

RSA CHASE

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.

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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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Profile analysis

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Chase debut record reads:

2 F 2 1 4 1 1 1 1 1

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

Last time out record reads:

1 2 2 1 2 2 1 1 1 1

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

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

3 3 5 7 10 7 6 5 8 12

90% 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):

6 4 4 4 8 3 4 4 4 4

80% of all winners have run less then five times over fences.

100% of winners had more then two runs over fences.

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

33% 25% 33% 75% 25% 33% 50% 100% 75% 75%

Rounded up to the nearest percent.

Average % = 52.4%

Grade 1 wins over fences prior to RSA chase:

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1

Graded wins over fences prior to RSA chase:

0 0 0 1 0 0 0 1 1 1

Age statistics:

7 7 7 7 8 7 5 7 7 7

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80% of winners were aged seven.

Days since ran record reads:

27 52 34 44 44 53 47 32 25 23

100% of winners ran within fifty two days.

Irish record reads:

F 2 5 3 1 5 7 2 F 1

Fate of the favourite reads:

F 4 5 5 3 2 P 1 1 1

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

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

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

6 2* 13* 4 8 4 10 1 1 1

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

16-1 9-2 33-1 15-2 25-1 5-1 14-1 6-5 4-1 9-4

BHB rating (where provided):

115 - 129 - - - 143 - 149 155

Profile analysis:

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

Diamond Harry

Weird Al

Pandorama (although is possibly ground dependant)

Bensalem (likely to run in William Hill Trophy at the time of writing)

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POSTFILES

STEEL PLATE AND SECTIONS

- 13th NOV 2009

When **Overclear** and **Ashkazaar** raced clear with two to jump the rest of the field would have been trading at long odds against in running, although the way both **Weird Al** and **Knockara Beau** closed them down and eventually passed them to finish first and second, appeared to be as much about the leaders stopping as the two of them running on. **Weird Al** was making his chasing debut and his inexperience probably played a part in him getting outpaced and looking well beaten when hitting the third last fence. The fact that he made up many lengths on the leaders from that point onwards and rallied to such affect that he managed to get up to lead on the line in only his third ever race in public is to his enormous credit and the way he stormed up the hill suggests that he will have no trouble staying further. **Knockara Beau** did his reputation no harm at all as he came to win the race after the last and ran on powerfully up the hill before being mugged on the line, and therefore too late to give him any chance of fighting back. He has looked suited to racing on softer ground than this and is another that should benefit from a stronger test of stamina.

BERKSHIRE

- 27th NOV 2009

This was a disappointing turn out for a Grade Two Chase at a Grade One track although, no doubt, in many people's eyes this will have been more than compensated for by the presence of the 171 rated hurdler **Punchestowns** who was making his long awaited chasing debut. From a ratings point of view he beat a 135 rated chaser by seven lengths whilst in receipt of seven pounds, with the 142 rated **Red Admiral** a further seven lengths behind. Nevertheless, today was about far more than pounds per lengths and even though all **Punchestowns** proved today was that he could jump well, at an even gallop in a small field chase and win easily against inferior opposition on a Grade One track, it still represented that all important first step along the way to **Cheltenham** in March. Weather permitting we will hopefully get to see him perform in a more competitive chase before the New Year.

DRINMORE

- 2nd DEC 2009

This Grade One Chase was ultimately only about one horse as **Pandorama** jumped exceptionally well and travelled with consummate ease for much of this two and a half mile journey round **Fairyhouse**. It is fair to say that he was a little awkward at the last and had to be ridden aggressively on the run in to come clear of the well regarded **Alpha Ridge**; nevertheless, this was a clear cut win by a progressive staying chaser. The heavy ground was to his advantage and a step up in trip should certainly show him in an even better light.

FELTHAM

- 26th DEC 2009

Long Run pulled hard for much of this contest and also made several fairly significant errors, the worst of which was probably the one he made at the second last fence. The stayer **Tazbar** had closed to within three or four lengths of him at this point, looking a bit of a threat and it would have been no surprise to see him go on and make a close finish of it This is possibly more significant when one considers the minor concerns Long Run's connections had voiced regarding the extent of his stamina reserves plus the energy that the horse expended on the way round. The fact that he picked up again and drew right away in effortless fashion showed

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what an engine he has; his eagerly anticipated next appearance on a racecourse will hopefully tell us a lot more.

