

And they're off at Musselburgh Races today!



Musselburgh Racecourse heads in to its busiest period of the year with today's meeting the first of three May fixtures, followed by four high profile race days in June.

The card kicks off with two evenly contested heats over the minimum trip of five furlongs and Cracking Choice, trained by Michael Dods near Darlington, would be a deserved winner of the Brewin Dolphin Handicap (2.00). Runner up in his last three outings, Paul Mulrennan's mount was headed in the final strides by the strong finishing Bogsnog at Newcastle eight days ago, and he has the early speed to overcome an outside draw.

The combination of trainer David Brown and jockey Robert Winston has rewarded Musselburgh racegoers with a regular flow of winners and Captain Midnight will be hard to beat in the Baillie Gifford EBF Maiden Stakes at 2.30. Bred for speed, the two year old started a well backed 7/4 favourite on his debut at Ripon and was only run down in the last 50 yards, and he will appreciate this sharp five furlongs.

Top weights dominate the £10,000 Weatherbys Bank Handicap over 9f (3.00). The in-form David O'Meara relies on the penalised Frontier Fighter, a dual winner on the polytrack at Wolverhampton earlier in the year and again successful on the

turf at Pontefract on his most recent appearance.

Stable jockey Danny Tudhope is likely to ride a waiting race on Frontier Fighter and these patient tactics could prove decisive in a protracted duel with the front running Gala Casino Star, who weakened inside the final furlong when a promising third behind St Moritz at Ripon.

The £12,000 Weatherbys Private Banking Handicap at 3.30 provides London Citizen the ideal opportunity to get off the mark at the second attempt for the North Yorkshire trainer Karl Burke. Previously raced in America, London Citizen was noted staying on strongly in third place behind Country Western and Lightning Launch on his debut for the Burke stable at Ripon. That race was over 7f and London Citizen will relish the extra quarter of a mile round Musselburgh.

The £12,000 Core (Oil and Gas) Ltd 7f Handicap at 4.00 looks at the mercy of the David O'Meara trained Gandalak. After two encouraging placed efforts over the minimum distance, Gandalak stepped up to 6f at Newcastle last week and in the hands of Danny Tudhope made every yard of the running to rout a competitive field of handicappers. Gandalak won easing down and he should have little problem building on that victory over the extra furlong at Musselburgh.

Prize money at Musselburgh this month tops £125,000 and other race meetings are on May 13 and 24. Next month will get off to a flying start with the Totepool Edinburgh Cup on June 1, followed by a glamour weekend with Stobo Castle Ladies Day on Friday June 14, which is expected to attract a 9000 crowd, the

William Hill Scottish Sprint Cup on June 15 and the Investec Wealth & Investment race day on June 28.

Musselburgh Racecourse commercial manager, Sarah Montgomery, said: "The summer months offer something for every type of racing follower at Musselburgh and it's all hands on deck as we stage seven meetings in an eight week period.

"The course is in cracking condition and everyone at Musselburgh is looking forward to waving goodbye to a long winter and bringing the best of summer Flat racing to our regular racegoers and new visitors."

Gates open on Friday at noon, the first of eight races is at 2pm and last race at 5.35pm. Children aged 18 and under are admitted free when accompanied by an adult. Full information on Musselburgh's Flat season is available at www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk