



Ascot Racecourse Media Release

for immediate release, Monday, 12 February, 2018

All the news from today's Paul Nicholls Media Stable visit, plus background information

Paul Nicholls' intended runner in the G1 Betfair Ascot Chase, worth £150,000, over 2m 5f at Ascot on Saturday, February 17 for which seven horses went forward today.

Frodon (FR)

Age: 6

Breeding: Nickname (FR) - Miss Country (FR) (Country Reel (USA))

Owner: Paul Vogt

Form: 1/3F543185/11101F115-32321

Nine-time winner, with the latest of seven chase victories from 15 outings over fences coming in a G3 handicap chase over two miles and five furlongs at Cheltenham on January 27, when he was the very impressive 17-length winner under top-weight when partnered by Bryony Frost, then claiming a 5lb allowance.

Frodon was runner-up on his penultimate appearance in the Listed Lavazza Silver Cup Handicap Chase over three miles at Ascot on December 23.

Previously finished third to Top Notch in G2 Christy 1965 Chase over two miles and five furlongs at Ascot on November 25.

A G2 winner at Kempton Park in February, 2017, when landing the Pendil Novices' Chase.

Was only a four-year-old when landing highly-competitive G3 Caspian Caviar Gold Cup Handicap Chase over two miles and five furlongs at Cheltenham in December, 2016. Official BHA Rating: 164.

He is entered in the G1 Ryanair Chase at the Cheltenham Festival next month.

Starts: 23; Wins: 9; 2nd: 2; 3rd: 4 Win & Place Prize Money: £269,346

Paul Nicholls said today: "The owner is away at the moment and there are three meetings on Saturday so we just need to have a look and think about all our riding arrangements.

"I will see what Sam (Twiston-Davies) has elsewhere - it is quite possible that Bryony will ride Frodon (8/1 with Betfair) again - she has ridden him the last twice and they have run really, really well.

"She rides well - she has been given the opportunity to ride some really good horses. She listens and I said before Cheltenham that there was fresh ground, go and walk it. She did and kept on the fresh ground. She is enthusiastic, but most of all the horses run sweetly for her - that is a big thing. She has a lot of good qualities and seems a very good chase jockey.

"Frodon had a great season last season, winning six novices' chases, and has been running really well this season. He put a fantastic performance the other day at Cheltenham. He is rated 164 after being put up a lot and we really have no choice but to run him in better races like the Betfair Ascot Chase rather than handicaps.

"You don't see too many horses sprint up the Cheltenham hill like he did and on that ground (heavy) too. That was a handicap and this weekend he goes for a Grade One and he will meet totally different horses. He deserves to take his chance.

"Of the others in the race, Waiting Patiently (11/4) and Top Notch (9/4 favourite) are very good, while Cue Card (7/1) is running and the horse from Ireland, Coney Island (5/2), beat one of ours (Adrien Du Pont) the other day. It is a hell of a good race and we just have to hope that Frodon is still progressing and the Cheltenham victory was not a fluke. He jumps and travels very well and is in really good form.

"I would not be afraid to go back to three miles on better ground. He is only just turned six so he will get progressively stronger - he can keep improving. For a small horse, he jumps really, really well.

"I was slightly concerned before Cheltenham that the ground may have been too soft for him, but it did not seem to make any difference to him. He is quite versatile on ground and tough."

"You only really target these races if you have a horse good enough, but we've had three good winners of the race (Rockforce 2000; Kauto Star 2008 and Silviniaco Conti 2016) and with Frodon, we've had to go for the race because of his new mark."

Bryony Frost added today: "Who knows if Frodon can step up to a G1 successfully? We are testing the waters and asking bigger questions. Can he answer them? Saturday will tell - it is as simple as that.

"He was impressive at Cheltenham, you cannot ignore him for that, he jumps and he travels.

"He was top-weight and it was soft ground. He is talented and had already shown that. We took 5lb of his back, we had a dream run and he jumped perfectly and he was the only one galloping."

1.50pm G2 Sodexo Reynoldstown Novices' Chase, 2m 7f 180y, £40,000 - re-opened for entries until 11am tomorrow

Black Corton (FR)

Age: 7

Breeding: Laverock (IRE) - Pour Le Meilleur (FR) (Video Rock (FR))

Owner: The Brooks, Stewart Families & Jeremy Kyle

Form: 3/31231/311214-12111121

Black Corton has enjoyed a fabulous season so far, with seven victories in novices' chases. Recorded his biggest victory on latest outing when taking the G1 Kauto Star Novices' Chase at by a length and a half from Elegant Escape at Kempton Park on Boxing Day. Previously successful at Cheltenham twice, Newton Abbot, Fontwell twice and Worcester. He has been ridden by Bryony Frost for six of those victories.

