

Scots trainers target Cheltenham wins

Scottish racing stars are looking for success at the Cheltenham Festival, said to be the Olympics of horse racing, which takes place from March 14 to 17.

The Cheltenham Festival is the pinnacle of the jump racing season and Scottish-based training facilities, including Harriet Graham and Gary Rutherford, Sandy Thomson and Lucinda Russell, are looking for success.

Graham and Rutherford, based in Jedburgh, Roxburghshire, are in the Pertemps Network Final Handicap Chase on the Thursday with Brandy McQueen. The pair are the first joint-license holders in Scotland, having taken out their license in January 2022, and Brandy McQueen has won two of his last three starts, both at Musselburgh Racecourse.

Sandy Thomson, based near Kelso, is aiming for both the Coral Cup Handicap Hurdle on the Wednesday and the Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys Handicap Hurdle on the Friday.

Benson will run in the Coral Cup Handicap Hurdle on Wednesday and, on Thursday, Bass Rock will run in the Magners Plate Handicap Chase. Hill Sixteen will take on the Fulke Walwyn Kim Muir Challenge Cup Amateur Jockey's Handicap Chase on Thursday.

Prior to his racing career, Thomson had a successful rugby career, even winning the Scottish Championship with Kelso in

1984 and Lucinda Russell OBE, is the leading jumps Scottish trainer, collecting over 800 winners during her career.

Russell has enjoyed consistent success and is a previous Cheltenham Festival and a Grand National winner. Corach Rambler won the Ultima Handicap Chase at the Cheltenham Festival in 2022, and Brindisi Breeze won the Albert Bartlett Novice Hurdle in 2012, the first training success at the Festival for Russell.

During the 2017 Aintree Grand National, she found success with One For Arthur and then in 2021, during the Ayr Scottish Grand National, Russell had a winner with Mighty Thunder.

Russell runs her yard with her partner Peter Scudamore MBE, the retired eight-time Champion Jockey. and Russell is due to have runners every day during the Festival.

Key contenders include, Corach Rambler who will run in the Ultima Handicap Chase on Tuesday, which he won last year. Ahoy Senor is aiming for the Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup Chase on Friday, the feature race of the Festival.

Last year at the Festival Ahoy Senor came second to L'Homme Press, trained by Venetia Williams in the Brown Advisory Novices' Chase, so Ahoy Senor will be one to watch.