

# Musselburgh's richest meeting of the season under Starter's Orders

Musselburgh Racecourse's richest racing festival of the year in under Starter's Orders with an impressive £430,000 on offer over the bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials weekend.

On Saturday (1 February) with £230,000 in prize money on offer, the £100,000 bet365 Scottish Champion Chase takes centre stage at the six-card meeting.

And if the East Lothian course plays its cards right, the BHA have indicated that in time this 2m 4 furlong handicap chase could be elevated to Listed status alongside other Class 1 event the bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle.

Scottish-owned The Kalooki Kid heads the betting in the Champion Chase (2.50pm). The Nicky Richards-trained gelding, who carries the colours of Kirkcaldy businessman Eddie Melville, has been raised 7lbs for an impressive strike at Doncaster in December.

Last year's winner Corrigeen Rock defends his crown with Milnathort-based trainer Lucinda Russell also set to saddle Traprain Law. Minella Drama, trained by Donald McCain, is top-weight on a BHA mark of 150 while Marble Sands, the winner of last year's Frodon Novices' Chase, represents joint-trainers David Killahena and Graeme McPherson.

Paul Nicholls, who has a tremendous record at the Scottish Cheltenham Trials, is set to be to have runners from his Somerset stable on both days. The 14-time champion trainer is bidding for a hat-trick of wins in the opening race, the bet365 Scottish Triumph Hurdle (1.42pm) and he relies on once-raced €135,000 purchase Nardaran, who is prominent in the market along with Maitre En Science, trained by his nephew and former assistant Harry Derham.

Nicholls, who last year enjoyed five winners over the two days at Musselburgh, could again be the one to beat in the bet365 Scottish County Hurdle with Afadil, a previous winner of the Scottish Triumph Hurdle, bidding to repeat his victory of twelve months ago. A wide-open race sees Dundee United director Jimmy Fyffe double-handed with Florida Dreams (Nicky Richards) and Maghlaak (Adrian Keatley).

Sunday's feature race of a seven-card meeting with prize money totalling £200,000 is the £75,000 bet365 Edinburgh National Handicap Chase over a marathon 3m 7f (2.25pm)

Top-weight King Turgeon could be an interesting runner for his West Country trainer David Pipe as his three wins in the autumn included a strike over the Grand National fences at Aintree. Last year's hero Iris Oirr (Lucinda Russell) and Magna Sam (Alistair Ralph), the 2023 winner, are also among the entries.

Classy Flat recruit Wise Eagle, winner of the 2023 Queen's Cup at Musselburgh, is a fascinating entry for the bet365 Scottish Supreme Novices' Hurdle for Northumberland handler Adam Nicol.

In the bet365 Frodon Novices' Limited Handicap Chase (1.55pm), Benson, successful over hurdles at the track's New Year's Day meeting in 2023 and 2024, has been pencilled in by Borders trainer Sandy Thomson and he could be joined by Breizh River, trained by former jockey Paul Robson.

Musselburgh's February racing festival is long established an

important staging post for leading trainers looking to compete at the famous Cheltenham and Aintree festivals in the Spring and the coastal track has hosted some great prospects over the years, with many of the country's top trainers happy to make the trip north to take on Scotland's best home-trained horses.

With seven races screened lived on ITV, racecourse general manager Bill Farnsworth is delighted with the quality of runners. He said: "Each year we aim to attract the most progressive racehorses and the country's leading trainers and this year's bet365 Scottish Cheltenham Trials will not disappoint.

"The track is in excellent condition, we have no weather concerns with a forecast of dry and sunny spells, so the stage is set for an excellent weekend of first class national hunt racing. We hope racing fans will take advantage of the opportunity to get up close to the next generation of potential Cheltenham and Aintree champions."

Gates open on Saturday at 11.30am with the first race scheduled for 1.42pm and Six Nations rugby fans will not miss out with the Scotland v Italy match screened in all bars. On Sunday gates also open at 11.30am with the first race scheduled for 1.22pm

For further information and to book tickets visit [www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk](http://www.musselburgh-racecourse.co.uk)

