

CHAMPION HURDLE



The statistics as presented below are thoroughly researched and valid. They are, however, presented to augment and complement the analysis given in the other parts of the guide and we would hope they would be used in that way.

SMURFIT KAPPA CHAMPION HURDLE

10 Year Trends 1999-2009 (2001 abandoned)

The figures for all the various statistics are in date order, earliest first from left to right.

Contents

Hurdle debut record

Last time out record

Total career starts prior to hurdle debut

Total career starts over hurdles (prior)

Strike rate over hurdles (prior)

Class statistics

Age statistics

Days since ran record

Irish race record

Fate of the favourite

SP of favourite

Betting position of the winner

SP of the winner

BHB rating (where provided)

Profile analysis

info@patternsandprofiles.co.uk

CHAMPION HURDLE



Hurdle Debut record reads:

2. 2 1 3 1* 1* 0 1 1 1

*Hardy Eustace disqualified on debut and dual winner of the Champion Hurdle.

80% of all winners in the first two on hurdle debut.

Last time out record reads:

1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 1 3

80% of all winners won last time out.

Total career starts prior to hurdle debut reads (FLAT/NHF):

11 11 4 2 4 4 N/A 14 16 14

Total career starts over hurdles reads (correlates in line to the above):

16 23 4 25 10 16 18 5 12 12

Strike rate over hurdles reads (correlates in line to the above):

87.5% 87% 39% 24% 40% 44% 44% 40% 75% 58%

Rounded up to the nearest percent.

Average % = 53.85%

Grade 1 wins prior to Champion Hurdle:

6 11 1 0 2 4 6 0 2 3

80% of winners had won at least a grade one race

Age statistics:

7 8 7 9 7 8 8 7 5 6

Days Since ran record reads:

51 50 19 38 30 31 44 45 23 24

CHAMPION HURDLE



100% of winners ran within fifty one days.

Irish record reads:

1 1 6 8 1 1 1 1 4 5

Fate of the favourite reads (asterisk denotes joint position in the market):

1 1 P 3 2 1* 1 6 14 3

SP of the Favourite (correlates in line to the above):

4-9 8-15 2-1 5-2 11-8 7-2 7-4 6-4 2-1 6-4

Betting Position of the Winner (asterisk denotes joint position in the market):

1 1 4 2 10 1* 1 6 5* 9

SP of the winner (correlates in line to the above):

4-9 8-15 10-1 9-2 33-1 7-2 7-4 16-1 10-1 22-1

BHB rating (where provided):

- - 153 - 167 - - - - 159 163

Profile analysis:

Based on past statistics the following horse best fits the profile.

Solwhit



CHAMPION HURDLE



POSTFILES

CORAL ASCOT

- 21st NOV 2009

This was a fantastic performance by **Zaynar** as he jumped magnificently on his way to a six length defeat of the highly regarded **Karabak**. He took up the running and kicked on well before the final turn leaving most of his rivals toiling in his wake. How much relevance this will have on the outcome of the Champion Hurdle is another matter altogether; **Red Moloney** was still travelling well as they straightened up, before running out of stamina over the near two and a half mile trip. **Karabak** could never quite get to the exuberant grey and, along with the fourth horse **Katchit**, now heads for the World Hurdle. Nicky Henderson stated in the autumn that he thought **Zaynar** might appreciate further than two miles and it is doubtful that he saw anything in this performance; as good as it undoubtedly was, to alter that view as his exciting grey appeared to be well suited to the extended trip.

FIGHTING FIFTH

- 28th NOV 2009

This was an extremely slowly run race which should have been to the advantage of **Binocular**, so the fact that he looked very one paced as he trailed home in fifth place was very disappointing. **Solwhit** was probably the horse most inconvenienced by the slow pace and stayed on well enough into third place behind **Sublimity** and the clear cut winner **Go Native**. **Solwhit** has the profile of a horse that will be shown in a better light when he competes in races which allow his stamina to come into play; in Grade One company he will appreciate a faster pace, softer ground and/or an extra half mile. **Go Native** travelled and jumped well and quickened impressively to run out a convincing winner; there is no obvious reason why he will be any less suited to the faster pace he is likely to encounter at **Cheltenham** in March.

