

# CHELTENHAM GOLD CUP



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.

## TOTESPORT CHELTENHAM GOLD CUP

### 10 Year Trends 1999-2009 (2001 abandoned)

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

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SP of the winner

BHB rating (where provided)

Profile analysis

*info@patternsandprofiles.co.uk*

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## Chase debut record reads:

1 2 1 1 1 5 F 1 1 1

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

## Last time out record reads:

3 1 2 1 1 1 2 1 1 1

100% of all winners in the first three last time out.

## Total career starts prior to chase debut reads (FLAT/NHF/HURDLE):

3 3 5 5 5 7 6 10 5 10

100% of all winners have had ten or less runs prior to chase debut.

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

13 10 6 9 12 11 9 10 9 20

90% of all winners have run less than thirteen times over fences.

100% of winners had more six or more runs over fences.

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

38% 30% 67% 78% 75% 45% 50% 70% 100% 65%

Rounded up to the nearest percent.

Average % = 61.8%

## Grade 1 wins over fences prior to the Gold Cup:

1 1 1 3 5 3 1 4 2 10

## Graded wins over fences prior to the Gold Cup:

3 2 3 6 8 4 2 6 5 12

## Age statistics:

9 8 7 8 9 7 7 7 8 9

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100% of winners were aged between seven and nine.

Days since ran record reads:

47 46 80 77 80 82 79 34 33 33 77

100% of winners ran within eighty two days.

Irish record reads:

3 2 2 3 3 P 1 5 7 N/A

Fate of the favourite reads:

3 4 13 1 1 1 1 1 2 1

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

5-2 9-4 9-2 13-8 8-11 4-1 4-1 5-4 10-11 7-4

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

8 2\* 3 1 1 1 3 1 2 1

90% of winners have come from the first three in the betting.

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

16-1 9-2 7-1 13-8 8-11 4-1 15-2 5-4 9-4 7-4

BHB rating (where provided):

166 170 169 170 175 - - 176 176 177

Profile analysis:

Based on past statistics the following horses, best fit the profile.

**Coldline**

*info@patternsandprofiles.co.uk*

## POSTFILES

### BETFAIR CHASE

- 21<sup>st</sup> NOV 2009

**Kauto Star** made a successful return to the track for the 2009/10 season, but only just as he managed to hold on by the narrowest of margins from **Imperial Commander** after a titanic battle all the way up the home straight. The fact that they put 24 lengths between themselves and the 169 rated **Madison Du Berlais** whilst, at the same time, being involved in such a prolonged duel significantly enhances the form. **Imperial Commander** took up the running with an excellent leap at the fourth last and another good jump at the next fence could easily have sealed his victory; however, it was not to be as he got in close to the third last and lost momentum, allowing **Kauto Star** to join him again and go two lengths up at the second from home. The Paul Nicholls horse jumped each of the last three fences better than his rival and that probably made the difference between winning and losing. **Imperial Commander** dispelled any lingering doubts about his ability to stay three miles and if the Betfair Chase was the final trial before the Gold Cup, the betting for that race would look very different to how it does now, especially when one considers the **Cheltenham** form of the Twiston - Davies horse.

### HENNESSY GOLD CUP

- 28<sup>th</sup> NOV 2009

This race could have some significance for more than one race at the 2010 Cheltenham Festival. After running below par in at least two of his three chases last season **Denman** showed he was back to his best with a fantastic display of jumping in the Hennessy Gold Cup at **Newbury**. From a handicapping point of view this was a much better performance than his win in the same race in 2007 as he was racing off a mark of 174 here in comparison to the 161 he raced off two years ago. In this chase he raced prominently all the way before being taken on by his stable companion **What A Friend** from two out. Despite conceding 22 pounds to his stable mate he rallied to go on again from the last and pull away on the run in. It is very difficult to compare this performance with that of **Kauto Star** in the King George as they were two very different types of contests; nevertheless, the Gold Cup should be a race to savour, particularly because now that he has proved his well being there is every reason to suppose that he will be ridden in the same positive manner at **Cheltenham** in March as he was when winning the Gold Cup in 2008.

