

THE GUIDE

AINTREE

OLD ROAN CHASE

23rd OCTOBER 2010

POQUELIN

According to official ratings **Poquelin** has improved to a mark of 164 from the 139 rating he began last season off. The fact that he has done so whilst contesting four chases run over about two and a half miles at **Cheltenham** bodes well for his chances in the future when racing over that course and distance. Apparently, the Paddy Power Chase is next on the agenda and his profile strongly suggests he should run well in that race.

If we were to handicap **Poquelin** on his form away from **Cheltenham** it would be difficult to offer a mark within 20 pounds of his current rating. This does not mean to say that he cannot perform to a rating of 164 at **Aintree**; it is just that he is yet to prove he can. The fact that he is racing against one or two rivals that have proven their suitability to racing over two and a half miles at **Aintree** makes it even more difficult to side with **Poquelin** when assessing the Old Roan Chase.

He has run in two chases at **Aintree** and has yet to show anything to suggest he could make his mark at this level. He is currently trading at a best priced **3/1** which, at least in part, is due to the name of his trainer; consequently, although he obviously has some sort of a chance, the percentage call is to watch his performance today and mark him up on whatever he achieves when he returns to **Cheltenham**.

ALBERTAS RUN

Albertas Run is a quirky individual who, prior to the 2009/10 season disappointed more often than he won; however, within his profile there lies one or two interesting patterns. His form on good ground now reads: **1 2 1 1 3 2 3 1 1 1**. His two third places in this sequence have both occurred when racing at **Aintree**, which is a course where he did not look like winning in his first three attempts before putting in his best round of jumping at the course last time out to take the Melling Chase in April.

Conversely, he has won two out of three chases at **Ascot** and three out of four at **Cheltenham** and has managed to win at each of those courses when the ground has been officially good to soft; interestingly enough, his chase form on good to soft going away from those courses reads: **P 3 3 6**. Prior to his win in the Melling Chase, aside from **Ascot** and **Cheltenham** he had only managed one other victory from eleven attempts over fences and that was in a minor novice event at **Towcester** on his chasing debut.

Now that he has put in such an impressive performance over course and distance it would be foolhardy not to take this into account when assessing his chances; on the other hand it is equally important that we bear in mind that in three out of four chases at the course he has not jumped well enough to make his mark in the Old Roan Chase. We should consider both sides of this coin when determining his appropriate place in the market.

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MONET'S GARDEN

He is a high class horse at distances up to two and a half miles and prefers good or good to soft ground. He has an excellent record when racing on a flat track and with a break between races. In Grade One Chases he has proven he stays two miles at **Cheltenham** and up to two and a half miles at **Aintree**.

Monet's Garden made his seasonal debut in the Old Roan Chase at **Aintree** in October 2009; he raced as a fresh horse, over two and a half miles, on a flat track and on goodish ground; he led from the second fence, was unchallenged for the lead thereafter and won with something to spare off top weight and a mark of 159. This return to form continued through the season with two more top class performances. His only disappointing run came in his second chase at **Ascot** in November when returning too quickly after the Old Roan last season. His form away from **Cheltenham** (a course that does not suit him) over about two and a half miles on good or good to soft going when racing as a fresh horse reads: **1 1 1 1 2 1 1 1 3**.

TARTAK

He has won four from fifteen over fences in Britain and has finished runner up on three occasions. He stays two and a half miles well on an easy track. He travelled and jumped well at **Newbury** over three miles in November 2008 but was outstayed on the run in by a horse that followed up in a better race over the same course and distance. At **Haydock** in January 2009 he tracked the searching pace set by **Will Be Done** and came to challenge three out and again at the last, but did not quite get home over two and a half miles on the testing ground.

Tartak improved throughout his novice chase season and saved his best performances for his final three chases. In his final start he beat **Deep Purple** with something to spare in a Grade Two Novice Chase over two and a half miles on good going at **Aintree**; that rival went on to be the comfortable winner of the Grade Two Novice event run in very similar conditions at **Ayr**.

Fans of pounds per lengths maths are likely to be interested in **Tartak** today. Certainly, if we look at his run in the Melling Chase he does appear to be well in here. Nevertheless, he has failed to win in seven attempts since losing his novice status, including in this race last year; furthermore, he was beaten by a double figure margin in five of those events and was tailed off three times. Despite racing against a course and distance specialist today **Tartak** is currently the **5/2** favourite and has to be opposed at that price.

I'MSINGINGTHEBLUES

He has won three out of his ten chases, stays two miles well enough on good ground and appeared to run out of stamina in his only try at two and a half miles in a Grade Two Chase at **Ayr** in April 2009. His best form has been when racing on flat tracks; consequently he cannot be totally dismissed today; however, although it is possible that his apparent lack of stamina for this trip was due to the race coming at the end of a six race season, the fact that he is competing with four proven stayers in a race which includes two horses likely to push the pace suggests we should look elsewhere on this occasion.

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CONCLUSIONS

Watch My Back runs from six pounds out of the handicap, prefers faster conditions and is probably being prepared for a tilt at the Paddy Power Chase. Ferdy Murphy used this race for similar purposes last season with **Three Mirrors**. The two favourites, **Tartak** and **Poquelin** both have some sort of a chance and cannot be dismissed lightly; nonetheless, the next two in the betting have profiles that suggest they hold stronger claims today.

The key to this race will be the fight for the lead. If **Monet's Garden** enjoys the same unchallenged lead as he did last season then he will be very hard to beat. Obviously, McCoy will be well aware of this, as he was in the Melling Chase in April when he harassed **Monet's Garden** all the way before driving **Albertas Run** into a winning lead on the turn for home. Perhaps, Richard Johnson was caught a little off guard that day in an attempt to give his horse a breather before the long home straight.

Albertas Run put in an exemplary round of jumping in the Melling Chase and will have to do so again to keep tabs on **Monet's Garden**. McCoy's mounts form on good to soft going is a concern, as is his overall profile away from **Cheltenham** and **Ascot**. Nonetheless, there is a good chance he will run to his best and, due to the over betting of the two favourites is clearly overpriced at **9/2**.

With his repeated course and distance form and his near perfect record in these conditions it is difficult to see why **Monet's Garden** will not perform to his best and be the one they all have to beat. Perhaps, heavy afternoon rain could be the only fly in the ointment. The fact that he has a less fashionable jockey on board is surely a big part of the reason why **4/1** is available for a horse running in near perfect circumstances