

ALBERT BARTLETT

POSTFILES

CLEANEVENT

- 15th NOV 2009

With **Tell Massini** well supported in the Albert Bartlett and **Reve De Sivola** and **Bobby Ewing** being aimed at that race or the Neptune, this race could hold major significance for both the staying novice hurdle races come **Cheltenham** in March. **Tell Massini** made most of the running with **Berties Dream** who ran a tremendous race in defeat and kept on well to finish in third place; Sam Thomas kicked the eventual winner into a clear lead from the third last flight and never looked like getting caught thereafter as he powered up the hill in the style of a really good stayer. He has only ever raced on soft going and connections voiced some concerns as to whether or not the good to soft ground which often prevails at the festival would be testing enough for him.

Bobby Ewing ran like a horse that failed to see out this trip on such testing ground and, at least on this evidence, the Neptune looks the more suitable target. The four year old **Reve De Sivola** boasts a lot of experience for a novice at this time of year and as a consequence of his previous exploits and the conditions of this race was forced to concede seven pounds to the year older **Tell Massini**; in finishing eight lengths behind in second he ran well enough given the circumstances and is still one to consider in March, especially given the winner's very specific ground requirements.

CROWNHOTEL – BAWTRY.COM

- 11th DEC 2009

This race could have some significance in more than one race at the **Cheltenham** Festival. **Menorah** raced far too keenly over this extended trip and paid the price in the home straight; still travelling well in the lead after the third last he stopped very quickly two from home which allowed **Bobby Ewing** to take up the running and stay on strongly to the line. Whether or not **Menorah** will stay this near two and a half mile trip when he learns to settle is open to debate, however, at least for the time being, a return to racing over two miles should show him in a better light. **Bobby Ewing** was ultimately an impressive looking winner of this race as he finished 10 lengths clear of his tired rival and will no doubt have either the Neptune or the Albert Bartlett as his **Cheltenham** target.

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- 12th DEC 2009

Tell Massini went clear from the third last hurdle and had the race in safe keeping soon after; he handled the step up to three miles well and in fact, was probably all the better for it. If the ground is testing at the festival he will clearly be a leading contender for the three mile novice race and will be a worthy favourite. However, he is yet to race on anything other than very testing ground so cannot be considered as a betting proposition until the day of the race. **Kenel Hill** ran on strongly up the hill and certainly stayed the trip well, even though he was undoubtedly flattered by his margin of defeat. It would be difficult to envisage him getting anywhere near **Tell Massini** at the festival given similar conditions

BARRY AND SANDRA KELLY

- 13th DEC 2009

This was a solid staying performance by the Paul Nolan trained winner **Shinrock Paddy** as he was driven out to finish 15 lengths in front of the Willie Mullins trained short priced

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favourite **Rhyl Accord**. He looked at home on the heavy going and may well appreciate a step up to three miles. Whether or not this is good enough form to make him a viable contender for the Albert Bartlett in March is another matter altogether. There are a number of good novice hurdlers in the staying department this season; at least two of them are trained by Willie Mullins and are both clearly ranked some way in front of today's runner up **Rhyl Accord** who did nothing for the form when subsequently being turned over in a relatively minor novice hurdle race at **Thurles**. Nevertheless, **Shinrock Paddy** has now won a Grade One Hurdle race in convincing style and although the quality of this race is difficult to quantify, we will hopefully get a better idea of where he stands in the pecking order after his next run.

DORANS PRIDE

- 28th DEC 2009

This was a steadily run race over two miles and six furlongs on desperate ground at **Limerick** and the qualities required to win such an event are very different to those needed to succeed in a fast run, big field race at **Cheltenham** in March. **Enterprise Park** lost a little ground and momentum at several hurdles and will certainly need to be slicker in the jumping department to remain in contention in a more competitively run contest. However, this was only his second race over obstacles so there is every reason to think that he will improve and one would assume that his connections will be keen to add to his experience before heading for the festival, at which, the Albert Bartlett looks the more obvious target.

