

DAVY RUSSELL & HARRY SKELTON'S

CHELTENHAM GUIDE

2026



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Jeremy Scott's Golden Ace shocked all at 25/1 in the Champion Hurdle last year

CHAMPION DAY

TUESDAY 10TH MARCH

13:20	Skybet Supreme Novices' Hurdle	2m ½f
14:00	Singer Arkle Novices' Chase	2m
14:40	McCoy Contractors Juvenile Handicap Hurdle	2m ½f
15:20	Trustmarque Ultima Handicap Chase	3m 1f
16:00	Unibet Champion Hurdle	2m ½f
16:40	Sun Racing Plate Handicap Chase	2m 4f
17:20	National Hunt Steeple Chase Challenge Cup	3m 6f



DAY 1 KEY TRENDS

- ★ 10 of the last 12 Supreme winners won their last run before Cheltenham
- ★ 9 of the last 12 Arkle winners were trained by Willie Mullins or Nicky Henderson
- ★ 11 of the last 12 Champion Hurdle winners were aged between 6 and 8

DAVY'S VERDICT



I've been impressed with **OLD PARK STAR** and he looks the one in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle for that man Nicky Henderson. He's an excellent jumper and is improving all the time. He gets the vote ahead of Talk The Talk who may need further and El Cairos who may lack experience. On the subject of lack of experience, Kopek Des Bordes hasn't seen many fences in public, and I'd be against him in the Arkle Chase. Again, I'd be in the Henderson camp with **LULAMBA** who has much more experience and looks rock solid. At a bigger price **JULY FLOWER** might be the each-way call for a team that do so well at this meeting. Finally, I'm all over **THE NEW LION** when it comes to the Champion Hurdle. Irrespective of who turns up to take him on he gets my vote ahead of Gordon Elliott's Brighterdaysahead. She is a super mare but has to prove herself at Cheltenham.

CHAMPION HURDLE ODDS

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The New Lion	11/4
Brighterdaysahead	3/1
Constitution Hill	3/1
Lossiemouth	11/2
Golden Ace	13/2

*Price in this guide correct as of 25/02/26 at 8:30am

HARRY'S VERDICT



MYDADDYPADDY goes for the Supreme Novices' Hurdle. I don't think we saw him at his best at Aintree, but that's well behind him now. It's an open race and he's going there in good form. If I had to pick one in the Arkle, I'd like to be on Lulamba. He didn't like the ground when winning at Newbury last time, but still did it impressively. Kopek Des Bordes missing his last 2 engagements would be a bit of a concern. The opening day revolves around the Champion Hurdle and we're going there with a strong chance with **THE NEW LION**. He got back on track at Cheltenham last time and seems in great form. We've got to give Brighterdaysahead 7 pounds, and Lossiemouth too if she lines up, and we respect all our rivals, but we've always had a lot of belief in our horse. **MADARA** will run for us in the Plate. He's stepped forward from his run last time at Kempton and we might put cheekpieces back on him to sharpen him up.



Marine Nationale secured an emotional success in last year's Queen Mother Champion Chase

LADIES DAY

WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH

13:20	Turners Novices' Hurdle	2m 5f
14:00	Brown Advisory Novices' Chase	3m 1f
14:40	The Cup Handicap Hurdle	2m 5f
15:20	Glenfarclas Cross Country Handicap Steeple Chase	3m 5½f
16:00	BetMGM Queen Mother Champion Chase	2m
16:40	Debenhams Johnny Henderson Grand Annual Handicap Steeple Chase Challenge Cup	2m
17:20	Weatherbys Champion Bumper (In Memory of Sir Johnny Weatherby)	2m ½f



DAY 2 KEY TRENDS

- ★ All of the last 12 Turners winners were rated 146 or higher
- ★ 9 of the last 12 Brown Advisory winners were aged 7
- ★ 11 of the last 12 Queen Mother Champion Chase winners were in the top 3 in the betting