**Barbers Shop** travelled well just behind the leaders and looked a real danger until appearing to run out of stamina before the last fence. This is not the first time this has happened as he was also going extremely well in the 2009 Gold Cup before looking like a blatant non stayer from before the second last fence. He has excellent form over two and a half miles including behind **Imperial Commander** in the 2008 Paddy Power Chase at **Cheltenham** and the obvious festival race for this Nicky Henderson horse has to be the Ryanair Chase.

### KING GEORGE

- 26<sup>th</sup> DEC 2009

**Kauto Star** was promoted to 6/4 favourite for the **Cheltenham** Gold Cup after his 36 length demolition of **Madison Du Berlais** and the rest of the King George field. Given the incredibly impressive nature of his success at **Kempton** it was a little surprising to see him remain at odds against. When any horse wins a top class race with such ridiculous ease it is important to take a step back and have a closer look, especially when the horse in question will undoubtedly trade at short odds in the future as a result of the impressive nature of one victory.

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**Kauto Star** is the best three mile chaser we have seen for a long time and, due to the inevitable layers of hype that follow on from each success with such a high profile horse, is always likely to be trading at a shorter price in the market than his overall form merits. Hence, the surprise at his odds against price for the Gold Cup.

It has to be noted that his chief market rival **Imperial Commander** made a terrible blunder at the second fence which effectively put him out of the race. Also the third favourite **Madison Du Berlais** was unable to live with the tremendous gallop set by **Ollie Magern** and **Nacarat** and was a little fortunate to snatch second spot on the run in. David Pipe's horse will probably be better in a smaller field where he can dictate his own pace. Of the rest, **Deep Purple** broke a blood vessel and **Albertas Run** could never get into the race whilst **Barbers Shop**, **Nacarat** and **Tartak** all failed to get home on the day. Nevertheless, the fact that the race rather fell apart for **Kauto Star** merely added to the scintillating nature of his victory and it has to be said that he never put a foot wrong and looked majestic in what was probably the most impressive looking performance of his career

## LEXUS

- 29<sup>th</sup> DEC 2009

The Paul Nicholls bandwagon rolls on with yet another Grade One win to his name. This time it was the turn of the Alex Ferguson part owned **What A Friend** to do the honours as he held off the late challenge of **Money Trix** to record a hard fought success. Having previously finished an honourable second to Denman when receiving plenty of weight in the Hennessy Gold Cup at **Newbury**, he will be competing for third place at best should he take his chance in the **Cheltenham** Gold Cup. **Money Trix** will require heavy ground to offer him any chance of being competitive at **Cheltenham**. **Coolidine** dropped out of contention in a very disappointing fashion before being pulled up and is running out of time to prove his well being before March.

This contest may ultimately have more impact on the betting markets and outcome of the Ryanair Chase rather than the Gold Cup. **Joncol** has always appeared to be a mud loving three mile plus chaser in the making so this Grade One Chase looked to offer him an excellent chance to show his credentials. He travelled and jumped extremely well in the testing conditions and took up the running before the turn for home at which point he looked the most obvious winner. Unfortunately, he jumped the last like a tiring horse and was caught on the run in by both **What A Friend** and **Money Trix**. Paul Nolan suggested after the race that he may have got the tactics wrong with **Joncol** who perhaps could have been held onto for longer. His chances at **Cheltenham** in March would be greatly enhanced in the unlikely event of testing ground.

Those old rivals **Voy Por Ustedes** and **Schindlers Hunt** both appeared to find the three miles in testing ground beyond them, though they did jump a lot better here than either of them had previously at **Ascot**. Their respective profiles suggest that the challenges awaiting them in the Ryanair Chase should show them both in a better light and the fact that **Voy Por Ustedes** is trading at **11.0** on the exchanges whilst **Schindlers Hunt** is currently available at three times that price, despite the fact that they again finished within half a length of each other, is as much to do with hype and media coverage as it is to do with ability.

