



STARS READY TO COME OUT TO PLAY ON QIPCO BRITISH CHAMPIONS DAY

Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day when using any of the quotes or videos

An array of stars are set to contest the eighth QIPCO British Champions Day at Ascot on Saturday. Britain's richest raceday, with £4.47 million of prize money on offer after supplementaries, is on the cards for many of the best horses in Europe after they stood their ground – or were supplemented – at the five-day stage this morning.

John Gosden has assembled a power-packed squad that includes **Roaring Lion**, **Cracksman**, **Stradivarius** and **Lah Ti Dar**, although his Newmarket neighbour, Sir Michael Stoute, is responsible for the highest-rated entry in **Crystal Ocean**, the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes runner-up, who has an official rating of 128.

A decision over which race the brilliant Roaring Lion contests will be decided early on Thursday. He has been left in the QIPCO-sponsored Queen Elizabeth II Stakes, over a mile, and QIPCO Champion Stakes, over two furlongs farther, and connections want to assess underfoot conditions before choosing which race to run him in.

David Redvers, racing and bloodstock manager for Qatar Racing, the owners of Roaring Lion, said on Monday afternoon: "John Gosden and I are walking the course on Thursday morning and a decision will be made then."

Aidan O'Brien fields another strong team that includes the supplemented **Flag of Honour**; winner on the day last year, **Hydrangea**; and **Capri**. Leading miler **Recoletos**, who will run in the QIPCO-sponsored Queen Elizabeth II Stakes, and **Kitesurf** in the QIPCO British Champions Fillies and Mares are the stand-out challengers for France.

QIPCO British Champions Day has established itself as a wonderful finale to the European season and features four Group 1 races, a Group 2 and the richest mile handicap in Europe. In total, 24 Group 1 winners remain entered and, between them, they have accumulated 45 victories at the highest level.

CRACKSMAN READY TO GO OUT WITH A FLOURISH IN QIPCO CHAMPION STAKES

3.50pm: QIPCO Champion Stakes (£1.3 million) Group 1

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

The QIPCO Champion Stakes is the most valuable mile and a quarter race run in Europe and a sensational finale is on the cards with the star group of Roaring Lion, Cracksman, Crystal Ocean and Capri among 14 entries.

Cracksman evoked memories of his sire, Frankel, when a dazzling seven-length winner of the race 12 months ago and has added two more Group 1 victories to his CV this term – the Prix Ganay at ParisLongchamp and Investec Coronation Cup at Epsom. On his other start this term, he chased home Poet’s Word in the Prince of Wales’s Stakes at Royal Ascot.

Roaring Lion has thrived on his racing this year and has shown a mile and a quarter to be his optimum trip on his past three starts – reeling off successive Group 1 wins in the Coral-Eclipse, Juddmonte International Stakes and QIPCO Irish Champion Stakes. The grey, owned by Qatar Racing Limited, also won the Group 2 Betfred Dante Stakes at York in May in between finishing fifth in the QIPCO 2000 Guineas and third in the Investec Derby.

Gosden has other potential strings to his bow in **Monarchs Glen**, absent since winning the Wolferton Stakes at Royal Ascot and **Maverick Wave**.

Sir Michael Stoute has yet to enjoy a winner on QIPCO British Champions Day and will be hoping to change that with either **Mirage Dancer** or **Crystal Ocean**. The latter won the Hardwicke Stakes at the Royal Meeting before being touched off by Poet’s Word, his stablemate, in a compelling QIPCO-sponsored King George VI and Queen Elizabeth Stakes. On his latest start he again had to settle for second, finding a concession of 8lb to Enable too much to handle in the 188Bet September Stakes at Kempton.

Capri was a close fifth to Enable in this month’s Qatar Prix de l’Arc de Triomphe, having won the Dubai Duty Free Irish Derby and William Hill St Leger last season. He is among five Aidan O’Brien-trained representatives.

WHAT THEY SAY:

John Gosden, the trainer of Roaring Lion, Cracksman and Monarchs Glen



- John Gosden video here: https://youtu.be/RMv_AKsMYnA

- Available to embed here: `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/RMv_AKsMYnA?rel=0" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>`
- **Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day**

Roaring Lion:

"He's improved so dramatically this year and been a fabulous horse to train. I've never had a horse get bigger and stronger like he has – and his constitution has truly impressed me.