DAVY'S VERDICT



We will find out a lot more about the Turners Novices' Hurdle at the declaration stage when Willie Mullins decides what he is running and then the jockey booking that follows will tell us plenty too. As much as I respect No Drama This End, I've a feeling one of the Irish might just win this and **BALLYFAD** may be the value here. Arguably the race of the day looks to be the Brown Advisory Novices' Chase, which is really competitive. I'm certainly not sure Final Demand is the horse they think he is and I'd be keener on the likes of **WENDIGO**, and **KOKTAIL DIVIN**, if he turned up here. The feature race is the Queen Mother Champion Chase and put simply, if the same **MAJBOROUGH** who showed up in Dublin lines up here, he'll win. As for Marine Nationale, he'd need the ground to dry out plenty to go back-to-back.

QUEEN MOTHER CHAMPION CHASE ODDS

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Majborough	13/8
Marine Nationale	9/4
Il Etait Temps	7/1
L'eau Du Sud	15/2
Quilixios	18/1

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HARRY'S VERDICT



We run **BOSSMAN JACK** and **SOLDIER REEVES** in the Turners' Novices' Hurdle. They are 2 promising horses but would have to step up on what they have shown so far. No Drama This End is probably the one to beat. Hopefully the ground dries out for **KATEIRA** as that would give her an each-way chance in the Coral Cup. **L'EAU DU SUD** goes for the Champion Chase. He loves to be fresh, so we've given him a break since his last run. We know he likes Cheltenham and I think he has a chance if he brings his A-game. Marine Nationale is entitled to plenty of respect as last year's winner. Majborough won impressively at Leopardstown last time, but this course provides a different test. **BE AWARE** has been running well in strong novice races. The Grand Annual will be his first start in a handicap and he must have a chance. We could run a mare called **METS TA CEINTURE** in the Champion Bumper. She's got some good form in France and would be interesting if the ground wasn't too soft.



Bob Olinger won last year's Stayers' Hurdle under Rachael Blackmore

ST PATRICK'S THURSDAY

THURSDAY 12TH MARCH

13:20	Ryanair Mares' Novices' Hurdle	2m 1f
14:00	Jack Richards Novices' Limited Handicap Chase	2m 4½f
14:40	Close Brothers Mares' Hurdle	2m 4½f
15:20	Paddy Power Stayers' Hurdle	3m
16:00	Ryanair Chase	2m 4½f
16:40	Pertemps Network Final	3m
17:20	Rosconn Group Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Challenge Cup Handicap Steeple Chase	3m ½f



DAY 3 KEY TRENDS

- ★ All of the last 10 Mares' Novices' Hurdle winners were aged 5 or 6
- ★ 9 of the last 12 Ryanair Chase winners had at least 1 previous win at Cheltenham
- ★ 9 of the last 12 Stayers' Hurdle winners had a previous Grade One win

DAVY'S VERDICT



I'm just not convinced with Lossiemouth this season and would be keen to take her on if she turned up in the Mares' Hurdle. Wodhoo looks the obvious one against her, but it might be worth chancing **FEET OF A DANCER** at a big price as she's been in great form and stays really well. **TEAHUPOO** deserves to be favourite to win the Stayers' Hurdle, particularly if the rain stays around. He was beaten by his owner's other runner Bob Olinger in this 12 months ago, but he's 11 years young now. The improver could be **MA SHANTOU** who looks like the new kid on the block. There will be uncertainty over which horse Willie Mullins runs in the Ryanair Chase right up until the eleventh hour. Obviously whichever one of **FACT TO FILE** or **Gaelic Warrior** shows up, will take some beating. I know that **PANIC ATTACK** is heading down the Mares' Chase route, but connections may have their heads turned if this is a small field.

