

# SIR BATHWICK

SEPTEMBER 2008



**FORM** 5 5 2 \ 4 1 5 5 \ 2d 4 1 3 P 2

Sir Bathwick did not commence his racing career until March 2006 in a novice hurdle at **Newbury** when he was already seven years old. The main reason for this late start was due to him being riddled with cancer for the early part of his life. Consequently, he starts the 2008\2009 season as a nine year old chaser with only thirteen starts to his name. He has run six times over fences. He has been in the care of Brendan Powell for his entire racing career to date.

When a horse has suffered with ill health, both before and during his short racing career, the potential for progress can, in some cases, be far greater than the norm. It could be misleading to be categorical with regards to the levels and patterns of his performances, we do, however, have enough racecourse evidence to point us in the right direction.

**HURDLES** 5 5 2 4 1 5 5

**CHASES** 2d 4 1 3 P 2

As one would expect, Sir Bathwick ran very green in his first season over hurdles, which started in March 2006. In his third and final run that season at **Wincanton** in April, he made up six lengths after the last, running on strongly through a gap to claim second place near the line, a promising improvement on his first two starts.

In November 2006 he made his seasonal debut at **Plumpton** in a minor novice hurdle race. Despite running green again, he ran on well without being given a hard time. His jumping was much sharper in his next run at **Southwell**. Ridden more positively from the off, he drew clear with Burntoakboy in the home straight and ran on strongly to the line to record his first win.

Sir Bathwick ran with promise in his final two runs of that season. Both races were run on testing ground and he can be regarded as being unlucky in running on both occasions, especially in the first of the two races at **Chepstow** where he was stopped twice, but for which he would certainly have finished considerably closer. He still had cancer at this point in time, which is why his season finished on January 17<sup>th</sup>. Taking everything into account, it appears likely that Sir Bathwick is a much better hurdler than his rating of 103 suggests.

He has run well in four out of six chases. In the first of his two disappointing runs he returned home from **Exeter** with a sore throat. In the second race at **Fontwell**, he actually travelled and jumped well for a long way and leapt into the lead with a great jump four from home, but then appeared to have difficulty with the tight right hand turn which followed soon after and was quickly pulled up. He had struggled round the same turn on the first circuit.

Sir Bathwick looks to be on the upgrade as a chaser and, with so little experience behind him, could easily improve considerably on what he has achieved so far. In two of his last three chases his jumping has been quick and accurate, especially in his last run at **Cheltenham** where he made ground on his rivals at each of the last three fences before being collared close home.

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## GOING

GOOD\FIRM	2d	4			
GOOD	5	5	2	3	2
GOOD\SOFT	4	1	P		
SOFT\HEAVY	5	5	1		

On good\firm going on his chasing debut at **Sedgefield**, Sir Bathwick jumped very well before hitting a marker on the home turn and being disqualified. He ran like he needed the race but was still second best on merit. His only other race on fast ground came at **Exeter** when he tired very badly and was beaten a distance. He was never travelling that day and returned home with a throat described as "red raw" by trainer Brendan Powell.

His first two races on good going coincided with his first career starts, both run at **Newbury**. He was far too green in both races to be able to make any assessment regarding his suitability to the conditions. In his next race at **Wincanton**, also run on good ground, he still looked very inexperienced, but showed real improvement in the finish. He has raced on similar going in two of his last three chases. As the more experienced horse he is now, his suitability to good ground was obvious. At **Cheltenham**, in particular, he was extremely fast away from his obstacles and made ground on his rivals at many fences including each of the last three, when the race was at its most competitive.

Sir Bathwick has raced three times on good\soft ground with mixed results. When finishing fourth at **Plumpton**, on his seasonal debut, he was still green and was not given a hard race. When winning at **Southwell** he jumped extremely well and maintained his form to the line. Even when pulling up at **Fontwell**, his jumping was generally very good, if anything the sharpness of the track looked to play the most noteworthy part in him being pulled up.

On the bare evidence, his fifteen length win in a novice handicap chase run on testing ground at **Newbury** looks his most impressive performance to date. What we know for certain is that he handled the conditions better than his seven rivals that day. However, although he jumped adequately on the whole, he didn't make ground at his fences and was so tired in the home straight he walked through the second last and did well to stay on his feet. He was legless after that blunder and his easy victory looked to be as much if not more about his rivals' inability to cope with the conditions. He ran on at one pace in both of his hurdle races on very soft going. With luck in running he may have finished a bit closer in both.