## ARGENTO CHASE

- 30<sup>th</sup> JAN 2010

**Taranis** returned from an absence of 766 days to take the Grade Two Argento Chase by six lengths from the race fit favourite **Carruthers** and was subsequently promoted to joint

*info@patternsandprofiles.co.uk*

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fourth favourite for the Gold Cup with several leading layers at around 25/1. This was the first time that the winner had faced a trip beyond three miles and the slow early pace was probably to his advantage; likewise **Carruthers** is yet to prove he stays further than three miles in a race of this quality and certainly looked like he ran out of stamina on the run in; the fact that he made several mistakes will not have helped his cause. On this evidence, he appears to have had his limitations exposed and a return to three miles, maybe on a flat track, could be the order of the day. On the strength of this performance, the winner has a reasonable chance of picking up some prize money behind the front two or three in the Gold Cup. Having finished well beaten in fourth place, after starting the race well clear on official ratings, **Madison Du Berlais** finally put to bed any debate regarding his suitability to racing at **Cheltenham** and he will now surely be saved for **Aintree** in April and an attempt to repeat last year's victory in the Totesport Bowl.

## IRISH HENNESSY

- 7<sup>th</sup> FEB 2010

The crowd at **Leopardstown** were treated to an exciting climax to the Hennessy Cognac Gold Cup as **Joncol** just got the better of **Coolbine** after a rare old battle to the line. The runner up benefited from an unchallenged lead and looked the obvious winner right up until being mugged on the line. His connections had intimated that he would improve for the run and that being so; **Coolbine** has every chance of finishing in the first four in the Gold Cup.

The pedestrian pace played into the hands of **Joncol** and **Schindlers Hunt** and made life very difficult for the two obvious stayers in the race, **Money Trix** and **Notre Pere**, both of whom would have had a better chance off a stronger gallop. **Joncol** now steps back in trip to contest the Ryanair Chase and is trading as short as **5/1** in places for that event, which appears to be an overreaction to his chances, principally because he is yet to race on anything other than testing ground in ten career starts. **Schindlers Hunt** was well suited to the very steady pace and looked dangerous from the second last flight; unfortunately, he lost valuable momentum after getting in too close to the last fence leaving the two favourites to fight out the finish. He ran an excellent trial for the Ryanair Chase on a surface that was not to his liking and, as he showed behind **Imperial Commander** and **Voy Por Usteddes** last year, he will be suited to racing on better ground over half a mile less.

## AON

- 13<sup>th</sup> FEB 2010

**Tricky Trickster** and **Niche Market** fought out a close finish to the Aon Chase at **Newbury** with the former being driven to get up on the line to take the spoils. However, the real story of this race was the shock defeat of the **1/6** favourite **Denman**, who unseated his new jockey A.P. McCoy at the third last fence having made a serious blunder at the previous flight. To some extent, the writing was on the wall before he hit the fourth last fence as, by then, he had already been asked a question and was struggling to shake off the attentions of **Niche Market**; a horse rated 34 pounds inferior. Make no mistake, this is a devastating blow to his chances of winning the Gold Cup for a second time and his current odds of about **3/1** are more to do with the weight of money invested on him prior to the Aon Chase rather than a realistic reflection of his current chances of defeating **Kauto Star** at **Cheltenham**.

## THE GUIDE

### KAUTO STAR

**Kauto Star** is the highest rated three mile plus chaser in the country and has won the King George Chase at **Kempton** three times and been successful in two out of the last three renewals of the **Cheltenham** Gold Cup. Clearly, the conditions offered in these challenges suit his abilities especially well. **Kauto Star** was promoted to 6/4 favourite for the **Cheltenham** Gold Cup after his 36 length demolition of **Madison Du Berlais** and the rest of the King George field and is now trading even shorter. This was arguably the most impressive looking performance of his career and, although he may be too short in the betting to recommend a financial investment; he is well clear on official ratings, is clearly the number one contender and has every chance of winning the Gold Cup for a third time.

### IMPERIAL COMMANDER

**Imperial Commander** has proven top class form when racing as a fresh horse and has won four out of the five chases he has contested at **Cheltenham**. He returns to his favourite course on the back of a disappointing result in the King George as he did last year before winning the Ryanair Chase. He proved his ability to stay three miles when being beaten on the nod by **Kauto Star** at **Haydock** in November and the fact that they put 24 lengths between themselves and the 169 rated **Madison Du Berlais** whilst, at the same time, being involved in such a prolonged duel significantly enhances the form. If both horses had come straight to the festival from **Haydock** then the betting for the Gold Cup would look very different to how it does now, especially when one considers the **Cheltenham** form of the Twiston Davies horse. There remains a reasonable chance that **Imperial Commander** can improve pro rata from **Haydock** with the hot favourite and remain in contention at the bottom of the **Cheltenham** hill; whether or not he will get up the hill as well as the first two favourites is rather more difficult to predict. His jumping is at its best when he is allowed to bowl along so we should expect him to be ridden positively in the Gold Cup and at his double figure price he could be worth considering as a back to lay as there is a good chance he will be trading much shorter than his current price with two fences to jump.