RELKEEL

- 12th DEC 2009

Although this was a particularly weak renewal of this prestigious Grade Two Hurdle it was, nevertheless, a race that did offer some insight into the Champion Hurdle potential of Nicky Henderson's **Zaynar**. This was a two and a half mile plus race run on testing ground at a steady pace set very early on by **Golan Way** who sadly parted company with his jockey at the second hurdle leaving **Night Orbit** to briefly take over before being headed by **Cape Tribulation** from the fourth. **Cape Tribulation** kicked for home after the second last flight and **Zaynar** appeared to be in a minor spot of bother for a few strides before his stamina came into play as they met the rising ground approaching the last. He eventually ran out a very comfortable six length winner from the gallant northern raider and is undoubtedly a high class horse; whether or not he will appreciate a drop in trip with a faster pace on better ground is another matter altogether.

INTERNATIONAL

- 12th DEC 2009

We were provided with a most informative renewal of the Grade Two Boylesports.com International Hurdle featuring four leading fancies for **Cheltenham** in March, including the first and second from the 2009 Champion Hurdle in **Punjabi** and **Celestial Halo**. This was a really competitive affair run at a good gallop set initially by **Ashkazaar** before **Celestial Halo** upped the pace from the top of the hill. The four principals drew clear with **Punjabi**, **Medermit** and **Khyber Kim** travelling well in behind the odds on favourite **Celestial Halo**. Nicky Henderson had said before the race that his reigning champ would need the run and so it proved as **Punjabi** tired and dropped out before the last flight leaving a three way fight up the hill.

info@patternsandprofiles.co.uk

CHAMPION HURDLE

Medermit was the first to crack and, although he didn't quite have the pace to stay with the front two he did, nonetheless, run with great credit to finish in third place three lengths behind the runner up.

Celestial Halo appeared to be in control approaching the last but the writing was on the wall soon after as **Khyber Kim** made stealthy headway on the rail to take the lead half way up the run in and win a shade more comfortably than the two and a quarter length margin of victory would suggest. Every time an odds on favourite is turned over pundits and punters alike will queue up to offer excuses on behalf of the vanquished; nevertheless, this was a fast paced Champion Hurdle trial run at **Cheltenham** on soft ground and if the same testing conditions prevail in March it would be no surprise to see **Khyber Kim** confirm this form.

CHRISTMAS

- 26th DEC 2009

This Grade One race resulted in another impressive display from **Go Native** as he confirmed Fighting Fifth form with the much heralded **Binocular** to capture the second leg of the WBX Triple Crown Series. He was held up out the back of the seven runner field prior to taking closer order off the home turn; taking it up at the last and quickened two lengths clear of **Starluck** and **Binocular** before being eased and then idling close home in a way that was reminiscent of his finish in the 2009 Supreme Novice Hurdle. At this stage **Go Native** has the strongest form and is a worthy favourite for the Champion Hurdle; however, he is certainly a tricky ride and will clearly need the gaps to open up at the right time for him. **Starluck** failed to get home at **Cheltenham** in the Triumph Hurdle last year and is unlikely to have a better chance of beating **Go Native** than at **Kempton**, whilst **Binocular** has become disappointing and has now been well beaten by Noel Meade's horse twice in quick succession.

SPORTINGBET

- 23rd JAN 2010

Medermit confirmed his superiority over **Punjabi** on identical terms and as a result was shortened significantly for the Champion Hurdle. The percentage call is to assume that they have run to a similar level of form as last time out at **Cheltenham** when they both finished some way behind **Khyber Kim** and **Celestial Halo**. The proximity of **Afsoun** adds some substance to the possibility that, whilst this is very good form, it may not be top class; nevertheless, although there is strong evidence that suggests **Medermi**t is a little behind **Khyber Kim** in the pecking order, Alan King's horse has now run to a similarly high level of form three times on the bounce and he would not need to improve by much to be placed in a Champion Hurdle. **Punjabi** is said to be a stuffy horse that will always need a couple of runs to put him right. He has shown improved form in the spring in each of the last four seasons and will need to do so again if he has any chance of retaining his two mile hurdle crown.

