



Ascot Racecourse Media Release

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Coney Island set to return to Berkshire as entries revealed for £150,000 G1 Betfair Ascot Chase on February 17

Entries are revealed today for the £150,000 Betfair Ascot Chase, the most valuable Grade One (G1) contest of the Jumps season run at Ascot Racecourse, and staged in 2018 on Saturday, February 17, Betfair Ascot Chase Day.

Run over two miles and five furlongs, the Betfair Ascot Chase boasts an outstanding roll of honour since its establishment in 1995. Martha's Son, One Man, Teeton Mill, Tiutchev, Our Vic, Monet's Garden, Voy Por Ustedes and Kauto Star all feature among the winners.

Heading the 19 entries for this year's renewal is **Cue Card** (Colin Tizzard, 8/1 with Betfair). The remarkable 12-year-old is looking to become the first horse to win three renewals of the Betfair Ascot Chase.

A decisive six-length victor of the 2013 renewal, the King's Theatre gelding registered an emphatic 15-length success last year to maintain his 100 per cent record at Ascot and gain his ninth G1 victory. Jean Bishop's horse, who has accumulated over £1.4 million in prize money, finished second to Bristol De Mai on his latest start in the G1 Betfair Chase at Haydock Park on November 25.

Trainer Colin Tizzard, based on the Dorset/Somerset border, could also be represented by another top-class chaser **Fox Norton** (8/1). A head second to Special Tiara in last year's G1 Queen Mother Champion Chase over two miles at the Cheltenham Festival, the eight-year-old recorded back-to-back G1 victories in the G1 Melling Chase (2m 4f) at Aintree in April and the G1 Champion Chase (2m) at Punchestown in May.

A half-length second to Politologue in the G1 Tingle Creek Chase (2m) at Sandown in December, Fox Norton was pulled up on his first start over three miles in the G1 King George VI Chase at Kempton Park on Boxing Day.

One of the most intriguing entries for the 2018 Betfair Ascot Chase is the lightly-raced **Coney Island** (Eddie Harty, Ireland, 3/1). A winner of two of his four starts over fences, the seven-year-old returned after nearly a year off the track due to a foot injury to record a nine-length success over course and distance in the Sodexo Graduation Chase at the Christmas Meeting on December 23.

Prior to that, Coney Island was a two and a quarter-length winner of the G1 Drinmore Novice Chase (2m 4f) at Leopardstown in December, 2016, and has a rating of 162 over fences.

Trainer Eddie Harty, who is based in County Kildare, explained: "Coney Island is in good form at the moment and he has come out of his latest run at Ascot really well."

“We’ll see how he is in the next couple of weeks, but I would think that we would aim for the Betfair Ascot Chase. That is the plan and we are very pleased with him at the moment.

“The race fits nicely into the programme and he won nicely at the track last time over the distance. It is a very good race in its own right and he will be up against strong opposition, so it should be a good test.

“He goes on any ground except probably extreme conditions, so the ground won’t be any real concern for him.

“He’s won a G1 before [Drinmore Novices’ Chase], so running in a G1 race like this against some good horses doesn’t faze us as he has shown that he can handle these sort of races; he’s G1 material.

“The Cheltenham Gold Cup [Friday, March 16] is definitely on our minds and he is entered, but we’ll see how he gets on in his next race as that should leave a clearer picture as to where we stand.”

The exciting **Top Notch** (Nicky Henderson, Betfair’s 11/4 favourite) is unbeaten in three starts at Ascot and landed the spoils in taking fashion on his first start of the season with an impressive eight-length victory in the G2 Christy 1965 Chase over the same distance at Ascot in November.

The seven-year-old, rated 164 over fences, justified odds-on favouritism on his latest start by three and a quarter-lengths in the rescheduled G2 Peterborough Chase at Taunton on December 14.

Champion Jumps trainer Nicky Henderson, is looking for a fourth success in the Betfair Ascot Chase following Riverside Theatre’s back-to-back victories in 2011 and 2012 and Tiutchev’s 2001 win, as he bids to join Martin Pipe as the race’s winning-most trainer.

Northern handler Malcom Jefferson is doubly represented in the Grade One contest courtesy of **Waiting Patiently** (7/2) and **Cloudy Dream** (12/1).

Seven-year-old Waiting Patiently is unbeaten in five starts over fences and has looked an exciting prospect in two runs so far this season. A comfortable two and a quarter-length winner of a Listed event at Carlisle in November, the son of Flemensfirth produced a career-best performance to land a Listed chase at Kempton Park over an extended two and a half miles earlier this month.

The ultra-consistent Cloudy Dream has filled the placings in three starts this term, which culminated with a seven-length second to subsequent G2 Cotswold Chase winner Definitely Red at Aintree in December in the G2 Many Clouds Chase (3m 1f). The eight-year-old has yet to finish out of the first three in 17 career starts.

Paul Nicholls is also seeking to procure a fourth victory in the Betfair Ascot Chase. Successful with Rockforce (2000), Kauto Star (2008) and Silviniaco Conti (2016), the progressive **Frodon** (7/1) is one of four entries for the Somerset handler. The six-year-old was third to Top Notch at Ascot in November and impressively defied top-weight with a 17-length success on his latest start in a G3 handicap chase at Cheltenham over a similar distance on January 27.