KNIGHT FRANK

- 28th DEC 2009

This was an enthralling contest between two of the best staying novice chasers in Ireland and the fact that the determined **Pandorama** prevailed by a short head over the gallant **Weapons Amnesty** only tells part of the story. The runner up lost ground and momentum at several fences early on and did well to keep in touch at the back of the pack; at the same time Davy Condon was biding his time in mid division on the eventual winner who put in another solid round of jumping on the yielding ground. **Weapon's Amnesty** made smooth headway to close on the pack on the approach to the second last flight at which point a superb leap from **Pandorama** took him up to dispute the lead. Three strides after the last flight it appeared to be curtains for **Pandorama** as he looked like being swallowed up by **Lenabane** on his outside and **Weapon's Amnesty** who had made stealthy progress, on his inner; however, under heavy pressure he drew away with his chief rival on the long run to the winning post and, although he was clearly headed, he got back up on the line to prevail in the tightest of finishes.

It has to be noted that if the runner up had jumped with more fluency he may have run out a convincing winner; nonetheless, he will have to improve that side of his game to get competitive in the RSA Chase and, although the winner was perhaps a little fortunate and certainly not as impressive as he had been at **Fairyhouse**, this was run on slightly quicker ground, which would not necessarily be in his favour. It was also a much more competitive Grade One Chase.

Pandorama has already won three Grade One contests in a nine race career, eight of which he has won; a record that suggests his chances need to be respected come **Cheltenham** in March. The most obvious advantages held by **Weapon's Amnesty** are, that he is less ground dependant than his adversary and has proven form at the festival, having won the Grade One Albert Bartlett Hurdle over three miles in 2009. Connections of both horses have reason to travel to **Cheltenham** in March with more than a little confidence behind them.

SPORTINGBET.com

- 23rd JAN 2010

This was a small but select field for this Grade Two Chase at **Haydock** and was headed by the odds on favourite **Diamond Harry** a 163 rated hurdler making his chasing debut. The presence of **Knockara Beau** and **Mumbles Head** in the field offered the possibility of some strong form lines for the RSA Chase. The field was made up by the Alan King contender **Bensalem** who was having his third start over fences and who ran **Diamond Harry** to half a length off level weights over hurdles on similarly testing ground as today.

The pace was a good one and set by **Knockara Beau** and **Mumbles Head** with the two favourites travelling well in behind. The writing was on the wall for the two front runners when both **Diamond Harry** and **Bensalem** went past approaching the third last fence; at this point the Alan King horse, who was not travelling quite as well as the favourite, took a crashing fall and hampered **Knockara Beau** in the process leaving the motionless Barry Geraghty well clear on **Diamond Harry**. The easy winner had far too much speed for his rivals and was never in any danger thereafter as he finished well clear of the staying on **Knockara Beau** who again ran like a horse that would appreciate an extra half mile.

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If we interpret this form literally then **Diamond Harry** would have little to fear in the RSA Chase from either **Weapon's Amnesty** or **Weird AI** who had previously raced against **Mumbles Head** and **Knockara Beau** respectively. However, we have witnessed both of those horses running on strongly up the **Cheltenham** hill, whilst this remains an area of some concern with **Diamond Harry** who has lugged left under pressure and failed to convince in his last two finishes at the course.

TOWTON NOVICES' CHASE

- 6th FEB 2010

Weird AI booked his place in the line up for the RSA Chase with an authoritative win underlined by an excellent round of jumping. **Knockara Beau** made most of the running until being joined and headed by **Weird AI** three from home; from this point the Ian Williams trained joint favourite asserted his authority on the race and never looked like relinquishing his lead as he was driven out to win by a comfortable two and a half lengths. This was only his fifth ever career race and his third over fences and though he may not have beaten **Knockara Beau** in quite the same scintillating way as **Diamond Harry** did at **Haydock**, the fact remains that he is progressing with every run, has proved himself twice at **Cheltenham** and, with this performance at **Wetherby**, he has shown that the three mile plus trip of the RSA Chase is to his advantage. **Knockara Beau** has now tried to lead all the way in two small field chases and it would be no surprise to see him held up off the pace at **Cheltenham** where his chances of picking up some valuable prize money would be more obvious given soft ground.