Sir Bathwick clearly acts on soft\heavy ground well enough to win off a mark of 109 over fences. Over hurdles he jumped well in such conditions, particularly at **Chepstow** in December 2006. However, his quick jumping is unmistakably seen to better effect on quicker ground. One would certainly mark his chances up when running on good [and maybe good\soft] going on a course which offers a stiff test of jumping.

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## DISTANCE

19\21F 5 4 2d 3 2

22\23F 2 1 P

24\25F 5 1 5 5 4

The first three runs in the 19\21F sequence coincide with his three seasonal debuts. In the first two debut runs his performance level was dictated by his inexperience. On his third seasonal debut at **Sedgefield** he was also making his chasing debut and ran well until weakening up the hill. Brendan Powell said "he is a light framed horse who will always improve for his first run". His racecourse record supports this view.

The last two runs in this sequence were arguably his best two performances over fences to date. At **Exeter** over two miles and three and a half furlongs he travelled well all the way behind the pace set by the useful Gold Medallist [145 rated hurdler] and despite looking tired on the run in managed to maintain his three length deficit all the way to the line. He was returning from a break at **Exeter** and according to his trainer was "95% fit". In his most recent chase at **Cheltenham** over two miles and five furlongs he looked like he would be swallowed up by several of his pursuers four from home and again three fences out, but, making ground at each of the last three fences, he was only caught by Nation State close home giving him no opportunity to battle back.

On desperate ground at **Newbury** over two miles and six furlongs he was out on his feet from the second last. One could argue that most three mile horses would have struggled to get home in those conditions, however, what we can say with, at least, some degree of certainty is that we should be wary of his chances when running on very soft ground over a trip beyond two and three quarter miles. In the third race of his career at **Wincanton** he ran on strongly from the last over two miles and six furlongs showing he stayed this sort of trip well in a moderate novice hurdle on good ground.

On very soft ground at distances of around three miles Sir Bathwick stayed on at one pace at both **Chepstow** and **Newbury**. Although he met trouble in running in both races one could argue that each time he was travelling more strongly before the last than he was on the run in and gave the impression he was reaching the limits of his stamina in both runs. One must bear in mind that his season finished prematurely here to allow further operations on his cancer. One can only guess as to how much this affected his performances.

When he won at **Southwell** over a distance of three miles and half a furlong he proved categorically that he stays this trip well on a flat track over hurdles against a good horse [Burntoakboy] on good\soft going. He jumped into the lead at the last hurdle down the far side and, having been given reminders on the home turn, drew clear with his main rival up the home straight. He still looked second best approaching the last, but jumped it well and battled on for a gutsy win. Burntoakboy ran off a mark of 115 that day, but went on to win the Coral Cup at the **Cheltenham** Festival off 128 and was subsequently raised to a mark of 140 over hurdles.

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## COURSE

LH 5 5 4 1 5 5 2d 1 P 2

RH 2 4 3 P

Sir Bathwick certainly seemed to have some difficulty negotiating the right hand bend at **Fontwell**. However, he jumped very well round right handed **Exeter** and it appears just as likely that this long lean looking horse struggled with the tightness of that turn at **Fontwell** rather than its direction. On the limited evidence available Sir Bathwick is yet to show a strong preference either way round. The only thing we can say for certain is that he has gained a lot more experience racing on left handed tracks.

FLAT 5 5 2 1 5 1 P

UNDULATING 4 5 2d 4 3 2

Both of Sir Bathwicks' wins have come on flat tracks. At **Newbury** he took full advantage of his rivals' inability to cope with testing conditions and at **Southwell** he was impressive in beating Burntoakboy over three miles and half a furlong. Sir Bathwick is not the quickest of horses and his fast jumping is the most effective part of his armoury. Consequently, he may well appreciate a trip of three miles when racing on a flat track on goodish ground.

He is yet to prove he can stay three miles on a stiff undulating track. In his best two jumping performances to date at **Exeter** and **Cheltenham**, he looked suited to a distance of around two and a half miles on good ground on an undulating course with a stiff finish.

Sir Bathwick acts on flat and undulating tracks alike. His quick jumping may be a bigger advantage on tracks where the lay out and/or size of the fences offer a stiffer challenge. Flat tracks like **Newbury**, **Kempton** and **Aintree**, meet this criteria as does an undulating course such as **Cheltenham**.

