



# *Sandhurst Area* **POINT-TO-POINT**



## PREVIEW

### HAMPSHIRE HUNT POINT-TO-POINT RACES

#### HACKWOOD PARK

**Sunday 11<sup>TH</sup> March 2018**

With the recent snowfall wiping out last weekend's point-to-point programme entirely, owners and trainers are obviously keen to run their horses and organisers of the Hampshire Hunt point-to-point at Hackwood Park have been rewarded with 114 entries – over 30 more than last year – for their six-race card, which kicks off at 1pm.

Clerk of the Course Bill Welling visited the course on Sunday and told me then, “Apart from small drifts around four of the jumps and by the running rail on the run-in, the course is completely clear of snow. The recent spiking of the course means that, even though we have had a rapid thaw, there is no water lying on the surface. The going is currently Soft.” A mixture of sunshine and showers is predicted for the between now and race day, with heavier rain on Saturday, and further going updates will be provided during the week.

The opening Sofas & Stuff Restricted Race, over two and a half miles, has attracted 15 entries, of whom the most intriguing look to be a trio of ex-Irish horses in Double You Be, Bean Liath and Mason Dixon. The former comes from the powerful Martin Weston yard and has been running consistently in this company this season, while the two Welsh raiders took divisions of a Howick Maiden last month – Mason Dixon posted a faster time, but had the better ground conditions, so there isn't likely to be much between them. Dan's Wee Man ran well at Bangor-on-Dee last time on his return from a year off the track while two more worthy of consideration are Cottenham winner Full Batten, who has disappointed since, and Richard Bandey's consistent Victoria Hill, whose trainer is weighing up his options between running here or at Kingston Blount on Saturday.

Highlight of the day is likely to be the Moore Blatch Mixed Open, for which the winner qualifies for the Timico Mixed Open Final at Cheltenham and the first two for the Skinners Ladies Open Final at Stratford. 23 entries, the largest of the day, have been received and it's high on quality too. Arthur's Secret and Broken Eagle are two of the best pointers in the country – the latter was upsidest Cheltenham bound Volnay De Thaix when unseating two out at Brocklesby Park recently and connections of the latter have been frustrated by the spate of recent abandonments. As his co-

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owner, I can say he is unlikely to run if the going remains on the soft side.

Arthur's Secret's trainer Martin Weston also has the useful Vasco De Mee and consistent veteran Awesome George – a winner here two years ago – in the field, and could hold the key to the race. Others worth noting are Tim Gredley's pair Bivouac and Midnight Cowboy – new to pointing and ex-Alan King – although both are also entered at Ampton, Aintree Foxhunters hopeful Mon Parrain for Charlotte Fuller and David Maxwell's Minerfortyniner.

One intended runner is Storm Lantern, of whom trainer Joan Johnston said, "I'd like to run him if it's good to soft and he's in the same form as he was when second at Larkhill. We'll stick to Mixed Opens and Ladies as he struggles to carry twelve stone." Richard Bandey is also considering this event for Fond Memory. "His reappearance was his first run for two and a half years and a first ride for Jamie Neild," the Wolverton handler told me. He was rated 125 under rules and is better than he showed there."

Like the Restricted, the first Maiden Race, sponsored by NFU Mutual Basingstoke and for four, five and six year olds, is run over two and a half miles. There are 17 entries headed by a trio from Martin and Tom Weston's Hindlip stable, near Worcester, all of whom are also entered in the closing event. Cook The Books was second on his Larkhill debut, The Late Legend has been knocking on the door but was beaten at odds-on last time out and Pougne Helio is yet to complete the course. Dissertation has been placed twice this year after recovering from a broken leg sustained when falling last season, while likely improvers include Platinum Ben, Shanoule Wood and Toby Maguire.

Fred Hutsby is keen on Charing third Kalinite. "He's a proper horse," enthused Fred. "Ideally he wants better ground but he'll also take some beating on Good to Soft." Finally, keep an eye on newcomer Kootenay River in the market. Trainer Fran Nimmo and her partner, professional jockey Charlie Poste, are really making a name for themselves with their young horses and this Irish-bought four-year-old by Dubai Destination is closely related to black-type performer Simarian.