SCILLY ISLES

- 6th FEB 2010

This Grade One Hurdle race was ultimately won in commanding fashion by the 171 rated hurdler **Punchestowns** who survived an almighty blunder at the seventh fence to maintain his unbeaten record as a novice chaser. The end result looked in doubt as **Tchico Polos** went clear down the far side and still had several lengths in hand from the last of the railway fences; nevertheless, **Punchestowns** soon reeled him in and after joining the leader at the second last he was asked for an extra effort on the run in and responded well to surge eight lengths clear by the line. He beat the Paul Nicholls horse with far more in hand than **Somersby** had managed previously at the course, though it may be that **Tchico Polo** was slightly less suited to the extra half mile he had to race over today. There is no doubt that **Punchestowns** is a particularly classy recruit to chasing; however, although he may prove to be the one they all have to beat at **Cheltenham**, it has to be said that his current price has more to do with his hurdle rating than the form he has shown over fences thus far. It was no surprise to read that Nicky Henderson was considering giving **Punchestowns** another run before March and he mentioned the Reynoldstown Chase at **Ascot** as his most likely next stop.

DR. P.J MORIARTY

- 7th FEB 2010

Citizen Vic led all the way and put in a splendid round of jumping to take this prestigious Grade One Chase in fine style. This is the third year running that this prize has been won by a horse trained by Willie Mullins after **J'y Vole** in 2008 and **Coldine** last season. A trip to **Fairyhouse** in April is now on the agenda for the winner, whilst the RSA Chase remains the target for the staying on runner up **Weapons Amnesty**, who again blighted his chances with his lack of fluency over the obstacles. Although he did not make what one could describe a serious error; he did lose ground and momentum at several fences and this is now the fourth time in five chases that the quality of his jumping has impacted on his finishing position. He should be

suited by the extra distance at **Cheltenham** but he will clearly have to improve in the jumping department to remain competitive in the RSA Chase.

TOTESPORT.COM KINGMAKER

- 13th FEB 2010

Although this race is run over a distance of two miles it will almost certainly have more impact on the market and possibly the outcome of the RSA Chase. **Long Run** won the race in ultimately convincing style from **Joe Jo Star** and **King Edmund** but did not impress everyone with the manner of his jumping earlier on in the contest, particularly at the sixth fence which he hit very hard; nevertheless, **Warwick's** fences offer a particularly tricky challenge and with little time before the festival, **Long Run** is on a steep learning curve at the moment and will hopefully improve for this experience. **King Edmund** should be rated as the clear second best horse on the day and was a little unfortunate not to hang onto the runner up spot after being the only horse to put up a fight against the ultimately convincing winner. He spoilt his chances by continually jumping out to the right and may well be a fair bit better than his final position suggests; however, the Arkle Chase may be aiming a little too high and at least on this evidence, he will be better off racing on a right handed track. **Joe Jo Star** was never in with a chance and ran on late to take the tiring **King Edmund** near the line, whilst **Take The Breeze** was most disappointing and was, perhaps, still feeling the affects of his trip to Ireland; alternatively, he might require much softer ground to be competitive at this level over two miles.

