

## STARS STAY ON COURSE FOR 9<sup>TH</sup> QIPCO BRITISH CHAMPIONS DAY

A star-studded cast is on course to light up QIPCO British Champions Day at Ascot on Saturday after the five-day entries were revealed on Monday.

The ninth edition of Britain's richest raceday, which boasts prize-money of more than £4 million, is again packed full of quality from start to finish.

No fewer than 25 Group 1 winners remain in the mix, with this year's Classic winners **Hermosa, Magna Grecia, Anapurna, Phoenix Of Spain** and **Star Catcher** set to be joined by star names such as **Benbatl, Stradivarius, Magical, Japan, Coronet, Advertise, Hello Youmzain, One Master** and **The Tin Man**.

There will also be an international flavour with the darling of Japan, **Deirdre**, set to be joined by contenders from Ireland and France.

## YOUNG PRETENDERS SET TO TAKE ON PAST THREE WINNERS OF SPRINT

The past three winners of the QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes are set to clash on Saturday.

**Sands Of Mali** (2018), **Librisa Breeze** (2017) and **The Tin Man** (2016) have each won the Group 1 showpiece and five more winners at the highest level – **Advertise, Brando, Hello Youmzain, Mabs Cross** and **One Master** – are ready to join them in what promises to be a superb start to the glittering finale of the British Flat racing season. The Denis Hogan-trained **Make A Challenge**, a Listed winner in Ireland this weekend, has been supplemented for the race.

Two three-year-olds, **Advertise** and **Hello Youmzain**, head the betting. The former, usually ridden by Frankie Dettori, was winning the third Group 1 race of his career when landing the Larc Prix Maurice de Gheest at Deauville last time by a neck from **Brando**, having earlier won the Commonwealth Cup at Royal Ascot.

**Hello Youmzain** was third in the latter contest after being slow away before making all in the Betfair Sprint Cup at Haydock last month when **The Tin Man** (second), **Brando** (fourth), **Dream Of Dreams** (eighth), **So Perfect** (ninth), **Forever In Dreams** (tenth) and **Khaadem** (11<sup>th</sup>) were all behind.

Another notable contender among the 17 to stand their ground is **Cape Byron**, a course specialist who beat **Donjuan Triumphant**, and **Keystroke** in decisive fashion in the Group 3 John Guest Racing Bengough Stakes at the track last time.

### WHAT THEY SAY:

**Kevin Ryan on Hello Youmzain and Brando**

"It's always been the plan to go there with both of them and they are in great shape. They have both got form at Ascot and hopefully they run their races and it will be a good end to the season for them.

"We are fortunate to have two runners in a Group 1 like this. Ease in the ground is not a bother for either of them.

"Some horses like Golden Slippers [Ryan's Prix de l'Abbaye winner] need time but Hello Youmzain stepped up straight away and done everything we've asked of him.

"He's a young horse, only three, and we've minded him this year. Hopefully that will pay dividends in the long run. He's a very exciting horse and there's no reason why he can't improve and get stronger next year.

On Hello Youmzain's tendency to edge left at the end of his races, Ryan added:

"That's just him being a babyish and he will grow out of that. It's not stopped him winning.

"Brando is a seasoned warrior who turns up for every big occasion and runs his race. He's run well in the race in the past and is a star, a marvellous horse who holds his form."

### **James Fanshawe on The Tin Man**

"He's been a regular in the race and won it once. He wasn't at his best in it last year when he was probably feeling the effects of his previous run at Haydock [when winning the Sprint Cup].

"He's fit and fresh heading into it this time. Their coats are going this time of the year and you never quite know, but he seems really well.

"We didn't have him quite right midsummer and that's why he went to Newbury [for the bet365 Hackwood Stakes] rather than the Prix Maurice de Gheest.

"After Newbury he had a nice break and he finished his race strongly last time in the Sprint Cup at Haydock. Oisin [Murphy] said he was a bit unlucky because he stumbled a bit coming out of the gates but I was just so pleased he ran so well, and he has come out of it really well.

"I think that he likes being able to get into a race in his own time, rather than put the gun to his head early. I always thought he wanted better ground but he handles soft ground as well as anybody else and a lot of his relations love it."

### **William Haggas on One Master**

"Last year we went from her win in the Foret to the Breeders' Cup and Hong Kong, but this year we didn't entertain running her at the Breeders' Cup. The idea this time was the Foret and then Ascot, and part one of the jigsaw is done.

"I don't like the drop to six furlongs much, but when Tasleet [Haggas's former sprinter] got beaten in it two years ago he got outstayed by Librisa Breeze, who was a seven-furlong horse coming back to six. Hopefully, they will go hard and have a nice fight.

"We tried a mile earlier in season in the Queen Anne and Falmouth. She travelled best in the latter and for most of the way was going to win, but she was weak in the last furlong. Usually, horses who are doubtful stayers do not win.