"The extraordinary thing about him is that he's had a tough season – he's been hard at it since February – yet he's come back for more. He's in a good place mentally and physically. I think the trainer's more likely to go over the top than him.

"He would be the very legitimate favourite for the QIPCO Champion Stakes but would not want it very soft or heavy. He's got the class and speed to run over that mile [in the Queen Elizabeth II Stakes] if that were the case and we'll keep an eye on what's around us [weather wise].

"He showed a lot of guts in the Eclipse and was hugely impressive in the Juddmonte. Then he had an impossible task at Leopardstown when forced to go round five horses off no place. I don't know how he quickened like he did.

"He's always been a fun horse to be around. He wasn't with us in the spring but with some horses it takes a little time to get in the groove. You ask a football manager – it takes quite a long time to gel players together or get someone doing what you want them to do. It's no different with horses as with humans.

"He was a complete playboy and during the winter spent great deal of time on his hind legs. 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. He came good with racing. It's got him disciplined and professional."

Cracksman:

"It's not been an easy year for Cracksman and the driest summer since 1976 was no help to him but he's a fabulous horse. I don't think he's descended, so much as he's hit rather a plateau.

"He's in top order. It's hard to criticise a horse whose won two Group 1s this year and been second in a Prince of Wales at Royal Ascot in a very good time on fast ground, but he wasn't quite mentally with us that day.

"He got very interested in the girls [fillies] coming back from the Windsor Forest. They were walking back into the stables and on a hot day and were sweaty. He obviously caught a little whiff of them and was rather keen to get over the hedge and say hello to them.

"He's worked well since and runs whatever the ground. He's hugely talented and I think you will see a lot of what you saw last year. He runs whatever the ground and I should think it will be his last race."

Monarchs Glen:

"It was a great run [in the Wolferton last time] and it's quite likely he will run. We had a couple of spots for him but decided that rather than go for the Prix Dollar at Longchamp, where we were concerned about the ground, or the Darley at Newmarket, where the ground was too quick, we would save him for Ascot."

David Redvers, racing and bloodstock manager for Qatar Racing, the owners of Roaring Lion

"It's been the culmination of ten years work to finally have a horse who is up there among best in the world. It's been fantastic to be involved in him.

"We buy a lot of horses but at that [Keeneland] sale we only bought three or four, and he was the nap. You try and find horses with angles and, though it's a horrible old expression, of ticking every box.

"For us he was by the right sire, we knew he'd handle turf, he was out of a young mare and he was a hell of a physical [specimen]. He had great movement and was very correct - everything we look for.

"He has the most remarkable constitution. He had a pretty tough race at Leopardstown but was already charging around the place and wanting more a few days later."

Sir Michael Stoute, the trainer of Crystal Ocean

"We are planning to run him in the QIPCO Champion Stakes. It would have been better for the owner if he'd won the King George but it was a very brave effort and we've really been pleased with the way he has progressed. He will be dropping back in distance but he is effective at ten [furlongs]."

STRADIVARIUS SEEKS TO HIT ANOTHER HIGH NOTE IN LONG DISTANCE CUP

1.25pm: QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup (£530,000) Group

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

Stradivarius has been flawless this season and heads ten entries for the QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup, which is the first race on QIPCO British Champions Day.

The four-year-old's successive wins in the Mansionbet Yorkshire Cup, Gold Cup, Qatar Goodwood Cup and Weatherbys Hamilton Lonsdale Cup – all of them QIPCO British Champions Series races – earned his connections a £1 million bonus offered by Weatherbys Hamilton.

Bred and owned by Bjorn Nielsen, Stradivarius was a close third in the QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup last year and is unbeaten since.

If Stradivarius caps a perfect campaign then the John Gosden-trained colt will become only the second horse to have won five races that fall under the QIPCO British Champions Series umbrella in the same season. The mighty Frankel achieved the feat in 2012.

Gosden could also call on the services of **Weekender**.

Irish-trained challengers have won six of the previous eight runnings and are strongly represented Aidan O'Brien and Willie Mullins.

