

No shortage of quality entries for Musselburgh's bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend

At four miles and 176 yards, the bet365 Edinburgh National is the longest race – flat or jumps – staged in Scotland, but there are no shortage of quality entries for Musselburgh's bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend this Saturday and Sunday.

Among the 22 entries for Saturday's feature race are the first, third and fourth from the 2020 running, Bob Mahler, Sumkindofking and Little Bruce, respectively, and the Warren Greatrex-trained winner went on to finish third in the Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Chase at the Cheltenham Festival.

Three-time Grand National-winning trainer Gordon Elliott has four entries in the Class 2 £30,000 race, including Coko Beach, who carries the famous Gigginstown House Stud colours and is 5-1 joint-favourite with the race sponsor.

Indeed the Irish trainer has three of the first four in the early betting followed by The Ferry Master, who is on a hat-trick for Borders trainer Sandy Thomson after wins at Newcastle and Kelso in November.

Eleven-time champion trainer Paul Nicholls saddled five winners over Musselburgh's highly regarded bet365 Scottish Cheltenham trials weekend last year, and he has plenty of entries over both days including Shantou Flyer – second twice and third once in the last three Cheltenham Festivals – in Saturday's Edinburgh National.



On track for a cracking bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend at Musselburgh Racecourse Picture: Alan Rennie

In the opening contest, the bet365 Frodon Novices' Chase, Class 2 scorer at Ascot this season Allart is one of three Nicky Henderson entries and owner, Airdrie businessman Ronnie Bartlett, will take a keen interest with the horse pencilled in for Arkle Challenge Trophy at Cheltenham next month. Allart is an exciting prospect and connections will be hoping he can emulate Frodon, who won this race before successive wins in the Grade 1 Ryanair Chase at Cheltenham and the Grade 1 King George VI Chase at Kempton.

Last year's bet365 Scottish County Hurdle winner Dame De Compagnie, who holds multiple options at Cheltenham, is

another Henderson entry and she made a pleasing winning chasing debut at Ayr recently in the J P McManus colours.

Paul Nicholls has won the bet365 Scottish Champions Chase in the successive last three years and his sole entry, Cut The Mustard, is a mare who has been second in both recent starts in Listed company. In the same race, Dostal Phil, impressive on a chase debut at Newbury last month, could be a rare Musselburgh runner for Philip Hobbs who was victorious when two seasons ago his last course runners both won.

In the bet365 Scottish County Hurdle, Dumfriesshire-based trainer Iain Jardine, successful in this race in 2016, has pencilled in Voix Du Reve, runner-up over course and distance on New Year's Day and co-owned by leading golfer Lee Westwood, while the current 5-1 favourite is another Scottish horse, Keith Dalgleish's Newtown Boy, a winner over 2m 4f at Musselburgh in December.



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With more than £200,000 in prize money spread over the bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend, Musselburgh was delighted to confirm ITV have added coverage of a further four races at the Sunday fixture, with the Scottish course sharing billing with the Dublin Racing Festival at Leopardstown.

In Sunday's bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle, the favourite has claimed first prize in six of the last seven years, including subsequent Grade 1 winner We Have A Dream in 2018. His trainer Nicky Henderson is double-handed with Goodbye Stranger and Heross De Seuil, both successful on their hurdles debut in December. Meanwhile, champion jockey Brian Hughes has been booked by Donald McCain for the ride on Fiveandtwenty, who is unbeaten in three previous visits to the Scottish venue, twice over hurdles and once on the Flat.

Streets of Doyen, trained in Ireland by John McConnell, has won his last four starts over hurdles with his latest strike at Cheltenham in the autumn, and is entered in the bet365 Scottish Stayers Novices' Hurdle, while the Paul Nicholls-trained Threeunderthru five is another that holds Grade 1 entry at Cheltenham and is unbeaten over hurdles after emphatic wins at Lingfield and Ludlow.

In the bet365 Scottish Supreme Novices' Hurdle, Tommy's Oscar, trained in Northumberland by Ann Hamilton, is unbeaten in three starts over hurdles with his most recent win in a course and distance handicap. Sextant, a Listed winner on the Flat when with Sir Michael Stoute, made an impressive hurdle debut for Keith Dalgleish at Carlisle in December, while Third Time Lucki was a wide-margin winner for Dan and Harry Skelton at Kempton on Boxing Day.

Musselburgh Racecourse general manager, Bill Farnsworth, said: "The quality of entries on both days speaks for itself and we are geared up for an excellent weekend of quality jumps racing."

“With the support of bet365 we have been able to increase prize money on a number of the feature races and with ITV on board to cover six races live over the two days, this really underlines the credentials of our Scottish Cheltenham Trials Weekend as an excellent prospect for the major yards as they prep for the Cheltenham and Aintree festivals.”

Both weekend meetings will be staged behind-closed-doors, adhering to strict Covid-19 safety protocols.

*Feature pic by Alan Raeburn, Caledonia Photo