegoers lounge with multiscreens and your own desk where you can study the racecard while munching on a pastry and a coffee!

Catering in the French racetracks very much reflects the attitude of the French towards catering as a whole. The meals in the panoramic restaurants are very good and reasonable value. However, they do take some time, which not everyone likes to do. Fast food catering is sadly disappointing and is often just a small selection of sandwiches. While French bread is delicious, it does not stand being pre-packed in plastic and kept chilled for a few hours. Hence by the time you open it, it is pretty tough and chewy. Even at the big tracks, choice is limited and the hygiene of some of the stalls leaves a little to be desired particularly in relation to the temperature hot foods are kept at. An honourable mention must go to the ice cream van at Chantilly – absolutely superb and a blob of the local whipped cream makes it even more decadent.

Le Trotting

As in much of mainland Europe, trotting is as popular as thoroughbred racing. It is certainly a great spectacle and we can heartily recommend a visit to Paris-Vincennes on a Friday night to start the weekend on the right footing. The facilities are superb and we recommend you partake of a set meal in the panoramic restaurant. From here you get a fine meal and can watch the racing from a fantastic viewpoint and you are but 10 yards away from the tote desks if you fancy a flutter. On a separate track in front of the stands you can see the trotters warming up and this can give some valuable clues to their chances later on.

Conclusion

If your prime reason for going to the races is betting then maybe French racing is not for you. There is a tote monopoly and pools can be small leading to tremendous price volatility. Otherwise we can heartily endorse the French racing product. Access is great and the courses themselves are stunning and well-maintained. You will have plenty of space and the viewing from the stands is good and well supported by plenty of TV coverage. There is often tremendous variety on the card particularly at the regional tracks with cards covering flat, jumping, cross-country and trotting races. Finally, do give the trotting a try. A night of top class racing under lights accompanied by a superb meal at Vincennes is spectacle not to be missed!

Centaur at the Races

Welcome to the third of our regular series of reports on international racing. Our third report focuses on France, the largest European provider of thoroughbred racing after the UK.

Background

French racing differs from that in the UK in a number of ways:

1. There are no bookmakers. All betting is via the state tote system (PMU). While this does mean that betting opportunities are limited, prize money is significantly increased. Minimum prize funds at the main tracks are around €40,000.
2. Racing is organised in a similar way to Australia in that there are a limited number of main tracks (eg. Longchamp, Deauville, St Cloud, Auteuil, Enghien etc) and these are augmented by a large number of "regional" courses. These courses usually hold between one and ten meetings a year. Most of the meetings would consist of flat and jumps races and often there would be trotting.
3. France also has races for non-thoroughbred (AQPS) horses. These horses would normally have a thoroughbred sire. Prize money for AQPS races is equivalent to thoroughbred races. AQPS horses can compete in "normal" races.
4. France's answer to the Racing Post, known as the Paris Turf is very good if you want in depth details of the competing horses and your French is up to it. However, please note that the main details of any race meeting are printed in the edition the day before the meeting takes place. The paper on the day of the race would just cover a summary. Unless you want to do some serious punting the free sheet you get at the track is usually good enough.

Important Note

As I mentioned above there is a huge amount of French racecourses and Keith and I have only scratched the surface of the delights on offer. Hence we can only comment on the tracks we have seen, which are:

Enghien (Main-Paris)	Chantilly (Main)	Longchamp (Main-Paris)
Auteuil (Main-Paris)	Maissions-Lafitte (Main-Paris)	Argentan (Provincial)
Dieppe (Provincial)	St-Cloud (Main-Paris)	Compiègne (Provincial)
Deauville (Main)	Paris-Vincennes (Trotting)	

Naturally our comments must be restricted to what we have seen so apologies in advance if those comments do not accord with where you have visited.

Access

This is generally excellent. All the main courses are either by a tube (metro) or main line station. If they are not nearby then a free or heavily subsidised bus is available. Auteuil, Chantilly and Enghien are particularly conveniently located for public transport. All the courses have large car parks, which are free should you decide to do battle with the French (particularly Parisian) traffic. Another important plus factor is the entry price, which is absurdly cheap for us and stands at €3 to €4 for weekdays and €4 to €5 for weekends!

Setting/Scenery

This is a huge plus factor for me with French racing. We may have been lucky with the tracks that we have visited but every course has been stunning. The Paris tracks are both attractive in their own right but also often offer stunning views over Paris from the stands. This is particularly so of Auteuil, which offers a panoramic view. The country tracks are again delightful. Chantilly stands out as it is surrounded by woods and also has the magnificent architecture of the horse school on the home bend. Many courses such as Compiègne also have quite elaborate cross-country tracks in the infield so this area is a riot of colour and topiary – much better than the golf courses or car parks which adorn some of the UK tracks.

One track we haven't visited but which looks particularly attractive is Pau. This is located in South West France and stages much of the French jump racing in the depths of winter. It looks very scenic with the backdrop of the Pyrennees. Another potential must-see is Nouilly, where, on the cross-country course, horses have to negotiate a river! (see Christmas Quiz)

Continued on page 7

Centaur's Racehorses and Greyhounds

We start 2007 with a better line up on the greyhounds than with our racehorses for a change.

Racehorses

The decline in support from our membership for racehorse ownership shares has been a particular disappointment for me after 2 big winning years on our betting services. Current stock:

Bagan (Charlie Mann) – 8 year old - It is great to see Bagan back in action after a year and a half off with a tendon injury. A genuine Group 2 horse he should have an excellent future over fences. Shares available.

Crathorne (Martin Todhunter) – 7 year old - A prolific winner for us, Crathorne will return for a spring/summer campaign in early March. He will probably try to add a chase win to his six flat and hurdles wins for us.