TOTEPLACEPOT

- 13th FEB 2010

Diamond Harry cemented his elevated position in the betting market for the RSA Chase with his hard fought win in this three runner novice chase at **Newbury**. **Inchidally Rock** led until the home straight and jumped badly right at most fences which often caused a concertina affect with his two opponents. He impeded **Bensalem** at the cross fence when that rival rather surprisingly joined him on his outside on the approach to the obstacle; this caused the Alan King horse to lose several lengths in ground plus more in loss of momentum. **Bensalem** continued to follow the Paul Nicholls horse out to the right over the first two fences in the home straight as he tried to close the gap on the new leader **Diamond Harry**, who then jumped badly right at the second last fence slightly hampering **Bensalem** in the process. To cap it all, **Bensalem** then got in a little too close to the last fence and lost more ground to the leader who managed to maintain his momentum over the last obstacle and all the way to the line. For his part **Bensalem**, despite not getting the run of the race, still managed to close the gap on the run in and of the two, gave the impression that he would benefit more from a stiffer test of stamina. These two old rivals have now met three times over obstacles and on the balance of their form together and providing they both jump well enough; there probably will not be too much between them in the finish at **Cheltenham**.

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THE GUIDE

WEAPONS AMNESTY

The fact that **Weapons Amnesty** has won just once from five outings over fences is a reflection of the jumping problems he has incurred in at least four of those chases. He would certainly have won the Grade One Knight Frank Novices Chase at **Leopardstown** from **Pandorama** if he had jumped with more fluency. The biggest factor in his favour for the RSA Chase is that he is a previous Grade One winner at the festival, having won the 2009 Albert Bartlett Hurdle over three miles; however, his win to run ratio falls well short of several of his rivals here and since he still has a lot to prove in the jumping department, his place next to **Weird Al** in the betting market appears to be a slight overreaction to his chances.

WEIRD AL

Since finishing second on his racecourse debut in a National Hunt Flat race at **Exeter**, **Weird Al** has progressed to win all four of his starts over obstacles, the last three of which have been over fences. In his latest outing he proved his ability to stay three miles plus in testing ground at **Wetherby** by travelling and jumping well before outstaying his fellow joint favourite **Knockara Beau**. Although the form of his wins may appear to be a little behind the quality of one or two of his potential rivals in the RSA Chase, the fact that he is progressive, unbeaten over fences, has proven his ability to stay the RSA trip and has been successful in two chases round **Cheltenham** suggests that he is a solid contender for this event and at a double figure price is a viable each way alternative to the classy **Punchestowns**.

DIAMOND HARRY

Diamond Harry made it two from two over fences with a workmanlike victory over the Alan King trained **Bensalem** at **Newbury** in a time more than seven seconds slower than the 149 rated **Tricky Trickster** managed over the same course and distance later on in the afternoon. He certainly did not jump as well at **Newbury** as he had on his chasing debut at **Haydock** in January. He is a horse with a lot of speed and plenty of ability; however, although he got the three miles well enough in this three runner race, he is yet to prove that he will be suited by the **Cheltenham** hill at the end of a fast paced big field chase run over three miles and half a furlong. He was possibly a little fortunate to finish ahead of **Bensalem** at **Newbury** as the Alan King horse made a terrible blunder at the cross fence and lost several lengths in the process. These two old rivals have now met three times over obstacles and on the balance of their form together, and providing they both jump well enough, there probably will not be too much between them in the finish at **Cheltenham**.

PANDORAMA

The only horse to beat **Pandorama** in nine career starts is the top class Willie Mullins trained hurdler **Mikael D'Haguenet**. It is very hard to criticise a horse with such a high win percentage, especially as he has a Grade One win over hurdles and two Grade One Chases to his name. He appears to be particularly well suited to racing in testing conditions and was less impressive when racing on yielding going in his latest start, when just holding on from **Weapons Amnesty** in the Grade One Knight Frank Chase at **Leopardstown**. He is a very good jumper and will want the ground to be soft or heavy to give him his best chance of winning the

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RSA Chase; nevertheless, he is yet to prove that he will be seriously disadvantaged by racing on good to soft going and with his incredibly high win to run ratio he is not one to dismiss lightly.

LONG RUN

Long Run made it two from two over fences in Britain with an ultimately convincing victory in the two mile Kingmaker Novice Chase at **Warwick**. This was a rather unusual choice of race for a horse reportedly being aimed at the RSA Chase; apparently, his connections did not want to give him a stamina sapping race over three miles so close to the festival. Quite how informative this was with regard to his chances in the mile longer RSA Chase is rather difficult to quantify. He clearly has a fantastic engine and the potential to go to the top in the chasing game; at the same time he has made relatively serious mistakes in both his chases to date and will need to improve in that department to give him any chance at **Cheltenham**.