IRISH CHAMPION

- 24th JAN 2010

Solwhit proved once again that in testing conditions he is a very difficult horse to beat over two miles. He may lack the speed of one or two of his potential Champion Hurdle rivals but he comes off second best to no horse when it comes to tenacity and the will to win. **Sublimity** gave him a real fight until 100yards from the finish when he paid for his exertions by tiring badly and being deprived of second spot by the late surge of **Donnas Palm**. The fact that **Solwhit** took so long to wear down his old rival suggests that his current price of around 7/2 is a slight overreaction to his chances in the Champion Hurdle and this form may be just below the level it

CHAMPION HURDLE

will take to succeed at **Cheltenham** in March, particularly if the going is good; if the ground is testing, however, he will be staying on strongly up the **Cheltenham** hill and could be a threat to all. **Celestial Halo** dropped out in rather a tame fashion after leading until the home straight and although he almost certainly ran below form it is also fair to note that the form lines he shares with **Punjabi** and **Binocular** from last season appear to be a little below the best form shown by the new kids on the block such as **Solwhit** and **Go Native** at this stage.

MOREBATTLE

- 18th FEB 2010

Zaynar lost his position at the head of the betting for the Champion Hurdle after this shock defeat at the hands of a horse rated some 35 pounds below his mark of 168. **Quwetwo** made most of the running on the testing ground and was always just holding the vigorously ridden **1/14** favourite. The challenges awaiting him at **Cheltenham** will have little to do with those he faced at **Kelso** though, and whether or not he will be more suited to a drop in trip and better ground is debateable. **Zaynar** has put in his best three performances when racing as a fresh horse, so the fact that he had quite a hard race in defeat today on the back of a long journey from Lambourn to **Kelso** may not be the ideal preparation for the festival that his connections would have been hoping for.



CHAMPION HURDLE



THE GUIDE

GO NATIVE

Go Native has won both his trial races and is now on target for the WBX Triple Crown and the chance of a huge financial windfall for his connections. He has always appeared to be a horse that would be shown in his best light when racing off a fast pace in a big field on good or good to soft going as he was in the 2009 Supreme Novices Hurdle. Therefore, it is massively in his favour that he has managed to win his latest two contests, both seven runner affairs including an extremely slowly run Fighting Fifth at **Newcastle** where **Go Native** travelled and jumped well and quickened impressively to run out a convincing winner. At this stage **Go Native** has the strongest form on offer and can boast a previous course and distance success at the festival; consequently, his current odds of **6/1** appear rather generous, despite the fact that he is a tricky ride and will clearly need the gaps to open up at the right time for him. He is probably the strongest back to lay bet of the festival as he will almost certainly be travelling extremely well with two to jump and therefore be trading much shorter in running than his current odds.

SOLWHIT

Solwhit has the profile of a horse that will be shown in his best light when he competes in races which allow his stamina to come into play. In Grade One company he will appreciate a fast pace and either two and a half miles or testing ground. His performance in the Fighting Fifth at **Newcastle** suggests that he may well be found short of pace over two miles on good or even good to soft going. The fact that **Solwhit** took so long to wear down **Sublimity** in his latest start on his favoured testing ground suggests that his current price of around **7/2** is a slight overreaction to his chances in the Champion Hurdle and that the form of the Irish Champion Hurdle may be just below the level it will take to succeed at **Cheltenham** in March, particularly if the going is good; however, if the ground is testing, he will be staying on strongly up the hill and could be a threat to all.

ZAYNAR

Zaynar lost his unbeaten record over hurdles when being turned over at odds of 1/14 by the 133 rated **Quwetwo** at **Kelso** in February. At the start of the season his trainer suggested that his horse may well need further than two miles to be seen at his best and all three of his performances since then have supported this notion. On his seasonal debut he proved too quick for the World Hurdle contender **Karabak** over a distance close to two and a half miles and in the Relkeel Hurdle at **Cheltenham** in December he looked in trouble for a few strides as the 145 rated **Cape Tribulation** quickened on the testing ground; his stamina then kicked in over the two and a half mile plus trip and he eventually ended up winning comfortably. **Zaynar** is not without a chance in the Champion Hurdle and the fact that **Celestial Halo** will almost certainly set a very fast pace is to his advantage; nevertheless, there are at least one or two of his rivals who will be in their element racing over two miles off a fast pace and the same cannot necessarily be said with as much certainty for **Zaynar**.

