

Blankets are on at Musselburgh – on the racecourse!

Musselburgh's ground staff have been working overtime to ensure the track is in prime condition for this weekend's bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials weekend, and a fleece now covers the East Lothian course. It will be there until Saturday morning to avoid frost and ice damage.

Our grounds team are hard at work covering the track with fleece sheets ahead of the [@bet365](#) Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend.

They also worked hard over the weekend to move all chase fences and hurdles onto fresh ground. [#TopTeam](#) [#CheltenhamTrials](#) [pic.twitter.com/SuRNo4PgR3](#)

– Musselburgh Racecourse (@MusselburghRace) [January 28, 2019](#)

The Saturday meeting on 2 February is anchored by the £30,000 bet365 Scottish County Hurdle and the £40,000 bet365 Edinburgh National both on ITV Racing, supported by the £12,000 Scottish Future Champions' Novices' Steeple Chase and the £20,000 The Scottish Champion Steeple Chase.

In the Bet365 Scottish County Hurdle, Edinburgh-based owner Gerry McGladery will be hoping Normal Norman proves to be anything but by following up his New Year's Day win at Musselburgh in the Hogmaneigh Hurdle.

With two wins from only three runs over hurdles, the best is surely still to come from the Harry Whittington trained Anemoi, this half-brother to Classic-winning Flat superstar Laurens. Form since his Ascot debut success has been red hot

and he was beaten only by some very smart novices at Cheltenham last time out on New Year's Day.

Devon-based Nick Williams has saddled only one previous runner at Musselburgh in more than 20 years as a trainer but he plans to make the long trip north with Flying Tiger. Winner of the Fred Winter Hurdle at Cheltenham in 2017, Flying Tiger will hope to follow in the hoofprints of Diego Du Charmil, who also had success in that Festival race before coming on to win this prize. Paul Nicholls, trainer of the aforementioned Diego Du Charmil, fields the top-rated entry Malaya.

Paul Nicholls has scooped the last two runnings of the bet365 Scottish Champion Chase and the Somerset handler is double-handed with Copain De Classe and Tommy Silver – the latter is co-owned by former Manchester United legend Sir Alex Ferguson – while recent Punchestown winner Peacocks Secret is an interesting entry from the Irish stable of John 'Shark' Hanlon.

The bet365 £40,000 Edinburgh National is the most valuable of the 14 races which comprise the Scottish Cheltenham Trials weekend. Staged over a distance of four miles and 176 yards – and taking in excess of eight minutes to complete – it's also the longest race of the year anywhere in Scotland.

Rachael McDonald, last year's winning jockey on Full Jack, is set to ride Borders National hero Harry The Viking for her boss Sandy Thomson.

The Selkirk-based jockey said: "Musselburgh is one of my home tracks, so to win a race like the Edinburgh National was just a fantastic buzz. I won the Borders National at Kelso for the second time on Harry the Viking before Christmas and to have a second Edinburgh National to go alongside that would be amazing."

Looking Well, among the five-day entry for Saturday's marathon, was set to carry off last year's top prize when he

surged into the lead at the second last fence until Nicky Richards' Greystoke raider swerved badly and unseated jockey Ryan Day at the last fence.

On Sunday (3 Feb) the road to Cheltenham continues with the £25,000 bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle and the Sky Bet Supreme Scottish Trial Novices Hurdle and Albert Bartlett Scottish Trial, both with prize funds of £22,000.

Five-time champion jumps trainer Nicky Henderson was successful in last year's Scottish Triumph Hurdle Trial with We Have A Dream which went on to win in Grade 1 company at Aintree's Grand National Festival. Henderson is represented on Sunday by Lisheen Castle, a winner on his hurdles debut at Wetherby in early January, while Irish trainer John McConnell returns with Hannon after an impressive strike at the East Lothian venue on New Year's Day.

There is plenty of Scottish interest in the Pertemps Network Group Handicap Hurdle with Lucinda Russell, Nick Alexander and Keith Dalgleish all double-handed while Sandy Thomson is represented by Ken McGarrity-owned Arthurs Secret.

Three times Cheltenham Festival winning jockey, Brian Hughes, sums up the appeal of Musselburgh's bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials: "Although the races are called trials they're all very good races in their own right, with excellent prize money. I've been lucky enough to win a few of them, but it's getting harder to ride winners at the Scottish Cheltenham Trials because the quality keeps going up and up. Many of the people I ride for regularly come up for these key fixtures, so it's a meeting I am always looking forward to."

For more information and to book tickets please visit www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk