



## **EIGHTH WONDER ON CARDS AS STARS STAND GROUND FOR QIPCO BRITISH CHAMPIONS DAY**

*(Please make reference QIPCO British Champions Day if using any quotes)*

There will be stars at every turn when 75 horses contest the eighth running of QIPCO British Champions Day at Ascot on Saturday. Britain's richest raceday, with £4.47 million of prize money on offer, will feature a glittering cast who have already helped provide many of this season's highlights.

A high class field of eight will line-up in the £1.3 million showpiece, the QIPCO Champion Stakes, including the star trio of **Cracksman**, **Crystal Ocean** and **Capri**, while **Roaring Lion**, French ace **Recoletos** and prolific filly **Laurens** will be among those locking horns in a compelling QIPCO-sponsored Queen Elizabeth II Stakes, which has attracted a bumper 15 runners and carries prize money of £1,156,250.

Outstanding stayer **Stradivarius**, whose successive wins in the Mansionbet Yorkshire Cup, Gold Cup, Qatar Goodwood Cup and Weatherbys Hamilton Lonsdale Cup this year earned his connections a £1 million bonus offered by Weatherbys Hamilton, heads seven runners in the QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup.

**The Tin Man** and **Librisa Breeze**, the past two winners of the QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes, are among 14 in this year's £632,500 renewal, and another seeking a repeat success on the day will be the Aidan O'Brien-trained **Hydrangea**, who is back to defend her crown in the £600,000 QIPCO British Champions Fillies and Mares Stakes.

Among Hydrangea's ten rivals will be **Lah Ti Dar**, owned by Lord and Lady Lloyd Webber. She won her first three races this year by an aggregate of more than 19 lengths before meeting defeat for the first time when runner-up in the William Hill St Leger last month.

Completing the spectacular card is the £250,000 Balmoral Handicap, the richest mile handicap in Europe, which has drawn a maximum field of 20.

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John Gosden will be seeking to add to his three previous Champions Day winners and said: "QIPCO British Champions Day is a wonderfully exciting day's racing," he said. "It's the grand finale to the season in Europe, let alone in England and Ireland. It's a fabulous racing and has got everything. We always look forward to it and we've got a nice team for Saturday."

James Fanshawe, the trainer of popular six-year-old speedster **The Tin Man**, shares Gosden's passion for a day when, on and off the track, the champions of the sport are celebrated. "QIPCO British Champions Day has become a wonderful finale for the Flat season," he said. "As a trainer, you are always looking to have winners, but the good horses are the icing on the cake and to have one good enough to win at Champions Day is very exciting. It's what we all strive for."

The first QIPCO British Champions Day, in 2011, was illuminated by the mighty Frankel, who returned 12 months later to sign off his flawless 14-race career in the QIPCO Champion Stakes.

The mere mention of the great horse's name warms the hearts of racing fans and several of his offspring will be in action on Saturday, most notably Cracksman, who evoked memories of his sire when a scintillating seven-length winner of the QIPCO Champion Stakes 12 months ago. He clocked the fastest final furlong of any horse running on the day, even though three of the races on the card were run over shorter distances.

Cracksman has added two more Group 1 triumphs to his CV this year and will almost certainly be having the final run of his career before he is retired to stud. He will wear first-time blinkers in an attempt to keep his mind focused on the job.

The colt, bred and owned by Anthony Oppenheimer, forms part of a strong QIPCO British Champions Day squad assembled by Gosden, who leads the Trainers' Championship (which is contested over the calendar year) by more than £1 million.

"I enjoy training horses, being around horses," Gosden said on the eve of a meeting. "It's a passion, it really is. I'd feel a bit weird if I woke up in the morning with nothing to do. I'd certainly drive my wife mad if that was the case."

"To me, it [the Championship] is very much a stable thing. It's not about a trainer, it's about the whole of the team in the yard from the top assistant down to the guy who is mucking out. We are stockmen and women. It's seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, the horses are there and you've got to attend to them. Early mornings, long days, travelling back from the races – there's a lot of work people put in."

The bond between trainer and horse is strong, with Gosden seemingly having a particular soft spot for **Stradivarius**, who runs in the first race of the day. "He's a little guy but all heart. Winning those four staying races has not happened before and might not happen again. With his four white socks and white face, everyone says he should be giving pony rides around Brighton seafront. His achievements have been fantastic."