"The 13-day gap between her races is not ideal but she's had only four runs and likes soft ground. She's a genuine filly and I suspect she will stay in training - her owners are sporting people."

### **Richard Fahey on Sands Of Mali**

"He came back from Ascot [last time] a little bit sore, a few little niggly problems that we've sorted. He always works well, he's an exceptionally good work horse.

"I just feel that if we get our lad back then I'm not too worried about anything. It was high on the priorities for this year, but we do need to get him back bouncing."

## **GOSDEN AND O'BRIEN ON COURSE FOR A FAMILIAR BATTLE IN FILLIES & MARES**

John Gosden and Aidan O'Brien have dominated the past three renewals of the QIPCO British Champions Fillies & Mares Stakes and the pair again look to hold the aces.

Gosden has three contenders to shuffle in **Anapurna**, **Sparkle Roll** and **Star Catcher**. The bookmakers make **Star Catcher** the ante-post favourite and in her past three races she has reeled off successive wins in the Ribblesdale Stakes, Kerrygold Irish Oaks and Qatar Prix Vermeille.

**Anapurna**, a daughter of Frankel, won the Investec Oaks in June and secured another Group 1 prize when winning the Qatar Prix de Royallieu at Longchamp this month.

Aidan O'Brien has won the past two runnings, via Hydrangea and **Magical**, and the latter is among six potential runners this time. The master of Ballydoyle also has **Delphinia**, **Fleeting**, **Hermosa**, **Pink Dogwood** and **South Sea Pearl** engaged.

Other interesting contenders include **Antonia De Vega**, easy winner of her only race at Newbury this season, and the progressive **Tarnawa**, who landed the Group 2 Moyglare "Jewels" Blandford Stakes at the Curragh on her latest start.

### **WHAT THEY SAY:**

### **Ralph Beckett on Antonia De Vega**

"She did a racecourse gallop last week and, that went to plan, so the idea is to run. She's been training well and hopefully it stays soft because the formbook says that suits her.

"She's very under-raced and I'm hopeful there is a bit more to come. She goes there nice and fresh.

The trainer had five winners on Saturday at more than 21,000-1 and on the form of his horses, he added:

"We had a tricky spring, it wasn't going well and then we hit a bit of a blip in July when they weren't running well. Saturday gave us all a thrill and it's always a good idea to finish off your season well."

### **William Haggas on Klassique**

"Klassique ran well in France last time but was a bit flat. She loves the soft and so we deliberately put her away.

"She's an outsider and got quite a bit to find on form. I don't know whether she's good enough, but what I do know is that she will love the ground, stay the trip and try very hard. If she can finish in the first four then we will be delighted."

## **ALL-CONQUERING STRADIVARIUS FACING INTRIGUING NEW RIVAL IN KEW GARDENS**

Super stayer **Stradivarius** heads 14 entries left in the QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup.

The John Gosden-trained five-year-old scooped last year's renewal and has not lost since finishing a close third to Order Of St George in the 2017 running.

He has subsequently won all ten of his races and extended his winning sequence when cruising home ahead of **Cleonte** and **Max Dynamite** in the Doncaster Cup last month.

Earlier this year he won a second Matchbook Yorkshire Cup, a second Gold Cup, a third Qatar Goodwood Cup and a second Lonsdale Cup – exploits that secured his connections a second Stayers' Million bonus offered by Weatherbys Hamilton.

He has already won a record 11 races that fall under the QIPCO British Champions Series umbrella – two more than Frankel managed in 2011 and 2012 – and is seeking a record sixth QIPCO British Champions Series win of the season.

Gosden has also left in the lightly-raced **Royal Line**, who was making it five wins from nine races when landing the Group 3 Sun Racing September Stakes on his latest outing.

**Dee Ex Bee** has chased home Stradivarius three times this season, in the Gold Cup, Goodwood Cup and Lonsdale Cup. Last year's Investec Derby runner-up was placed in a Group 1 race for the seventh time in his career, without managing a win at the highest level, when third in the Prix du Cadran this month.

An intriguing new rival for Stradivarius could be **Kew Gardens**, the fluent 2018 William Hill St Leger winner. He was runner-up in the Irish equivalent last time, having previously been second to Defoe in the Investec Coronation Cup.

Another to note is **Withhold**, a six-length winner of the Listed Jockey Club Rose Bowl Stakes at Newmarket last time. The Gosden-trained Flying Officer won that race in 2015 en route to landing the QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup.

## **WHAT THEY SAY:**

### **Roger Charlton on Withhold**

"He's a sweet horse to train and an intended runner. Assuming we get there, I think there will be an awful lot of people at Ascot who will have never seen him in the flesh. He's a magnificent beast of a horse and I'm hoping he will be around next year, when I'm looking forward to running him in the Cup races.