As expected, O'Brien's **Flag Of Honour**, winner of the Comer Group International Irish St Leger, has been supplemented. He has thrived since being upped in distance and on his latest start made all for Classic glory at the Curragh.

O'Brien has four other entries to juggle, including **Kew Gardens** and **Capri**, the past two winners of the William Hill St Leger.

Thomas Hobson, the smooth Doncaster Cup winner, is set to represent Mullins, while **Desert Skyline**, winner of the Doncaster Cup last year, and **Mount Moriah**, a gallant fourth in the QIPCO British Champions Long Distance Cup 12 months ago, are also on course to run.

WHAT THEY SAY:

John Gosden, the trainer of Stradivarius

"He's in tremendous form and really benefited from having had a bit of time off. I'm absolutely thrilled with him. It was publicised that he and Cracksman worked together recently and this will be final race of the year.

"He's best on top of the ground but he handles soft.

"I think his win in the Gold Cup [was the most satisfying moment of my year]. He's a diminutive horse and the fact he gave everything, pulled a shoe off and rammed it into his foot in the last furlong and still won was a pretty remarkable achievement. He's 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."

David Elsworth, the trainer of Desert Skyline

"As a three-year-old he ran to a good level and he had a couple of nice runs early on in the season but then we lost our way with him a bit. We were hoping to win the Ascot Gold Cup but he ran terrible and nothing ever came to light.

“He ran better in the Goodwood Cup, then better again at York and last time was only beaten four lengths in a Group Three at Newbury that was only over a mile and three, so hopefully we are back in business. He’s never actually performed well at Ascot for some reason, but you can always make excuses.

“We are probably struggling to beat Stradivarius but we will give it a go.”

Ralph Beckett, the trainer of Mount Moriah



- Ralph Beckett video here: <https://youtu.be/M35MFh11mQ>
- Available to embed here: `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/M35MFh11mQ?rel=0" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>`
- **Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day**

“He had a problem after [Royal] Ascot with a splint and we had to give him some time off, but he’s been training well and we are in good shape.

“He ran really well last year and for a moment I thought he was going to put it up to them about two furlongs out. It was a good run as a three-year-old – he’s a year older now and hardier. He should run his race but he needs the rain.”

THE TIN MAN SEEKS REPEAT TRIUMPH IN CHAMPIONS SPRINT STAKES

2pm: QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes (£632,500) Group 1

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

No horse has ever won the same race twice on QIPCO British Champions Day but **The Tin Man** and **Librisa Breeze**, the past two winners of the QIPCO British Champions Sprint Stakes, are on course to try and buck that trend.

The former heads the ante-post betting after chalking up a third win at the highest level in the 32Red Sprint Cup at Haydock last month, when he had **Brando** (second), **Donjuan Triumphant** (fourth), **Sands Of Mali** (fifth), Harry Angel (sixth), **Speak In Colours** (seventh), **Tasleet** (eighth) and **Sir Dancealot** (ninth) behind.

Harry Angel was named as the best sprinter in the world at the Longines World’s Best Racehorse Rankings in January, having won the 32Red Sprint Cup and Darley July Cup in 2017, and all his powers looked intact when he gave

weight and a beating to the race-fit Brando on his return in the Group 2 Duke Of York Clipper Logistics Stakes at York in May.

However, things have subsequently not gone to script. He got his leg caught on the frame of the stalls when below-par in the Diamond Jubilee Stakes at Royal Ascot in June, injuring himself in the process, and then faded to finish sixth when defending his Sprint Cup crown at Haydock.

Librisa Breeze has yet to reproduce his best this season but returns to the scene of his finest hour. Tasleet (second), Harry Angel (fourth), The Tin Man (fifth), Brando (sixth) and Donjuan Triumphant (eighth) all played supporting roles behind him in last year's renewal.

Bacchus, the Wokingham winner, and **Projection**, owned by The Royal Ascot Racing Club, also stand their ground. The Fozzy Stack-trained four-year-old **Son Of Rest**, who dead-heated for first in a dramatic Ayr Gold Cup, has been supplemented.