Black Corton is a Listed winner over hurdles. The horse holds entries in Saturday's G2 Sodexo Reynoldstown Novices' Chase at Ascot on Saturday and the Cheltenham Festival in March in the four-mile G2 National Hunt Chase and the G1 RSA Chase over three miles.

Official BHA Rating: 155

Starts: 21; Wins: 12; 2nd: 4; 3rd: 4 Win & Place Prize Money: £163,113

Paul Nicholls commented: "The intention is run Black Corton in the Grade Two Sodexo Reynoldstown Novices' Chase at Ascot on Saturday.

"Bryony always rides Black Corton, who won the Grade One Kauto Star Novices' Chase at Christmas. He has astonished me with the improvement he has made this season, winning seven races from nine outings.

"He has just kept on improving. The maximum he was rated over hurdles was 135 and we just thought he would be a summer horse, but he is now rated 155+ and has just kept on winning.

"I probably got him beat at Newbury as I did not have enough belief in the horse. We should have made more use of him as we did at Kempton Park.

"He galloped all the way to the line at Kempton, even though he pulled a front shoe off four out and the bulb of his heel off, finishing lame. That would have stopped a lot of horses so he is obviously tough. He had 10 days box rest after that.

"He has had a nice break. He has been so well and you are only a novice once. This is his only chance to run in the Reynoldstown at Ascot on Saturday. He has progressed from race to race and thrived from running.

"He will do a piece of work on Thursday, just to make sure we are happy. He was going to school this morning, but the snow shower we had stopped that.

"Black Corton is in good form. I'm not sure why he and Bryony Frost get on so well together, something just seems to have clicked with Black Corton this season and they've just been on a roll.

"This is really a prep race for Cheltenham - the plan is to go to the RSA Chase at Cheltenham after Saturday. The idea is to have him right for Cheltenham.

"He does seem to have progressed race on race and I'm not sure he's a horse that wants to be without a run for a while, so this is a good prep race for him.

"I thought he wanted fast ground but has won on the soft at Cheltenham and Kempton Park now. Good horses go on any ground.

"The Reynoldstown is the right race for him. Like Frodon, he is not a great big scopey horse, rather a small athletic horse who has done really well.

"He has got to quite a lofty rating and unless he progresses more, next season will be quite hard. But he has done nothing wrong - who knows, he is progressive and could be a surprise package for us."

Bryony Frost said today: "I think Black Corton has surprised everyone - he is awesome.

"Paul and the owners were keen to get me, when I turned conditional, on the right foot. It is important for young jockeys too and it just so happened to be this little horse I got legged up on at Worcester.

"Who would believe that every time we asked him to give more, he gave more. I am privileged to be on him.

"I don't know why we get on - we just do. We just fit in the groove together and ride the same wave.

"I sat on him this morning and he feels great - he is his old self, just going about his business today, doing his routine. The snow started coming down and he started having a few sneezes - he is not used to that around these areas. He is in good shape.

"His victory at Kempton was awesome - jumping is the name of the game and he jumped. He was a 100 per cent right and Paul said just kick on and keep the pace strong as we know he stays and jumps. - put fitness to the test.

"The gallop we went was ridiculous - I don't think we were far behind Might Bite's time - Black Corton was electric.

"We want to get the ball rolling again at Ascot on Saturday before the big questions come at Cheltenham.

"He has had a lovely little break and he is as fresh as paint this morning.

"I am claiming 3lb now - I would love to still claim 5lb. That is what it is - we are improving and going through the stages of our career like everybody has to. You hope the experience you are gaining will prove you can have 3lb off rather than 5lb and still produce winners.

"I am Paul's conditional and the team here have looked after my career perfectly and they will carry on holding my hand through it - I would be lost without them and all the support of my family."

Seven go forward for Saturday's Betfair Ascot Chase

Ante-post favourite Top Notch heads seven five-day confirmations for the £150,000 G1 Betfair Ascot Chase, staged over two miles and five furlongs at Ascot Racecourse this Saturday, Betfair Ascot Chase Day, February 17.

Top Notch (Nicky Henderson) has won his last two starts in great style, including over the course and distance in the G2 Christy 1965 Chase in November, and tops Betfair's market at 9/4.

Irish challenger Coney Island (Eddie Harty IRE, 5/2 with Betfair), a G1-winning novice over fences last season, created a big impression at Ascot on his comeback when taking the Sodexo Graduation Chase by nine lengths on December 23.

Waiting Patiently (Ruth Jefferson, 11/4) is another likely improver, having won five from five over fences so far. He comes into the race on the back of a decisive eight-length success over Art Mauresque in a Listed chase at Kempton Park on January 13.