### DENMAN

**Denman** blotted his copybook with a disappointing performance and an uncharacteristic blunder or two in the Aon Chase at **Newbury**. To some extent the writing was on the wall before he hit the fourth last fence as, by then, he had already been asked a question and was struggling to shake off **Niche Market**; a horse rated 34 pounds inferior. The debate will continue to rage regarding the decision to replace Sam Thomas with A.P. McCoy; however, whatever the rights and wrongs of that decision, the fact remains that this was not the performance of a potential Gold Cup winning horse. **Denman** has now won just once in his last five chases and has failed to complete in two of them; furthermore, the race he won in this sequence, the Hennessy Gold Cup at **Newbury** in December, is the only time he has put in a performance of the highest class since beating **Kauto Star** in the 2008 Gold Cup. He may well return to his best at **Cheltenham**, and let us hope that he does, as it would be fantastic for racing and a wonderful spectacle to witness **Kauto Star** and **Denman** battling up the **Cheltenham** hill one more time; nevertheless, sentiment can play no part in our financial decisions and we will certainly be better off in the long run if we ignore the claims of all horses

that perform well below their best just a month before the festival and especially those that are still trading as short as **3/1**.

## TARANIS

**Taranis** did remarkably well to win the Argento Chase on his comeback run after an enforced absence of 766 days. The race was a slowly run affair which probably worked in his favour as he has never previously convinced as a horse likely to stay three miles plus at **Cheltenham** on soft going. This was a relatively weak renewal of this Grade Two contest and as a consequence of this victory **Taranis** was trading at around the 25/1 mark for the Gold Cup, which looks a reasonably fair reflection of his chances. Being a previous winner at the **Cheltenham** Festival is in his favour though this is negated by doubts about his stamina and the fact that he is from the same stable as the big two in the betting. **Taranis** may well be held up off the pace in an attempt to pick up the pieces if one or two of the more fancied horses fail to stay the trip; this scenario would make him a slightly more attractive each way proposition in the market without the favourite.

## COOLDINE

The most significant performance of his career with regards to his chances in the Gold Cup is his impressive success in the RSA Chase at the festival last season. However, it is easy enough to pick holes in that run as **Horners Wood**, the horse that finished runner up, was rated 126, whilst the third horse home from just six finishers was **Massini's Maguire** who clearly did not get up the hill on the day. Nevertheless, the Gold Cup is a race with very little strength in depth beyond the big guns and therefore, as a dual Grade One Chase winner and previous festival victor, **Cooldine** has every chance of running well despite the lack of substance in his RSA Chase win. He returned to something like his 2009 festival form in his most recent outing when just touched off by **Joncol** in the Grade One Hennessy Gold Cup at **Leopardstown** in February. His trainer Willie Mullins stated before the race that he was just coming back to form and would improve for the run; that being the case, there is every reason to think that **Cooldine** can at least finish in the first four in the Gold Cup.

**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 complexion of this race as a betting proposition changed significantly after the performance of **Denman** in the Aon Chase. This does not mean that he could not return to form and go close here; however, it does make that scenario less likely, whereas the lack of response in the market suggests that his chances have not diminished in any way. Before the Aon the percentage call was to assume that the rest of the field were fighting for third place at best; whereas, with just one particularly strong favourite to oppose now, this has become a race worth having a go at with two horses priced at double figures. **Imperial Commander** and **Cooldine** are both available at **12/1**, which means we only need one to finish in the first three to cover our two each way investments. The fact that they are both such good travellers means

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that we are also likely to have an opportunity to lay one or both of them in running at the bottom of the hill, if we so wish.

**My Will** is of some interest at his current price of **33/1** in the market 'without the two favourites' as he will probably be given a quiet ride and there is a good chance that we will see him running past beaten horses up the hill. He is also trading at **80/1** without **Kauto Star** and is worth considering to small stakes if and when each way terms are on offer in that market.