## DAYS SINCE A RUN

30+ 5 2 4 2d 1 3

-30 5 2 1 5 5 4 P 2

Brendan Powell stated that Sir Bathwick "will always improve for his first run", this view is supported by his record first time out. Although he ran well when he finished third to Gold Medallist at **Exeter** after a break of eighty five days, he tired from the second last over a trip well within his stamina range. On four out of four occasions he has performed like he will improve for the run after an extended break from the track.

He has run particularly well after short breaks of nineteen days [at **Southwell**] and twenty three days [at **Cheltenham**] and does not appear to be disadvantaged in such circumstances.

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## CONCLUSIONS

Sir Bathwick is likely to improve for his seasonal debut and any other race when he is returning from a long break. He was a late starter and does not have many miles on the clock and [aside from the cancer] has always been a sound horse. He may well progress more than the average nine year old.

On what he has achieved, he looks to be exceptionally well handicapped over hurdles. His jumping has improved significantly over his six chase races. In his last run, in particular, he was extremely fast away from his fences and with so little experience behind him he is likely to improve again. Although he goes through the mud, the speed of his jumping is a distinct advantage on better ground. His quick jumping may be a bigger advantage on tracks where the lay out and/or size of the fences offer a stiffer challenge.

If he has a preference between left and right handed tracks, he is yet to show it. He has proved he stays three miles on an easy flat track on good to soft going. On the limited evidence available, he has raced as if three miles in testing conditions is beyond his stamina limits.

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## PROGRAMME

Brendan Powell has stated that Sir Bathwick is very likely to go for the Paddy Power Handicap Chase over two miles four and a half furlongs at **Cheltenham** in mid November after a two and a half mile prep run over fences at either **Wetherby** or **Cheltenham** approximately a month earlier. Assuming he doesn't pick up a penalty first time out he should be at the lower end of the handicap for his first target. For example, a mark of 129 would have meant a weight of 9 – 10 last year, 10 – 6 in 2006, 10 – 1 in 2005 and 9 – 9 in 2004.

Il Duce finished second off a mark of 143 in last seasons Paddy Power having previously finished third in a novice handicap chase off 132 over the same course and distance in April 2007. Sir Bathwick finished second off 128 in the 2008 renewal of that same novice event.

Patman Du Charmil won £3,216 in prize money when finishing fifth as a novice chaser in the 2007 Paddy Power. He went on to compete in four more **Cheltenham** Handicap Chases over a similar trip, namely, the Boylesports Gold Cup in early December, the New Years Day Chase, the Betchronicle Chase in late January and the Racing Post Plate at the Festival in March. He finished third, second, sixth and seventh respectively and picked up more than £32,000 prize money in the process. In his only other chase he finished second at **Uttoxeter** earning a further £4,680, yet his mark went up from 135 to just 138 over the course of the whole season. Sir Bathwick is potentially a far better jumper than Patman Du Charmil and one would have good reason to be hopeful he could achieve at least as much given a similar programme.

After finishing second in the Paddy Power, Il Duce went on to finish runner up off a mark of 145 in the Silver Trophy Chase over two miles and five furlongs at **Cheltenham** in April and won over £35,000 for the two races. Clearly, there is a lot of money to be made in the place prize money alone in this sequence of races, and if Sir Bathwick ran well in the Paddy Power one could understand him being aimed towards, at least, one or two of the other **Cheltenham** chases.

If a few of the younger horses prove to be a bit too speedy for him this season [which must be a possibility] then Sir Bathwick could be dropped in class to take advantage of his lenient hurdle rating. If he proved quick enough to win or go close in one of the **Cheltenham** races then the Racing Post Chase at **Kempton** in late February could be a possibility. Three miles round **Kempton** should not be a problem on goodish ground and the three fences in the home straight followed by a short run in could play to his strengths. If connections preferred to keep him at two and a half miles, the Grade Three Connaught Gold Cup Handicap Chase at **Newbury** on March 1<sup>st</sup> could be a viable option. His first couple of races may determine whether or not he would benefit from a step up in trip.

The Topham Chase over the National fences at **Aintree** in April could be an appropriate end of season target. The likely pace of the race should be to his advantage, the trip is perfect and the ground is often good in April. The prize money is excellent and a high percentage of the field is usually made up of older horses. In the last four years, a third of horses finishing in the first six were at least ten years old and nearly half of the rest were nine year olds.

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