"Stradivarius has won ten races in a row and is phenomenal. He should win but if we are second, third or fourth to him I will be thrilled."

### **Aidan O'Brien on Kew Gardens**

"He had a little setback that meant he had to miss the Gold Cup but he ran well the last time [when second in the Irish St Leger] and he's been fine since.

"He seems to be in good form and we've always thought he would get two miles no problem. The nicer the ground the better it will suit him."

### **Bjorn Nielsen, owner/breeder of Stradivarius**

"He's been a once in a lifetime horse for me, truly incredible. I'm so lucky to own him. You always bond better with the good ones, especially those who are paying the bills. And he doesn't bite me!

"I read somewhere that he and Frankel are the only horses have won five QIPCO British Champions Series races in a year, which he's done twice now. If he achieves the sixth on Saturday he will be the only horse to have done it – that would be some feat.

"His big weapon is his turn of foot against the stayers. He has what they don't have. It doesn't matter if they run it fast or run it slow, they've tried it every

way. When the chips are down a furlong and a half out and Frankie says 'go' then he goes 'boom'.

"He's been well managed by a great trainer and will stay in training as long as he stays enthusiastic and sound. His target will be the Gold Cup with a run in the Sagaro or Yorkshire Cup as a prep beforehand."

## **BENBATL IN PRIME SHAPE FOR QUEEN ELIZABETH II STAKES, SAYS BIN SUROOR**

Saeed Bin Suroor has no doubt that his globetrotting star Benbatl will be ideally served by the demands of the QIPCO-sponsored Queen Elizabeth II Stakes.

Bin Suroor also had the option of running Benbatl in the QIPCO Champion Stakes over two furlongs further but the trainer, who won that race with Farhh in 2013, reckons the stiff mile of the QEII, which carries prize-money of £1.1 million, will be perfect for him.

Benbatl signed off last year by chasing home the mighty Australian mare Winx in the Ladbrokes Cox Plate and re-emerged, 11 months later, to thrash **King Of Comedy**, **Zaaki** and **Happy Power** in the Group 2 Shadwell Joel Stakes at Newmarket last month.

His previous exploits include a win at Royal Ascot and Group 1 triumphs in Dubai, Germany and Australia. With an official rating of 126, he is among the highest-rated horses in the world.

Aidan O'Brien has saddled the QEII winner three times in the past decade – via Rip Van Winkle (2009), Excelebration (2012) and Minding (2016) – and his squad comprising **Circus Maximus**, **Hermosa**, **I Can Fly**, **Magical** and **Magna Grecia** all remain engaged.

The past two Queen Anne Stakes winners, **Accidental Agent** and **Lord Glitters**, are on course to run, while other Group 1 winners who remain in the mix are **Phoenix Of Spain** and **Veracious**.

Another to note is the French challenger **The Revenant** who was making it eight wins from ten starts when winning easily after more than four months off at Longchamp last time. Charm Spirit (2014) and Solow (2015) have been recent French-trained winners of the QEII.

### **WHAT THEY SAY:**

#### **Saeed Bin Suroor on Benbatl**

"He's always had class and won Group 1s in Germany, Dubai and Australia. He's a calm horse who is very easy and straightforward to train.

"The plan always been to give him a break this year and then bring him back September time. He won well at Newmarket and he has come back from the race really well.

"I'm happy with him going into the QEII. Sheikh Mohammed made the decision [to run in the QEII rather than the QIPCO Champion Stakes]. It's a stiff mile and I think that's the best race with him.

### **Richard Hannon on King Of Change**

"He's a lightly-raced colt who runs well fresh. He's plenty fit enough and in great form. Since his very good second in the QIPCO 2000 Guineas, we have deliberately given him a break and prepared him for the autumn.

"There was nothing flukey about his run in the Guineas. He proved that [when winning] at Sandown last time and he will come on a lot for that. He's a horse for next year, don't forget that, but if he ran a good race in the QEII then we would be delighted.

"He's the sort of horse that might like soft ground. He's big, strong and I think he will deal with that no problem."

### **Charlie Hills on Phoenix Of Spain**

"He was in the QIPCO Champion Stakes but I think we are better off keeping him on the straight mile for the QEII. I've been really pleased with him leading up to the race and he ran much better in France last time when he was doing all his best work late on.

"He ended getting a little bit too far back that day but he finished off his race much better than he had in his previous couple of races.

"Benbatl was mighty impressive last time and there are plenty of other Group 1 winners in there but it's been an open mile division this year and, while it's a competitive, it looks up for grabs."

### **William Haggas on Move Swiftly**

"Like all our runners on QIPCO British Champions Day, it's a case of the softer the better. She's had training issues but is a talented filly who goes well fresh and it did not surprise is when she won the Duke of Cambridge at Royal Ascot on her reappearance.