The Gwynne Dental Conditions Race, for horses that have not won since 2016, is being run for the second year and this year's contest sees 18 entries. Top-rated here – just in front of consistent Templebraden – is Fontwell Hunter Chase third Letbeso, of whom trainer Karen Lawther's son Tom Brockett said, "He ran well there against a Paul Nicholls horse and would have won if it had been a point-to-point. Soft ground will be in his favour." Julie Wadland has her string in good

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form and has high hopes for Midnight King. “He’s got a good chance,” she admitted. “He ran very well at Charing over two and a half miles and the step up to three will suit. I ride him every day and he’s in good form.”

Like Midnight King, Kazuri Kate is taking her time to find her best form after missing the 2016/2017 season, but is an intended runner according to trainer Claire Hardwick, while two other highly rated entries who have missed a year are Killmacallogue Bay and Findlay’s Find. The latter, now in the care of Julie Mansell, seems to have been around forever but is only twelve! He was leading horse in 2011 at the age of five, has won 22 points and a Hunter Chase in an admirable career and would be a popular winner here.

The Jude Becher Countryside Alliance Veterans & Novices Riders Race, which has 20 entries, allows up-and-coming young riders to take on seasoned campaigners. Unfortunately 70-year-old Tim Underwood will not be riding his useful performer Tempelpirate in this, but he has booked a relative youngster in the shape of 51-year-old Phil York! He is one of three rated over 100 in this contest, the others being the aforementioned Awesome George and Duncombe Park winner You Too Pet, for Dale Peters and Harry Thorpe-Codman. Several of these are entered elsewhere on the card but it is the target for Mazuri Cowboy, whose trainer Joan Johnston joked, “The softer the better. On the point of abandonment would be perfect! He’s past his sell-by date but still seems enthusiastic.”

Claire Hardwick’s Creepy will accompany Kazuri Kate in her horsebox subject to ground conditions, while Richard Bandey’s Milborne St Andrew winner Boher Call is another likely participant. “He was taken out by a loose horse last time,” the trainer told me. “He was well-placed in Ireland running over shorter trips and I was pleased he got the trip last time. Jumping’s his forte and he’s the perfect ride for George Bingham.” With 17 of the 20 entries rated 90 or more, this could be set to be the most competitive race of the day.

The concluding contest is the three-mile Quilter Cheviot Open Maiden, which has 21 entered. Other than the horses noted above who are also entered in the young horse event, the most interesting contenders look to be Fred Hutsby’s seasonal debutant Kinlochspelve, and David Maxwell’s Big Bang De Loire, who has been running under rules this season. Simon Gilmore confirmed that his consistent Come On Harriet, “Goes on any ground, ran well here last year, stayed on at Larkhill and is in good nick,” while lightly-raced runners to watch out for include Bastante, Kaiden Michael and Lynn Redman’s well-bred Lizzie The Leopard, who will appreciate the soft ground.

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Richard Bandey is upbeat about Bastante's prospects stepping up to three miles, saying "She ran a nice race at Larkhill and jumped well," and Tom Brockett said of his mother Karen Lawther's Kaiden Michael, "Things haven't gone our way so far and we haven't had the chance to see what he's like yet. He's got a good turn of foot and is in top form, snapping and munching away!"

The point-to-point racing starts at 1pm and will be preceded by the Lucy Lines Leading Rein Dash at 11.30 followed by the Rhiannon Lines Pony Scurry and a parade of hounds at midday. There will be a funfair, bouncy castle and face painting for children, plus trade stands including artwork, jewellery, fashion, country clothing, hats and gifts. New for 2018 is a Food Village with pizzas, pies, cakes, cocktails, alcoholic drinks and tea and coffee.

Charlie Corbett of the Hampshire Hunt commented, "We're really excited about this year's event, which promises to be bigger and better than ever before, with lots of activities to suit all tastes both on and off the track. We would like to thank all our sponsors for their continued support and look forward to a great day's point to point racing."

Hackwood Park is a left-handed course on a slope with a downhill back straight and an uphill finish. It is sharp, but by no means easy. The course has a mixture of permanent and portable fences and the top and bottom bends are now fully equipped with plastic rails.

It is about two miles SE of Basingstoke and signposted off the A339 (Alton road), leaving the M3 at J6. **RG25 2JZ**

Entry is £10 per adult, with under 16s going free. There is a £10 supplement for the Premium Car Park. For advance booking, visit the website [www.hackwoodparkracecourse.co.uk](http://www.hackwoodparkracecourse.co.uk) to buy tickets.

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