Rightful Ruler (Martin Todhunter) – 5 year old - This horse is highly regarded by his trainer but has been slow to fulfil his promise. We are hopeful of a multiple winning year over hurdles/flat this year. Shares Available

Boxhall (Noel Wilson) 5yo - I bought Boxhall at the October 2006 Newmarket Sales. A winning four year old on the flat for Walter Swinburn, he has settled in well and schooled well over hurdles. He has a preference for good ground so we are delaying his appearance till late Feb/early March with a summer campaign in mind. Share available.

Opportunity - Staying flat 3 year olds were making huge prices at the October sales, Purple Moon 460,000gns, Lightning Strikes 200,000 etc. I am looking for shareholders to buy a 3 year old maiden with potential. Get it to win on the flat and take it to the October sales so we would be incurring training fees for a maximum of 8 months. Contact Steve in the office if you are interested.

Greyhounds

Greyhound ownership is a fun hobby which often turns out to be a lot more as owners often get involved with their greyhounds, watch them run regularly and take them as pets at the end of their racing careers.

Centaur operates the largest greyhound breeding/ownership operation in the UK with 2 stud dogs and 7 brood bitches. Our operation is managed by Jimmy Fenwick who has been top UK breeder for the last 3 years and Scott Fraser, a leading greyhound expert.

We can provide greyhounds either outright or in shared ownership for all budgets. Many, many clients now own shares. Why not get together with friends, family or work colleagues like Andy and Simon from Nottingham who had never owned a greyhound in their life but decided it would be fun. They bought a half share in Centaur Striker in November. In 2 months he won 8 out of 9 races including the British Sprint Championship and won far more than they paid for the dog in winning bets. Gavin Cheeseman a long term Centaur client bought four promising pups from us in mid 2006, renamed them and is having great success at Walthamstow and Romford.

Current line up

Centaur Decree (MarkWallis) – highly rated pup - target 2007 Derby.

Centaur Striker (Charlie Lister)-top British sprinter - a real win machine-target 2007 Derby-1/4 share available

Centaur Iris (Mark Wallis) top class staying bitch – target 2007 TV Trophy

Centaur Trooper (Terry Dartnall) – ditto ¼ share available

Centaur Fuji (Mark Wallis) – promising staying bitch - shares available

Centaur Driver (Mark Wallis) – staying dog at Walthamstow - shares available

The following greyhounds running at Brough Park and Sunderland can be bought outright for £500-£1,000 renamed by you and moved to your local track if you wish. You can research their breeding and form on www.thedogs.com.

Centaur Arrow, Centaur Fury, Centaur Pearl, Centaur Daring and Centaur Rose.

Early thoughts on the Cheltenham Festival

A month to go to the Cheltenham Festival and the excitement is already starting to build up. What makes matters really interesting is the possibility of soft ground for the first time in over 10 years.

Some Do's and Don'ts to bear in mind,

Do

- Follow the Irish in the opening novice hurdle
- Have a small stakes multiple bet each day
- Look to back horses, who have proved themselves on the course in the steeplechase races.
- Develop a staking plan for the meeting

Don't

- Back horses with multiple entries until bookmakers offer non-runner no bet.
- Back horses in-running when they are well clear-the Cheltenham Hill turns many races around.
- Back horses who have fallen in their last 6 races in the 4 mile National Hunt Chase
- Chase losses
- Take odds on Black Jack Ketchum for the World Hurdle

Analysis of early price races

Tuesday

Supreme Novices Hurdle

The Irish have a tremendous record in this despite Noland's success last year. Catch me (10/1) would be my preference at this point in time although ante-post favourite De Valira (8/1) will be a tough rival. However, following a deeply impressive performance at Haydock, the main UK challenge looks as if it will come from Nicky Henderson's Amaretto Rose.

Arkle

Fair Along will take the field along at a furious pace. One horse who will be able to keep in touch and who I think will go on to win is Briareus who was tremendously impressive when beating a strong field at Ascot.

Recommended ante post bet 1pt ew Briareus -16/1 available

Champion Hurdle

An all out tussle here up front between former champions Brave Inca and Hardy Eustace and new contender Detroit City. Brave Inca seems outstanding each way value at 4/1.

Wednesday

Ballymore Properties Novice Hurdle

Aran Concerto is being touted as the Irish Banker of the meeting at 7/2. I would only disagree if Catch Me was rerouted to this race.

Royal Sun Alliance Chase

I would definitely take on Denman here. My Way De Solzen (11/1) who has multiple entries would be my number one if he turns up. Two dark horses for consideration are Travino (20/1) and Money Trix (20/1)

Queen Mother Champion Chase

It is difficult to adopt a betting strategy here until Kauto Star's intentions are known. Newmill is my lay of the meeting here. I think last year's race was sub-standard. There looks to be each way value in Monet's Garden at 14/1 and Nickname at 25/1.

Thursday

World Hurdle

Although Black Jack Ketchum is a worthy favourite, his ante post price could look poor value if Hardy Eustace and Asian Maze are rerouted to this race.

Ryanair Chase

I strongly fancy In Compliance (8/1) for this race, however connections may be tempted to go for the Gold Cup.

Friday

Brit Insurance Hurdle

Colin Tizzard has some nice staying novice hurdlers this year. Flight Leader has shown a liking for the course and appears each way value at 9/1.

Gold Cup

It would be great to see Kauto Star win and crown himself the best chaser since Arkle. However if it came up soft/heavy, three and a quarter miles might prove too far. My advice is wait until the day before betting.

Triumph Hurdle

A notoriously difficult race. Paul Nicholls has a strong hand with Poquelin (20/1) and Predateur (25/1).