STAYERS' HURDLE ODDS

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Teahupoo	7/4
Honesty Policy	4/1
Kabral Du Mathan	6/1
Bob Olinger	13/2
Ma Shantou	13/2

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HARRY'S VERDICT



TAKE NO CHANCES wasn't beaten all that far in the Mares' Hurdle by Lossiemouth last year, and hopefully she can run another good race. Lossiemouth is again the one to beat and she looks a class above the rest. If either Gaelic Warrior or Fact To File run in the Ryanair, then they would be the ones to beat. Heart Wood would also hold a strong chance, but it looks like Willie Mullins holds the aces in this race. We might run **KABRAL DU MATHAN** in the Stayers' Hurdle. He looks like the young pretender that is on the up. He hasn't attempted 3 miles yet, especially at Cheltenham, and whether he is an out-and-out stayer yet remains to be seen, but he's going the right way. Teahupoo and Bob Olinger are both proper stayers that know how to race over this trip. They both have strong chances, as does Honesty Policy, who caught my eye at Ascot last time. **ACE OF SPADES** and **SUPREMELY WEST** could line up in the Pertemps. This is a hard race to win but both hold live each-way chances.



Inothewayurthinkin won last year's Gold Cup under Mark Walsh

GOLD CUP DAY

FRIDAY 13TH MARCH

13:20	JCB Triumph Hurdle	2m 1f
14:00	William Hill County Handicap Hurdle	2m 1f
14:40	Mrs Paddy Power Mares' Steeple Chase	2m 4½f
15:20	Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle	3m
16:00	Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup Steeple Chase	3m 2½f
16:40	Festival Challenge Cup Open Hunters' Steeple Chase	3m 2½f
17:20	Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap Hurdle	2m 4½f



DAY 4 KEY TRENDS

- ★ 7 of the last 12 Triumph winners ran in the Spring Juvenile Hurdle at Leopardstown on their last start
- ★ 8 of the last 12 County Hurdle winners were priced 10/1 or bigger
- ★ 10 of the last 12 Gold Cup winners were Irish-trained

DAVY'S VERDICT



Sadly, Narciso Has, the big Irish banker for the Triumph Hurdle, was ruled out of the race so it has a much more open feel to it. Gordon Elliott's **MANGE TOUT** is a good filly and finished third to Narciso Has the last day. She stays well and might be the pick of the Irish. As for the home team, I was impressed with **MINELLA STUDY** who has that all important course form. Dinoblu and Spindleberry look the obvious pair in the Mares' Chase, but I'd be with the Skeltons' **PANIC ATTACK** if she showed up. I like **JALON D'OUDAIRIES** at a huge price each-way in the Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle, he has plenty of class and should outrun his odds. The feature race of the week is the Cheltenham Gold Cup and it looks one of the most wide-open. I went on record just after the King George saying that **JANGO BAIE** was the one and I am not abandoning him now. Haiti Couleurs is interesting as a rapidly improving staying chaser and you can never rule out Galopin Des Champs.

GOLD CUP ODDS

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Fact To File	9/2
Jango Baie	5/1
Gaelic Warrior	11/2
The Jukebox Man	11/2
Haiti Couleurs	8/1

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HARRY'S VERDICT



In the Triumph Hurdle, we run **MAESTRO CONTI**. He has done nothing wrong, winning both his starts at 2 very different tracks in Kempton and Cheltenham. He's got a good attitude, jumps well and I think the hustle and bustle of the race will suit him. Despite Narciso Has missing out the Irish still hold a strong hand, but hopefully we can challenge them. **PANIC ATTACK** has had a great season, winning all 3 starts. She's in good form, and I think she'll go very close in the Mares' Chase. We're happy with **GREY DAWNING** going into the Gold Cup. This season we've campaigned to have him spot on twice. He was very good at Haydock on his reappearance in November and then I think we left a bit to work on when he ran last time in the Cotswold Chase. He made 1 or 2 mistakes, which cost me a challenge, but he hit the line strongly which was encouraging. It's obviously an incredibly hard race to win, and this year looks an open renewal, but we feel he's going there with a good chance.

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