

Musselburgh Races have a good turnout this weekend



Despite the prospect of Newbury going ahead and a bonus jumps card being staged at Kempton, Saturday's John Smith's replacement Scottish Cheltenham Trials meeting at Musselburgh has attracted a highly competitive turnout.

A maximum field is probable for the John Smiths' Scottish County Hurdle with the majority of last Sunday's declared runners standing their ground and additional interest being stimulated by the inclusion of last year's Cheltenham Festival winner Divers and recent course winner Simply Ned. Nicky Richards also has the latter pencilled in for Kelso next Wednesday, so should Simply Ned be declared overnight for Saturday's race at Musselburgh, he would be a likely contender.

The course and distance winner Kaolak, trained by Jim Goldie and the probable mount of Graham Lee, is sure to give Scottish racegoers an excellent run for their money.

Lucinda Russell sounded optimistic about the chances of her runners for last Sunday's abandoned fixture and with three winners at Ayr the following afternoon, the Milnathort trainer will be anticipating further success from Bold Sir Brian in the Novices Chase and Quito Du Tresor in the John Smith's Scottish Champion Chase.

Due off at 3.25, the Champion Chase will be ultra-competitive with the Lucinda Russell pair of Quito Du Tresor and Santa's Son being taken on by the likes of the Ferdy Murphy trained De Boitron, Mick Easterby's Lightning Rod and the lightly raced Woody Waller, formerly with Howard Johnson and now trained by John Wade in Co. Durham. Woody Waller, an encouraging second when giving away weight to the consistent Storm Surge at Haydock last time out, has to be fancied to go one better.

With Nicky Henderson opting to keep his horses close to home at Newbury and Kempton, Saturday's reopened John Smiths' Scottish Triumph Hurdle Trial could develop into a match between John Ferguson's Newmarket juvenile Creekside and John Quinn's duo, Blue Destination and Uncle Bryn. The latter has been narrowly beaten in each of his recent runs over hurdles and is the preferred mount of Dougie Costello, the stable jockey.

Gates open at Musselburgh on Saturday at 11.30am and the first race is off at 1.10pm. Pre-purchased tickets for 5 February meeting can be used on Saturday or within 90 days up to 4 May.