CHALLOW

- 29th DEC 2009

This looked a very competitive renewal of this Grade One Hurdle and so it proved, as four horses were still in with a chance with just 50 yards to run. The gallant **Restless Harry** belied his odds of 40/1 by going down narrowly with all guns blazing after making most of the running in the gruelling conditions. He had previously won easily at **Towcester** in similarly desperate ground and was, perhaps the horse to benefit most from the testing going. **Any Given Day** challenged well before the last flight but failed to get home in the conditions and was eased once his chance had gone. He could be a fair bit better than the bare result suggests and is one to remember when he races on quicker ground.

Finians Rainbow travelled like the best horse most of the way up the home straight, only gave best near the line and would be well fancied to reverse this form if racing in less testing conditions. **Reve De Sivola** was outpaced and under pressure from some way out before wearing down his opponents on the run in. On this evidence he would come up a little short against the best two and a half milers on better ground and a step up in trip might be called for. **Kennel Hill** stayed on strongly for fourth place and since he has already appeared to be suited to half a mile further, this was a particularly strong reinforcement of the quality of his three mile form with **Tell Massini** at **Cheltenham**.

SYNERGY SECURITY

- 24th JAN 2010

A surprise result for most watchers as the long odds on favourite **Quel Esprit** ridden by Ruby Walsh was turned over by the Barry Geraghty ridden **Coole River** who was trying two and a half miles for the first time. Conversely, the favourite was stepping back in trip having won over three miles on similarly testing ground at **Cork** in December and the obvious conclusion to come too is that he was out speeded and maybe could have done with a faster gallop. Where they go from here is difficult to judge as **Quel Esprit** will no doubt appreciate the likely faster

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pace of the Neptune, but may need the extra half mile of the Albert Bartlett on good or good to soft ground.

This was only the second time he has been beaten on the track, the first was behind **Dunguib** in the Champion Bumper, and whichever way we analyse this race cannot disguise the fact that this defeat will have been a huge disappointment to his connections, particularly as it may well be **Quel Esprit's** final race before **Cheltenham**. The level of this form is difficult to gauge at the moment but if **Cooler River** runs in the Deloitte Hurdle over two miles and two furlongs on 7th February we may get a better idea of where the first two home in this race fit into the bigger picture.

BETDAQ POKER

- 12th FEB 2010

Quantitativeasing started a very short priced favourite at odds of **8/13** and ran a perfectly reasonable trial for the Neptune Investment Hurdle despite being beaten in a close finish by the all the way leader, **Phidippides**, trained by Evan Williams. The fact that **The Betchworth Kid** was closing in fast and only beaten a further length suggests that, although this form maybe of a high standard, the chances of all three of these being top class are not good. **The Betchworth Kid** was the first to come under pressure off the home turn and was probably the most inconvenienced by the steady pace; he stayed on strongly after the last and would have gone very close in another 100 yards. He will appreciate the faster pace he is likely to benefit from at **Cheltenham**, although his connections have yet to confirm his festival target. The winner was not entered for **Cheltenham** and may stick to racing on a flat track for the time being, whilst **Quantitativeasing** remains on target for the Neptune Investment and may not need to improve to be involved in the finish.

THE GUIDE

TELL MASSINI

Tell Massini has won all three of his races since coming over from the Irish point to point circuit. He has made most of the running in all three contests and won each of them in impressive fashion. In his two races at **Cheltenham** he has powered up the hill on both occasions without ever looking like being beaten. The race he won over two miles five in November has worked out particularly well with the well beaten runner up **Reve De Sivola** going on to win the Grade One Challow Hurdle at Newbury. The horse that finished second that day was **Restless Harry**, who followed up by running away with the Neptune Hurdle at **Cheltenham** beating two highly touted horses from the top yards in the process. The key to these contests is that they were all run in testing conditions and if we have similar ground in March then **Tell Massini** is a worthy favourite and the one to beat. Nevertheless, we must remember that his connections have voiced some concerns as to whether or not the good to soft ground which often prevails at the festival would be testing enough for him. He has very specific going requirements and is yet to race on anything other than very testing ground so cannot be considered as a betting proposition until the day of the race.