He may well turn out to be a little bit between two stools at the moment in that, although he can boast plenty of chasing experience in France, he has only won two small field chases in Britain and might struggle to jump at the pace required to win an Arkle; furthermore, he is yet to prove that he has got the stamina for a potentially gruelling RSA Chase. If everything falls into place for him in the longer race he could easily win it and possibly win it impressively; nevertheless, he is currently trading as short as **4/1** in places, which does not seem to take into account his inexperience in Britain, nor the fact that he will be ridden by an amateur jockey. Whatever happens to **Long Run** in the 2010 RSA Chase, he is certainly a horse to look forward too for next season.

PUNCHESTOWNS

It is not that often that we get to see such a highly rated hurdler attempt to translate his ability to fences. He is a consistent reliable performer and has won six times and finished in the first three in all nine starts since joining the Nicky Henderson team. Two of his defeats came at the hands of **Big Buck's** so the only disappointing performance in his British career came when chasing home Elusive Dream and Crescent Island at **Cheltenham** in April 2008. He has won two from two over fences, though it has to be noted that his jumping was more convincing on his debut at **Newbury** in comparison with his latest outing at **Sandown**. On balance he will probably stay the trip of the RSA Chase, though the fact that he was outstayed close home (albeit by **Big Buck's** on both occasions) in each of his latest two races over three miles at **Cheltenham** is a minor concern, particularly given his current meagre odds. In an ideal world his connections would, no doubt, have preferred to get one more run into him for experience, particularly after the serious mistake he made at **Sandown**. If everything falls into place for him and his jumping holds up, **Punchestowns** has the best chance of winning the RSA and one could even envisage him winning it with something to spare. Nonetheless, we will do better in the long run at this game if we ignore the claims of horses trading at **3/1** with such little relevant experience behind them and, for that reason alone, we should look elsewhere.

KNOCKARA BEAU

With seven chases to his name **Knockara Beau** goes into the RSA Chase as one of, if not the most experienced chaser in the race. He has won three chases and finished second in the other four so lacks nothing in consistency; furthermore, he appears to be most suited to jumping round left handed tracks, appreciates very soft ground and has a good chance of staying the

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three mile plus trip. He was probably unsuited to racing right handed at **Ascot** last time out and previously had raced twice against the more fancied **Weird Al**; both of those performances suggest that, at worst, he should not be too far behind that rival in the RSA Chase. **Knockara Beau** was easily put in his place by the classy **Diamond Harry** on heavy ground at **Haydock** in January. That race was, however, contested over a trip of two and a half miles which was massively in favour of Nick William's horse, who is no certainty to be suited by the **Cheltenham** hill at the end of a grueling three mile plus chase; consequently, **Knockara Beau** is not without a chance of reversing that form at **Cheltenham**.

He is currently trading at a best priced **40/1** for this race and, although he is far from being the most likely winner of the RSA Chase and despite making several jumping errors in his final warm up race at **Ascot**, he still has an excellent chance of finishing in the prize money; moreover, if anything goes wrong with a couple of the inexperienced favourites, **Knockara Beau** could still be in there fighting approaching the last fence.

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

If everything falls into place for **Punchestowns** and **Long Run** then it would be easy to envisage them both finishing some way ahead of their nearest pursuers. On the other hand, they are both too inexperienced and potentially closely matched to recommend a lumpy win bet on either. The obvious course of action would be to place them in cross doubles with two similarly strong contenders from another race. We considered matching them with two in the World Hurdle in the 'betting without the favourite' market; unfortunately, the potential gain from a relatively safe each way combination could not justify the possible risk.

Of the rest, **Weird Al** is progressive, will stay the trip and has good form at **Cheltenham**; consequently, he is probably the horse most likely to capitalise in the event of something going wrong with the favourites. **Knockara Beau** is another contender with good course form to his name; he prefers soft ground and, given those conditions, would have a good chance of running above his current odds of **40/1**.