MEDERMIT

Medermitt has run three solid races over hurdles this season; all of which give him strong claims of at least finishing in the prize money for the Champion Hurdle. In his latest start he

info@patternsandprofiles.co.uk

CHAMPION HURDLE

beat **Punjabi** at **Haydock** in convincing style; however, he beat the same horse in similar fashion at **Cheltenham** in his previous race when he finished well beaten behind **Celestial Halo** and **Khyber Kim** and the fact that the Twiston Davies horse had also beaten him over the same course and distance on his seasonal debut in November makes it rather difficult to see why he should reverse the form with either of them come the festival. Some pundits have pointed to the fact that he only just failed to get up to beat **Go Native** in the Supreme Hurdle as evidence of his strong Champion Hurdle claims; nonetheless, the gaps opened far too early for the Noel Meade horse that day and he drew well clear of **Medermid** before idling on the run in. With equal luck in running **Go Native** should be far too quick for him and on the balance of evidence **Medermid** will need to improve to finish in the first three.

CELESTIAL HALO

Celestial Halo has been a little disappointing in both his races since winning on his seasonal debut at **Wincanton**. To give him any chance of winning the Champion Hurdle one has to be prepared to forget his latest performance behind **Solwhit** at **Leopardstown** where maybe the ground was more testing than ideal or perhaps it was something to do with the travelling. Whatever the reason, it was not an ideal stepping stone to the festival and this should be taken on board when assessing his appropriate odds for the Champion. In his favour is his record at the last two festivals where he has won the Triumph Hurdle and was then touched off by **Punjabi** in the 2009 Champion Hurdle. His form with **Punjabi** and **Binocular** has taken more than a few knocks this season and it is possible that the new kids on the block are simply better than all three of them; nevertheless, previous festival form is not to be underestimated and the fact that Ruby Walsh will almost certainly be dictating the pace of the race is another point in his favour. **Celestial Halo** is likely to be prominent until at least the final flight and there will be far worse **16/1** shots running this week.

KHYBER KIM

Khyber Kim is a particularly difficult horse to assess for the 2010 Champion Hurdle. If we only consider his two runs this season, where he has beaten **Medermid** in both races as well as **Celestial Halo** and **Punjabi** on his latest start, then he has to be considered as one of the favourites in March, if not the horse with the best chance of winning. He has a three from three record when racing on soft ground over hurdles, so testing conditions will obviously add to his chances. Conversely, the fact that his post new year form over obstacles reads: **4 0 4 5 0 0 5** is rather disconcerting and this is not the record of a stand out Champion Hurdle contender; furthermore, he has been beaten a distance in each of the last two festivals including off a mark of 144 in the 2009 County Hurdle. The evidence stacked up against **Khyber Kim** has far more substance than the data in his favour and, even though he could win if everything falls into place for him, the percentage call for a horse with this profile is to cross them out of our calculations and if we do this consistently, we will be better off in the long run, however **Khyber Kim** performs on the day.

PUNJABI

Punjabi was promoted to **10/1** for the Champion Hurdle after his facile success in his final warm up race at **Kempton**. As the reigning champion his chances have to be respected, even though his first two performances of the season both suggested he might be a little behind the Alan King trained **Medermid**. Moreover, the form of his festival victory last year has not

CHAMPION HURDLE

worked out very well as the first three home have all performed below the standard set by **Go Native** and **Solwhit** this season. It should be noted that his connections have consistently maintained that he is a stuffy horse who will always need a couple of runs to put him right; furthermore, **Punjabi** has shown improved form in the spring in each of the last four seasons and will certainly need to do so again if he has any chance of retaining his two mile hurdle crown.

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

This is a race where the likely outcome is particularly ground dependent; on good or good to soft ground **Go Native** has the strongest chance of winning the Champion Hurdle and, given these conditions is fairly close to being an each way bet to nothing and is probably the best back to lay of the week. With equal luck in running he should be travelling easily at the second last flight, at which point, there is a very strong chance that he will be trading much shorter than his starting odds. If the gaps open up at the right time he has an excellent chance of coming home in front; however, if he is in front too soon, as he was in the Supreme Hurdle last year then we might want to consider laying him again on the run in at 1.1 or less. **Celestial Halo** is another who will prefer good to soft ground at worst and, given those conditions, is the obvious front runner and is overpriced at **16/1**; therefore, he may be worth a small investment as there is a reasonably good chance that we will have the opportunity to lay him back in running at a single figure price.

If the ground is soft or heavy then **Solwhit** will have a very strong chance of finishing in the first three and would probably be the most likely winner of the race; consequently, his current odds of **9/2**, should they still be available, will look very generous. **Khyber Kim** is currently trading at a double figure price, is unbeaten over hurdles on soft ground and would be an interesting alternative to **Solwhit**.