Cue Card (Colin Tizzard, 7/1) is bidding to become the first three-time winner of the Betfair Ascot Chase. The popular 12-year-old, who landed the spoils in 2013 and 2017, has not raced since finishing second in the G1 Betfair Chase at Haydock Park on November 25.

Frodon (Paul Nicholls, 8/1) looked as good as ever on his latest start under rising star Bryony Frost when posting a 17-length victory in a competitive G3 handicap chase at Cheltenham on January 1.

The confirmations are completed by Speredek (Nigel Hawke, 25/1), who was second behind Un De Sceaux in the G1 Clarence House Chase over two miles and a furlong at Ascot last month, and Traffic Fluide (Gary Moore, 50/1).

Barry Orr, Head of Media Relations for Betfair, said: "At the moment, Top Notch heads the market for the Betfair Ascot Chase at 9/4, with Coney Island next in at 5/2.

"Frodon, who we have just seen at Paul Nicholls' yard at Ditcheat, looks great and is currently in there at 8/1.

"Cue Card, looking for his third victory in the Betfair Ascot Chase, is a 7/1 chance. It is a small but select field, but at the moment, it is very competitive in the market, but Nicky Henderson's Top Notch is just heading the market.

"With Coney Island, he could either head for the Timico Cheltenham Gold Cup or the Ryanair Chase at the Cheltenham Festival after this race and with that in mind, there could be money for the horse in the coming days, but at the moment, it's just too early to call."

Betfair Ascot Chase - Betfair prices:

9/4 Top Notch
5/2 Coney Island
11/4 Waiting Patiently
7/1 Cue Card
8/1 Frodon
25/1 Speredek
50/1 Traffic Fluide

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 (7 five-day confirmations), final declarations 10am Thursday, February 15.

Horse	Age	Owner	Trainer
CONEY ISLAND (IRE)	7	J P McManus	Eddie Harty IRE
CUE CARD	12	Jean Bishop	Colin Tizzard
FRODON (FR)	6	Paul Vogt	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	Ruth Jefferson

7 five-day confirmations
1 Irish-trained

Betfair Ascot Chase Roll of Honour

YEAR WINNER AGE/WGT OWNER TRAINER JOCKEY SP
2017 Cue Card 11-11-07 Jean Bishop Colin Tizzard Paddy Brennan 4/9F

2016 Silviniaco Conti 10-11-07 Potensis Bloodstock Ltd & Chris Giles Paul Nicholls Noel Fehily 2/1F
 2015 Balder Succes 7-11-07 Masterson Holdings Ltd Alan King Wayne Hutchinson 4/1
 2014 Captain Chris 10-11-07 Diana Whateley Philip Hobbs Richard Johnson 8/11F
 2013 Cue Card 7-11-07 Jean Bishop Colin Tizzard Joe Tizzard 15/8F
 2012 Riverside Theatre 8-11-07 Jimmy Nesbitt Partnership Nicky Henderson Barry Geraghty 13/8F
 2011 Riverside Theatre 7-11-07 Jimmy Nesbitt Partnership Nicky Henderson Barry Geraghty 11/10F
 2010 Monet's Garden 12-11-07 David Wesley Yates Nicky Richards Barry Geraghty 11/2
 2009 Voy Por Ustedes 8-11-07 Sir Robert Ogden Alan King Robert Thornton 6/5F
 2008 Kauto Star 8-11-07 Clive Smith Paul Nicholls Ruby Walsh 4/11F
 2007 Monet's Garden 9-11-07 David Wesley Yates Nicky Richards Tony Dobbin 11/10F
 2006* Our Vic 8-11-07 David Johnson Martin Pipe Timmy Murphy 2/1F
 2005* It Takes Time 11-11-07 David Johnson Martin Pipe Jamie Moore 14/1
 2004 Hand Inn Hand 8-11-07 Patrick Burling Developments Ltd Henry Daly Mark Bradburne 15/2
 2003 Tiutchev 10-11-07 The Liars Poker Partnership Martin Pipe A P McCoy 15/8F
 2002 Tresor de Mai 8-11-07 Joe Moran Martin Pipe A P McCoy 9/2
 2001 Tiutchev 8-11-07 The Liars Poker Partnership Nicky Henderson Mick Fitzgerald 11/8
 2000 Rockforce 8-11-07 G Z Mizel Paul Nicholls Joe Tizzard 2/1F
 1999 Teeton Mill 10-11-07 The Winning Line Venetia Williams Norman Williamson 6/4F
 1998 One Man 10-11-07 John Hales Gordon Richards Tony Dobbin 7/4
 1997 Strong Promise 6-11-07 Geoff Hubbard Geoff Hubbard Norman Williamson 10/1
 1996 Sound Man 8-11-07 David Lloyd Edward O'Grady IRE Richard Dunwoody 1/2F
 1995 Martha's Son 8-11-07 P J Hartigan Tim Forster Rodney Farrant EvsF
 * run at Lingfield Park

Facts & Figures

The Betfair Ascot Chase was first run in 1995. It was initially staged on Wednesday, before moving to its current Saturday slot in 1999. The 2005 & 2006 runnings happened at Lingfield Park, while Ascot was undergoing redevelopment.