WHAT THEY SAY:

James Fanshawe, the trainer of The Tin Man



- James Fanshawe video here: <https://youtu.be/WMHPgESU49I>
- Available to embed here: `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/WMHPgESU49I" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>`
- **Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day**

"With these sprinters you take each race as it comes. The first thing was to see he got his old spark back when he had his first race at Windsor, in May – he won that nicely. Then he ran two really good races on quick ground in the Diamond Jubilee Stakes and the Prix Maurice De Gheest.

"We were concerned about the ground going into the Sprint Cup. He'd been placed in the race in the two previous races and both times it was really testing ground and we didn't feel he produced his best.

"So when we got to Haydock we thought 'here we go again – soft ground, we've got no chance' but I always had at the back of my mind he does come from a soft-ground pedigree.

His brother, Deacon Blue, was a very good horse on soft ground and with various other relations it's been a real help to them.

"It's easy enough to say now he won the race that he liked the soft ground, but he did. It gives you a bit of encouragement for QIPCO British Champions Day. He's shown he's effective on all ground.

"To have a runner with a good chance in one of the big races on QIPCO British Champions Day is exciting and what we all strive for."

William Haggas, trainer of Tasleet

"He was disappointing [last time] in the Sprint Cup at Haydock. I thought he'd run a bit better than that but he's come out of it very well and he's bouncing. We are ready to go again.

"He did his best bit of work this year the week before last, so I don't need to see that again. We'll just keep him happy and hope for the best. The more rain the better for him.

"He's run two good races there [Ascot] but he was in cracking form then. He hasn't been quite this good this autumn and got very tired at Haydock so I'm hoping for a better show at Ascot.

"The Tin Man's a very good horse and very good at Ascot, and there will be others."

David Elsworth, the trainer of Sir Dancealot

"He didn't have a great time in France because of the ground and draw but he ran well and he's pleased us. He's come home with a big smile in his face."

LAH TI DAR HAS CHANCE TO TAKE TOP BILLING FOR LORD AND LADY LLOYD WEBBER

2.40pm: QIPCO British Champions Fillies and Mares Stakes (£600,000) Group 1

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

QIPCO British Champions Day is rarely short of theatre and Saturday will certainly be no different as **Lah Ti Dar**, owned by Lord and Lady Lloyd-Webber, heads 14 runners left in the QIPCO British Champions Fillies and Mares Stakes.

The impeccably bred filly (by Dubawi out of Dar Re Mi) won her first three races by an aggregate of more than 19 lengths before meeting defeat for the first time when runner-up to Kew Gardens in the William Hill St Leger last month. She seemed betrayed by a lack of experience at Town Moor, but kept on strongly to be beaten two and a quarter lengths.

Two of the first three home in the QIPCO British Champions Fillies and Mares Stakes last year – **Hydrangea** and **Coronet** – remain on course for a rematch.

Likewise **God Given**, **Horseplay** and **Pilaster**, separated by little in the Group 2 DFS Park Hill Stakes at Doncaster last month.

Other intriguing contenders include the Andre Fabre-trained **Kitesurf**, the Prix Vermeille winner. Fabre is on the brink of winning a 29th French trainers' title.

WHAT THEY SAY:

John Gosden, trainer of Lah Ti Dar and Coronet

Coronet

"She's been desperately unfortunate not to win a Group 1. She runs into Enable, runs into Waldgeist, who beats her by a nose, then runs into Sea Of Class.

"She's the most consistent of fillies - a real trier and a tough cookie. If she doesn't win on Saturday we've got one final Baldrick plan. There's the Premio Lydia Tesio in Rome, in November, and we are planning to go and get her a Group 1 before she's retired to stud."

Lah Ti Dar

"She's in super form. I've had a lot run in the St Leger over the years and it's a race that can hit them a bit but I've been astounded with how she took it in her stride. It didn't bother her.

"In the St Leger she sort of got the idea of what she was meant to be doing in the last furlong. She's still a big, immature filly and Frankie said he was so busy settling her that he sent her to sleep and then could not wake her up again.

"I loved the way she finished that day. She was doing her best work in the final furlong."

And if Coronet and Lah Ti Dar are locked together at the finish...

"I'll go and hide at the bottom of the stands because someone is going to be upset, but I still fear Aidan [O'Brien]. He'll probably have something fly past the lot of them."

Roger Varian, the trainer of Pilaster

"Pilaster's a lovely filly and improving all the time. She's in great form and this race has been the target since she ran at Doncaster in the Park Hill.