SHINROCK PADDY

Shinrock Paddy has won both of his races over hurdles including a relatively weak Grade One Hurdle at **Navan** on his latest outing. Quite what this form adds up to is very difficult to say as the well beaten runner up **Rhyl Accord** did nothing for the form when subsequently being turned over in a relatively minor novice hurdle race at **Thurles**. There are a number of good novice hurdlers in the staying department this season; at least two of them are trained by Willie Mullins and are both clearly ranked some way in front of **Rhyl Accord**. Nonetheless, this was a solid staying performance by the Paul Nolan trained winner who looked at home on the heavy going and, at least on this evidence, he may well appreciate a step up to three miles. Whether or not this is good enough form to make him a viable contender for the Albert Bartlett is open to debate; consequently, his current odds of around **7/1** look a bit skinny, particularly given the fact that **Shinrock Paddy** has only raced on testing ground over hurdles and also that the quality of his Grade One form is so difficult to quantify.

RESTLESS HARRY

Restless Harry is trading at around the **6/1** mark for the Albert Bartlett after his demolition job of two highly touted horses from the top stables in **Royal Charm** and **General Miller**. He has won two out of his last three hurdle races and was just touched off by **Reve De Sivola** in the Grade One Challow Hurdle at **Newbury**. The big question mark against his name is, in common with many other fancied runners at the festival this year, that all of his relevant form has been gained in races run on very testing ground. He has been beaten in both races he has contested on good going at **Towcester** and **Market Rasen** respectively.

His trainer has stated that he thinks his horse will improve for the step up in trip and this may well be so; nevertheless, this is yet to be proven on the track. Another point against him is that with **Tell Massini** in the field, he is unlikely to get all of his own way out in front. However, on balance he has more substance to in his profile than most of his rivals and has good course form to his name to boot; on testing ground he will have a decent chance in the Albert Bartlett,

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whilst if the race is run on a much faster surface, he will almost certainly drift in the betting market and will probably struggle to stay with the pace.

THE BETCHWORTH KID

The Betchworth Kid has run three times over hurdles and recorded his one and only win so far on his hurdling debut at **Plumpton** in a minor race run on heavy ground over a distance of two miles. On his second start he ran the 136 rated **Tito Bustillo** close over a similar trip at **Taunton** and followed up by running on strongly to finish a close third in a slowly run race at **Newbury** over a more suitable distance of two miles and five furlongs. He is rated 103 on the flat and is now running off a hurdle mark of 138, which suggests he has enough quality to be competitive at **Cheltenham**. Although he stayed well on the flat it is very difficult to judge his stamina limitations over hurdles and whether or not the three miles of the Albert Bartlett is within his compass is difficult to say off such limited evidence. Nevertheless, his chances will be enhanced if the ground at **Cheltenham** is no worse than good to soft as this will be to the detriment of two or three of the favourites. On the other hand, if the going is testing this race will be a most gruelling affair run at a strong pace and, given that scenario, there will be a few horses with more proven credentials than **The Betchworth Kid**.

ENTERPRISE PARK

Enterprise Park made it three wins from three career starts with an ultimately convincing success in a five runner Grade Three Hurdle race at **Limerick**. His jumping was rather deliberate at times and he will certainly need to improve in that department whichever race he is targeted at in March. The form of this race has worked out well as the second horse followed up by winning a listed race by four lengths and the third horse home subsequently ran out a comfortable winner at **Down Royal**. Purely on the evidence of his latest performance, the Albert Bartlett appears to be the most realistic target; however, his trainer has indicated that he will make his mind up regarding the targets of **Quel Esprit** and **Enterprise Park** nearer the day. The latter may well translate his heavy ground form to the festival; nevertheless, his current odds for the Albert Bartlett are hovering around the **7/1** mark which makes little appeal, particularly as he is priced up mainly on the strength of his latest win, which was gained in a steadily run race over two miles and six furlongs on desperate ground at **Limerick**, whereas the qualities required to succeed in a fast run, big field race at **Cheltenham** in March are usually quite different.

Please bear in mind that many of the horse profiles were prepared well in advance of the conclusions. I decided not to edit them as they represent my thinking at the time of writing.

CONCLUSIONS

The first four favourites will all be well suited to testing ground and less so if the going is good or good to soft. Given these conditions, the ex flat horse **The Betchworth Kid** might be less inconvenienced than most, if not all of his market rivals and could be quite an interesting proposition. However, with so many of his rivals being so ground dependent, this is a race to make a decision on nearer the day. Updates should be on line on or around the Sunday before the festival begins.