There have been four dual winners - Tiutchev (2001, 2003), Monet's Garden (2007, 2010), Riverside Theatre (2011, 2012) & Cue Card (2013, 2017).

Martin Pipe has been the most successful trainer with four successes - Tresor de Mai (2002), Tiutchev (2003), It Takes Time (2005) & Our Vic (2006).

Paul Nicholls and Nicky Henderson lead the way among current trainers, with three victories each. Nicholls scored with Rockforce (2000), Kauto Star (2008) and Silviniaco Conti (2016), while Henderson won with Tiutchev (2001) and Riverside Theatre (2011 & 2012).

Barry Geraghty is the most successful jockey, with three victories - Monet's Garden (2010) and Riverside Theatre (2011, 2012).

It is a good race for favourites, with 15 of the 23 market leaders (65 per cent) having been successful.

The biggest shock was provided by 14/1 shot It Takes Time (2005).

Eight-year-olds are the most successful age group, accounting for 10 winners. The youngest winner was six-year-old Strong Promise in 1998, while the oldest was Monet's Garden, who was a 12-year-old for his second success in 2010.

There has been one Irish-trained winner - Sound Man (1996).

Paul Nicholls

Background Information

Manor Farm Stables, Ditcheat, Shepton Mallet, Somerset

Synopsis - 10-time champion Jump trainer in Britain (2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16).

He became the first British handler to accrue more than £4 million of prize money in a season in 2007/08.

He is a close second to current champion Nicky Henderson in this season's championship (2017/2018).

He saddled his 2,000th winner at Down Royal on November 5, 2011, 20 years after taking his licence, making him the fastest Jump trainer to reach that landmark figure and has now almost reached the 2,900-winner mark.

He has sent out 41 winners at the Cheltenham Festival, the third-highest total ever, including four victories in the feature Timico Cheltenham Gold Cup, and gained 115 Grade One successes in all.

Neptune Collonges provided Nicholls with a first Grand National victory in 2012.

Betfair Ascot Chase winners (3): Rockforce (2000), Kauto Star (2008), Silviniaco Conti (2016).

Born - Lydney, Glos, April 17, 1962.

Background - The son of a policeman, Nicholls began his racing career as a Jump jockey and partnered 130 winners between 1980 and 1989, with his biggest successes coming in the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup at Newbury on Broadheath (1986) and Playschool (1987), who also won the Irish Gold Cup with Paul up in 1988.

Having struggled to keep his weight down, he retired from riding in 1989 and assisted Devon handler David Barons, trainer of not only Broadheath and Playschool but also Seagram, who won the 1991 Grand National at Aintree during Nicholls' time at the stable.

Nicholls took out his own licence to train at Manor Farm Stables in Ditcheat on November 1, 1991, with just eight horses and has come a long way since. Manor Farm Stables, which has been expanded, is the main yard, with Highbridge the second yard just outside the village.

First winner as a trainer - Olveston, Hereford, December 20, 1991.

Bryony Frost

Born: April 13, 1995

Background: daughter of Buckfastleigh-based trainer Jimmy Frost, who rode Little Polvier to victory in the 1989 Grand National before taking over his father's training licence in March, 2002.

Bryony's brother Hadden, who sources and breaks in horses, was also a successful jockey and partnered Buena Vista to victory in the Pertemps Final at the 2010 Cheltenham Festival.

Bryony started riding the yard's donkey Nosey as soon as she could walk and moved on to riding out racehorses for her father at the tender age of nine. She became an amateur jockey aged 16 and enjoyed tremendous success in point-to-points (over 55 winners in that sphere), winning the National Novice title and the National Hunt Girls' title.

She shot to wider prominence at the 2017 Cheltenham Festival in March when guiding the Paul Nicholls-trained Pacha Du Polder to victory in the Foxhunter Chase.

She turned professional in July, 2017, and has gained several high-profile wins for Nicholls already this season, headed by Black Corton in the G1 Kauto Star Novices' Chase at Kempton Park on Boxing Day, Present Man in the Listed Badger Ales Trophy Handicap Chase at Wincanton on November 11 and Frodon in a G3 handicap chase at Cheltenham.

The now 3lb-claimer has had 41 winners under Rules so far, including 27 this season. She has enjoyed one success (on hunter chaser Polisky in the Royal Ascot Racing Club Open Hunters' Chase on April 3, 2016) from seven rides at Ascot Racecourse.

ENDS

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