"She's back in trip, but the way the race was run at Doncaster I'm sure it will be more a test of stamina at Ascot than it was there. I think she's got the ability to handle herself back at a mile and a half.

"It will be the biggest question we've asked her but I think she's ready for it and will run very well. She's a Group 2 winner and deserves her chance at Group 1 level. How she fares we will have to see, but I think she has a quality to run a nice race."

LAURENS SUPPLEMENTED FOR THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II STAKES

3.15pm: Queen Elizabeth II Stakes (sponsored by QIPCO) (£1,156,250) Group 1

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

The prolific **Laurens** was today supplemented for £70,000 by John Dance, her owner, after satisfying her trainer, Karl Burke, in a workout under PJ McDonald yesterday. Dance tweeted: "She's paid her way re the fee already. Being in the race is indeed a brave call, but it's her best trip and she deserves her place on the card."

McDonald fractured his left ankle and right heel after being thrown from a horse in the paddock at Newcastle on 3rd September and has not ridden in a race since. He is set to return to action, back at Newcastle, on Wednesday.

Laurens has won five Group 1 races in the past year, landing the Kingdom of Bahrain Sun Chariot Stakes at Newmarket on her latest start by a head from **Happily**, who she is set to meet again.

Roaring Lion has won his past three starts, all in Group 1 company. A decision over whether he contests the Queen Elizabeth II Stakes or QIPCO Champion Stakes will be taken on Thursday morning after connections have walked the course.

French-trained horses have won two of the past four renewals of and plenty will fancy **Recoletos** to improve that tally. Trained by 55-year-old Carlos Laffon-Parias in Chantilly, the four-year-old finished fourth to Cracksman in the QIPCO Champion Stakes on QIPCO British Champions Day last year but has proven an even greater force back in distance this year.

He won the Churchill Coolmore Prix d'Ispahan at ParisLongchamp in May and struck again at the highest level on his latest start when landing the Prix du Moulin de Longchamp. In between, he beat all bar the now-retired Alpha Centauri in the Jacques le Marois at Deauville.



- Carlos Laffon-Parias video: <https://youtu.be/sqpkXb-wNJM>

- Available to embed: <iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/sgpkXb-wNJM?rel=0" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>
- **Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day**

Lightning Spear (winner of the Qatar Sussex Stakes), **Without Parole** (St James's Palace Stakes), **Rhododendron** (Al Shaqab Lockinge Stakes) have already made their mark on this year's QIPCO British Champions Series, while **Romanised** scooped the Tattersalls Irish 2000 Guineas in May.

Expert Eye, who has twice made the frame in Group 1 company since his emphatic win in the Jersey Stakes, and **Addeybb**, fluent winner of the Group 2 bet365 Mile at Sandown in the spring, are on course to run, while **Lord Glitters** has been hard to fault since his dramatic triumph in the QIPCO-sponsored Balmoral Handicap on last year's card.

Beat The Bank has chalked up two Group 2 triumphs this season and is on course to run, as are **Stormy Antarctic**, third in the Ricoh Woodbine Mile last time, and **Zabeel Prince**, a half-length runner-up to Mustashry in the Shadwell Joel Stakes at Newmarket this month.

WHAT THEY SAY:

John Gosden, the trainer of Without Parole

"He's taken time to strengthen up. It didn't go too well at Longchamp [last time] after he got squashed a bit in the Juddmonte when Poet's Word was trying to come out. It was a bit of a meat in the sandwich job. His perfect trip next year will probably be a mile and a quarter."

William Haggas, the trainer of Addeybb



- William Haggas video available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8JkJuIIZd0&feature=youtu.be>
- Available to embed here: <iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/b8JkJuIIZd0?rel=0" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>
- **Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day**

"He's been left in the QEII and Champion Stakes. I want to go for the mile. He's not at his best on fast ground, he's much better on soft. It jarred him up in the Lockinge and it took a long time for him to come back. He's been ready to run for six weeks without finding his right conditions.

"I wanted to run him in the Irish Champion; I wanted to run him in Paris on Arc weekend but it just didn't happen because it was too fast for him.