Saphir Du Rheu (14/1), a G1 winner as a novice in the Mildmay Novices’ Chase at Aintree in 2015, has not run since falling in the Grand National on April 8, while **Art Mauresque** (25/1) finished a creditable eight-length second to Waiting Patiently in a G2 event at Kempton Park last time out. **Clan Des Obeaux** (7/1), a seven-length winner at Haydock in November, completes Nicholls’ quartet of entries.

Another trainer with multiple entries is Gary Moore, who has put in **Ar Mad** (20/1), a five and a half-length third to Politologue in the G1 Betfair Tingle Creek Chase at Ascot in December and **Traffic Fluide** (50/1), a well-beaten seventh in the G1 King George VI Chase at Kempton Park on Boxing Day on his latest start.

The progressive **Speredek** (Nigel Hawke, 25/1) continued his upward trajectory with a tremendous seven-length second on his first start in Graded company behind Un De Sceaux in the G1 Royal Salute Whisky Clarence House Chase at Ascot on January 20. The seven-year-old has a rating of 154 following that performance and has won four of his seven starts over fences.

Kylemore Lough (Harry Fry, 25/1), 14 lengths behind Speredek in third in the G1 Royal Salute Whisky Clarence House Chase and Grade One winner **God's Own** (Tom George, 16/1), third to Waiting Patiently at Kempton on January 13, are other potential runners.

Owners Paul and Clare Rooney have two Betfair Ascot Chase entries courtesy of **Go Conquer** (Jonjo O'Neill, 33/1), a four and a half-length winner over three miles at Ascot in November, and **Master Dee** (Fergal O'Brien, 66/1), a three length second at Aintree on November 11 and successful over two miles and three furlongs on his only start at Ascot in October, 2016.

Ballyhill (Nigel Twiston-Davies, 33/1), a disappointing 10th behind Frodon at Cheltenham last time out, and the unexposed **King's Socks** (David Pipe, 50/1), second to Footpad on his last start in France before joining David Pipe, complete the 19 entries.

Betfair Ascot Chase – Betfair prices:

11/4 Top Notch
 3/1 Coney Island
 7/2 Waiting Patiently
 7/1 Clan Des Obeaux, Frodon
 8/1 Cue Card, Fox Norton
 12/1 Cloudy Dream
 14/1 Saphir Du Rheu
 16/1 Gods Own
 20/1 Ar Mad
 25/1 Art Mauresque, Kylemore Lough, Speredek
 33/1 Ballyhill, Go Conquer
 50/1 King's Socks, Traffic Fluide
 66/1 Master Dee

The Betfair Ascot Chase

Grade 1, £150,000 total prize fund. Two miles and five furlongs, Saturday, February 17. For five-year-olds and upwards which are allotted a rating of 130 or more by the BHA Head of Handicapping following a review of the horses entered and after taking into account of races run up to and including the day prior to confirmation. Horses which are not qualified for a rating in Great Britain, Ireland or France may also be entered. Such horses may be eligible providing the Handicapper is satisfied that the horse's recourse performances up to and including the day prior to confirmation would merit a minimum rating of 130. The decision of the BHA Head of Handicapping shall be final. Weights: 5-y-o 11st 5lb, 6-y-o and up 11st 7lb; mares allowed 7lb. Entries closed January 30, entries revealed January 31 (**19 entries**), five-day confirmations and £7,500 supplementary stage February 12, final declarations February 15. Maximum field 18 runners.

Horse	Age	Owner	Trainer
AR MAD (FR)	8	Ashley Head	Gary Moore
ART MAURESQUE (FR)	8	Mrs Johnny de la Hey	Paul Nicholls
BALLYHILL (FR)	7	S Such & CG Paletta	Nigel Twiston-Davies
CLAN DES OBEAUX (FR)	6	Mr & Mrs P Barber, G Mason, Sir A Ferguson	Paul Nicholls
CLOUDY DREAM (IRE)	8	Trevor Hemmings	Malcolm Jefferson
CONEY ISLAND (IRE)	7	J P McManus	Eddie Harty IRE
CUE CARD	12	Jean Bishop	Colin Tizzard
FOX NORTON (FR)	8	Ann & Alan Potts Limited	Colin Tizzard
FRODON (FR)	6	P J Vogt	Paul Nicholls
GO CONQUER (IRE)	9	Paul & Clare Rooney	Jonjo O'Neill

GOD'S OWN (IRE)	10	Crossed Fingers Partnership	Tom George
KING'S SOCKS (FR)	6	Bryan Drew	David Pipe
KYLEMORE LOUGH	9	M J McMahon & Denis Gallagher	Harry Fry
MASTER DEE (IRE)	9	Paul & Clare Rooney	Fergal O'Brien
SAPHIR DU RHEU (FR)	9	The Stewart Family	Paul Nicholls
SPEREDEK (FR)	7	Kapinhand	Nigel Hawke
TOP NOTCH (FR)	7	Simon Munir & Isaac Souede	Nicky Henderson
TRAFFIC FLUIDE (FR)	8	Galloping On The South Downs Partnership	Gary Moore
WAITING PATIENTLY (IRE)	7	Richard Collins	Malcolm Jefferson

19 entries

1 Irish-trained

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