He has also savoured the development of **Roaring Lion**, from wayward youngster to hardened professional. "He was a real lad and liked mucking about – the type who that if he went into town you'd have to make sure he didn't start a fight," Gosden said. "He's come good with racing. It's got him disciplined and professional. He's improved so dramatically this year and been a fabulous horse to train."

It is not only the leading Flat trainers who will be competing for a slice of the glory. Willie Mullins, the serial champion National Hunt trainer in Ireland, will be represented by the Rich Ricci-owned Doncaster Cup winner **Thomas Hobson** in the Long Distance Cup.

"He was impressive at Doncaster last time and is in good order," Mullins said. "It's hard to expect he will win but if he could run well and get a good share of the prize-money then we'd be very happy. Stradivarius is going to be hard to beat, but if you are not in you cannot win."

## **OISIN MURPHY SEEKS TO COMPLETE DREAM SEASON WITH ANOTHER LANDMARK SUCCESS**

*(Please make reference QIPCO British Champions Day if using any quotes)*

Oisín Murphy will bid to cap his fantastic season with a first success on QIPCO British Champions Day.

The 23-year-old has ridden eight Group 1 winners all over the world this year – including in four QIPCO British Champions Series races – and has finished runner-up to Silvestre de Sousa in the Stobart Flat Jockeys' Championship.

Murphy has three superb rides on the day in the shape of **Roaring Lion** (QIPCO-sponsored Queen Elizabeth II Stakes), **The Tin Man** (QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes) and **South Seas** (QIPCO-sponsored Balmoral Handicap).

Murphy and **Roaring Lion** have combined to win the Betfred Dante Stakes, Coral-Eclipse, Juddmonte International and QIPCO Irish Champion Stakes this summer and it is little wonder he holds the three-year-old grey in great esteem.

"He's an exceptional horse and every time I ride him I need to keep that in mind. Horses like him are so hard to get your hands on and he will have no trouble coming back in trip," Murphy said.

"If you roll back the clock to the QIPCO 2000 Guineas, clearly he's proven now that he's a much better horse than Saxon Warrior. If you could run the Guineas again tomorrow morning, at the stage he is now, I think he would win. He's a different horse now to what he was in May.

"At the races he's brilliant and very relaxed about the whole thing, but going to post you need to switch him on by giving him a proper canter, otherwise he's not focused and he would think he's just there for a day out."

Murphy guided **The Tin Man** to victory in the 32Red Sprint Cup at Haydock last month and will be reunited with him in the QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes.

"I learnt a fair bit about him at Haydock, where he was very impressive," he said. "He was sleepy going to post – like Roaring Lion, not switched on – but if you light him up then he takes off.

"I lit him up a bit early and he did well to fend them off. In hindsight, I should have waited a little bit longer on him. I'd be a bit more confident this time. I'd never ridden him and you can watch as many replays as you like, but he can take off and at Ascot, over a stiffer six, I'll have to bare that in mind. He deserves to be favourite and goes there with a great chance."

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### **About QIPCO British Champions Series and Day**

QIPCO British Champions Day at Ascot on Saturday 20 October is the richest raceday in the British calendar with £4.47m in prize money on offer and is the finale to the European Flat racing season. It has an unrivalled British card featuring four Group 1s, a Group 2 and the richest mile handicap in Europe:

- 1.25pm - The QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup (Group 2)
- 2.00pm - The QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes (Group 1)
- 2.40pm - The QIPCO British Champions Fillies & Mares Stakes (Group 1)
- 3.15pm - The Queen Elizabeth II Stakes Sponsored by QIPCO (Group 1)
- 3.50pm - The QIPCO Champion Stakes (Group 1)
- 4.30pm - The Balmoral Handicap (Sponsored by QIPCO)

QIPCO British Champions Series shines the spotlight on Britain's most prestigious Flat races between May and October, culminating in the grand finale on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018 at Ascot Racecourse.

Hosted across ten of the UK's leading racecourses the Series encompasses the top British racing festivals, including the QIPCO Guineas Festival at Newmarket, the Investec Derby Festival at Epsom, Royal Ascot, the Moet & Chandon Newmarket July Festival, The Qatar Goodwood Festival, the Welcome to Yorkshire Ebor Festival at York and the William Hill St Leger Festival at Doncaster.

QIPCO British Champions Series comprises five easy-to-follow race categories – Sprint, Mile, Middle Distance, Long Distance and Fillies & Mares. For tickets to QIPCO British Champions Day on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> October go to [britishchampionsday.co.uk](http://britishchampionsday.co.uk)