He didn't travel to Ireland but did go to France. I don't think it will have done him much harm. His weight is really good and he's ready to run.

"His form is OK and he's a big, fine horse. If it was soft he would be a fair each-way shout."

Roger Varian, the trainer of Zabeel Prince



- Roger Varian video: <https://youtu.be/VhIQOPhz0k>
- Available to embed here: `<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/VhIQOPhz0k?rel=0" frameborder="0" allow="autoplay; encrypted-media" allowfullscreen></iframe>`
- **Please credit QIPCO British Champions Day**

"He's in great form. We were delighted with his run in the Joel Stakes a couple of weeks ago. Andrea rode him a bit of work last week and was pleased with him.

"I think in the Balmoral [last year] we were backing up eight days after winning at York – it gave us the penalty to get in – but he just ran a bit flat. This year it will have been a nice three-week gap from his penultimate start to running on Champions Day and that ought to suit him well.

"He's versatile regards ground but the softer it is the happier the trainer will be – and the horse."

Ed Walker, the trainer of Stormy Antarctic

"He worked really well last Wednesday and is in great shape. He's a crazy price. Lord Glitters is 8/1 and we are 40/1, yet we've got very similar form and met once when we came out on top.

"Recoletos is probably the outstanding horse in the race, assuming Roaring Lion doesn't run, and will be the one to beat but he's definitely got great place claims.

"He's very versatile regards the ground but it's a case of more rain the better because it slows down the others and he copes with it [soft ground] better than most."

Simon Crisford, trainer of Century Dream

"He is doing super well, we are really very pleased with him. We've given him a nice break since he ran so well in the Arlington Million in America because we've had the QEII as his main end of season target.

"He's developed very well physically and mentally as he's got a bit older and just strengthened into a proper horse. I think we first saw that at Epsom on Derby day when he won the Diomed Stakes and since then he's done nothing but please us. He ran a huge race in the Queen Anne, when the ground was a little bit quick for him but he still finished strongly.

"We are hopeful of a good run but you can never go into a race like that overconfident. There's some fantastic horses in there rated much higher but we are happy to give it a go. He likes to get his toe in and it's a case of the softer the better for him."

OSBORNE HOPING TO STRIKE WITH RAISING SAND IN THE BALMORAL

4.30pm: Balmoral Handicap (sponsored by QIPCO) (£250,000)

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

Another maximum field is on the cards for the Balmoral Handicap, which closes the card at Ascot on Saturday.

44 entries remain engaged in the richest mile handicap in Europe, but only 20 can compete.

Raising Sand, the ante-post favourite, is guaranteed a place in the final field after picking up a 6lb penalty for his success in the Bet With Ascot Challenge Cup, under Nicola Currie, at Ascot this month.

So too is Mitchum Swagger, while John Gosden, who has saddled the runner-up for the past four years, can call on the services of **Argentello**, **Tricorn** and **Style Hunter**.

WHAT THEY SAY:

Ralph Beckett, the trainer of Mitchum Swagger

"Mitchum Swagger was off for a long time after his good third in the Lincoln, the form of which is very strong, and he ran an OK race after a lay-off last time at Haydock.

"He has strong Ascot form, he was third in the Hunt Cup two years ago, and I hope we get him there."

****Jamie Osborne, the trainer of Raising Sand**

"He missed the cut last year and it was soft ground, so I was absolutely sick. Looking at that pot going away from us on soft ground was galling. I just hope this year we get the gods on our side.

"We were well aware that we probably needed to win last time in order to get the weight penalty in order to get into the Balmoral, but that race was also a great pot in itself. It would be a lovely end to his season if we could get our hands on the Balmoral."

****Nicola Currie, the jockey of Raising Sand**

"To be riding big winners at Ascot is what it's all about. It's exciting to be going back there with a ride on QIPCO British Champions Day.

"Last time he bolted with me for about a furlong going to the start, so I knew he was full of himself. Apart from that, it was straightforward enough. He's not a hold-up horse but he also needs some cover as he can be keen. We almost hit the front too soon but it pretty much went to plan. I thought he'd be there or thereabouts and hopefully he will be again."

*** Quotes first distributed in a release late last week*

ends

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 £4.35m 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 20th 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 20th October go to britishchampionsday.co.uk