"She ran awful in France last time but the ground was much too firm for her that day. We've deliberately not run her since, but she's got quite a bit to find on the book and I'm not sure she's up to QEII level."

### **Eve Johnson Houghton on Accidental Agent**

The five-year-old won the Queen Anne at Royal Ascot last year but refused to race when defending his crown this summer. The trainer said:

“Hopefully he decides to race! He’s given me the best day of my racing life and the worst. If I had to trade that off I would still take it, rather than having neither.

“He’s had a lot of physio and we’ve just got to hope he’s in the right frame of mind. It’s a shot to nothing for us. Wherever Lord Glitters finishes he should not be far behind, but Lord Glitters is a much shorter price than him.”

## **MEHDAAYIH COULD FLY FLAG FOR FRANKEL IN QIPCO CHAMPION STAKES**

The final contest of this year’s 35-race QIPCO British Champions Series is the £1.3 million QIPCO Champion Stakes, the most valuable mile and a quarter race staged in Europe.

Frankel won the 2012 renewal on the final start of his dazzling career, and in the past two years one of his sons, Cracksman, has been a runaway winner of the race.

This year the baton passes to one of his daughters, **Mehdaayih**, a Group 2 winner in France this summer who was also runner-up to Deirdre in the Qatar Nassau Stakes at Goodwood.

**Japan** subsequently finished fourth in the Qatar Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe and is among four entries left in by Aidan O’Brien. He also has **I Can Fly, Magical** and **Hermosa** entered.

John Gosden, the trainer of Cracksman, is responsible for **Coronet**, placed in the past two renewals of the QIPCO British Champions Fillies & Mares Stakes, as well as **Mehdaayih**. The last trainer to enjoy three successive Champion Stakes triumphs was Alex Taylor Jr, the Wizard of Manton, a century ago.

**Deirdre**, winner of the Qatar Nassau Stakes at Goodwood in August, will seek to provide Japan with a famous triumph, while other fascinating contenders include **Addeybb**, who beat **Pondus** in decisive style in the Group 3 Rose Of Lancaster Stakes at Haydock last time.

**Fox Tal** has been supplemented by trainer Andrew Balding for the race.

### **WHAT THEY SAY:**

#### **William Haggas on Addeybb**

“Whether he’s good enough, I don’t know. He’s got a bit to find on the book but he’s a smart horse who likes soft ground and a gallop, like when he won so well at Royal Ascot.

"Next time at York it was soft but not soft enough – it was "drying soft", whereas he wants it wet.

"Last year it never rained at all. We kept training him and by the time he got to the soft ground on QIPCO British Champions Day he was not at his best.

"This time his preparation has been different and it was marvellous of Newmarket to let us gallop him before racing last Friday because he will have benefited from that.

"I'd say he's a longshot on form, but if he gets his conditions he could come into it. He's proved he goes well fresh and if I can get him right for the day he should run well."

## **FULL HOUSE ON CARDS FOR BALMORAL HANDICAP (Sponsored by QIPCO)**

Forty-nine entries have stood their ground for the £250,000 QIPCO-sponsored Balmoral Handicap, Europe's most valuable mile handicap. A maximum field of 20 will be allowed to run, with ante-post market leaders Lord North, Kynren and Amedeo Modigliani still in the mix.

**Lord North**, trained by John Gosden, landed the bet365 Cambridgeshire in commanding style at Newmarket last month and remains on course to try and emulate Bronze Angel, who pulled off the Cambridgeshire and Balmoral double in 2014.

Gosden, who has saddled the Balmoral runner-up on four occasions without winning it, has also left in **Turgenev**, Kick On and **Casanova**. **Kick On** landed the Group 3 Tattersalls Sovereign Stakes at Salisbury on his latest start and is owned by the raceday sponsors.

**Kynren**, trained by David Barron, gained reward for his consistency when landing the bet365 Challenge Cup at Ascot this month and is set to be joined in the line-up by stablemate **Clon Coulis**, runner-up in this year's Royal Hunt Cup.

**Amedeo Modigliani**, one of two Aidan O'Brien possibles, was having only his fifth start when a close fourth in a Listed race at Cork this month. The Galileo colt has yet to run in a handicap.

Roger Varian won last year's Balmoral with Sharja Bridge and could be represented by **Fifth Position**, while David O'Meara won the 2017 running with Lord Glitters and his squad of seven includes last year's runner-up, **Escobar**, who has since continued to run well in top handicaps, and **So Beloved**, runner-up in the Group 1 Prix de la Foret in 2017.

Another eye-catching entry is Dermot Weld's **Jassar**, who had **Saltonstall** (sixth) behind when landing the Tote Irish Cambridgeshire at the Curragh in August.

