Cheltenham Festival Punting Angles with Proform - Part 2 - Tuesday
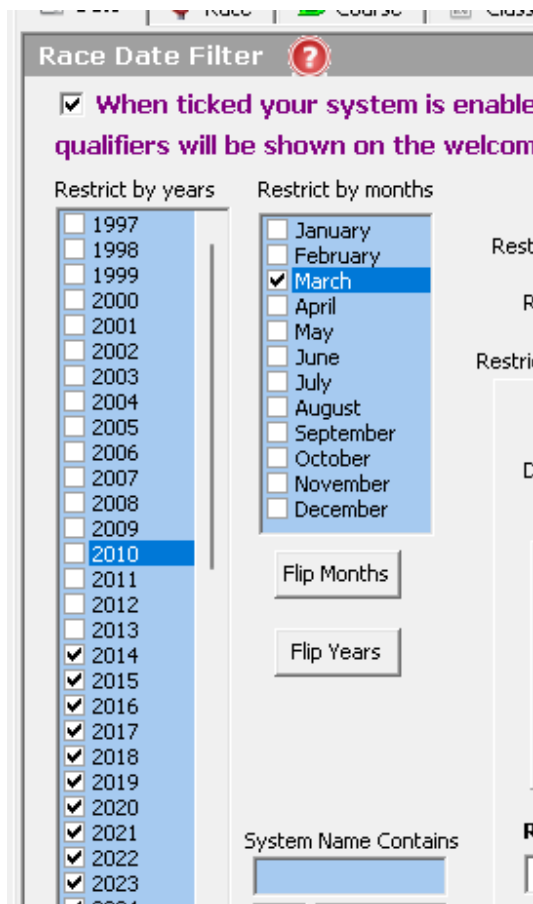
Introduction

In part 1 of this article, [which you can read on this link](#), I looked at a few general betting angles for the Cheltenham festival, but I wanted to take a more detailed look at the day one action, especially regarding the handicaps.
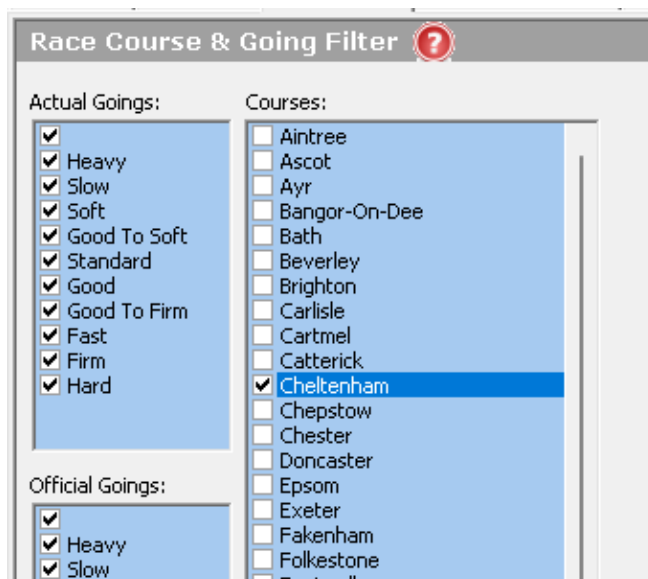
1.30 – Sky Bet Supreme Novices' Hurdle (Grade 1)

This race is not easy to analyse until we know whether BALLYBURN, the current antepost favourite, runs here or in the 2m5f Baring Bingham on Wednesday. I was on a preview panel for the Tote with Danny Mullins recently and he suggested that it was 60-40 in favour of the longer race. However, one stat that might prove helpful is the poor recent record of runners who were beaten in their prep race. When I first start betting at the Cheltenham festival in the late 80s/early 90s uncovering this stat would have taken a lot of manual labour but setting up ten-year-trend-style systems is a doddle with the Proform software….
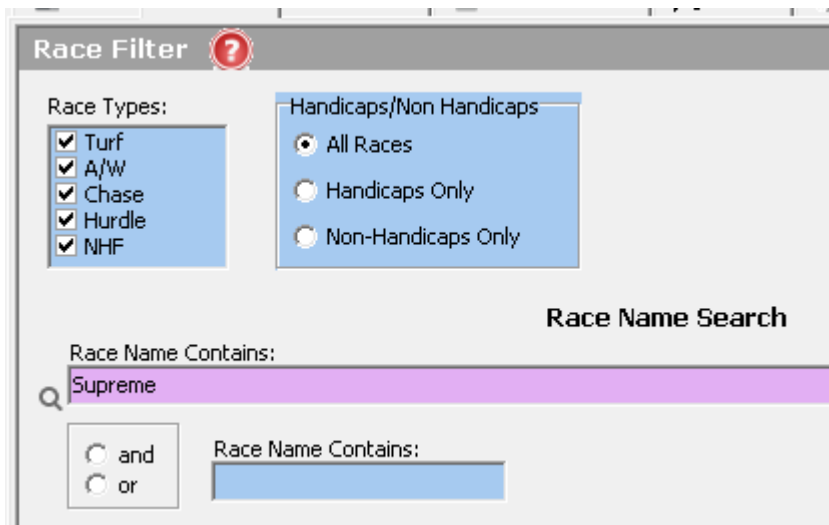
Using the Date tab in the system builder we select the past ten years and tick March in the month column…

In the Course tab we select Cheltenham…

In the Race tab we enter 'Supreme' in the Race Name Contains area…

Finally, in the LTO (last time out) Horse tab we enter '>1' (greater than 1) in the LTO Finishing Position section…

I then save the system with a meaningful name, e.g. 'CheltFestSupremeBeatenLTO-LAY?'.

Any qualifiers will appear on my Welcome Screen on the day of the race, to remind me that I might want to oppose them.

Clicking on Run System gives the following results...

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	50%SR	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	bsp DD	TEW_PL	TEP_PL	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
69	1	1.45	0.20	40.30	25.66	-1.85	2.85	0.35	1.25	26.09	-27.68	-40.12	-43.00	-27.00	-67.04	-43.00	-62.32

System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP (Prices up-to-date to: 28/02/2024 20:30:00)

Just one winner from 69 bets in the past ten years – the enigma that was Labaik, 25-1 winner (Betfair SP of 42.00) in 2017 after refusing to race before continuing tailed off in his prep race.
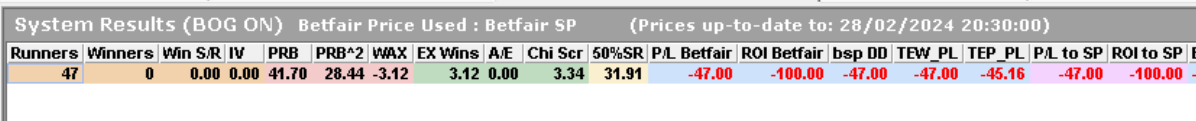
We'd have made a profit of 37.36% (after 2% commission) by laying all the qualifiers on Betfair. Food for thought where FIREFOX, 9-1 at the time of writing, is concerned.
He's the only horse to have beaten Ballyburn but was only fourth at Naas last time.

In 2018, no less than 15 of the 19 runners were beaten on their most recent start and the four last-time out winners included the 9-1 winner and 5-1 runner-up for a straight forecast that paid £47.35 to a £1 stake.

2.10 – Arkle Challenge Trophy Novices' Chase (Grade 1)

Like in the Supreme, we can set up a simple Proform system to identify what happened to Arkle runners who were beaten in their prep race. We just enter 'Arkle' in the Race Name Contains Tab…

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	50%SR	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	bsp DD	TEW_PL	TEP_PL	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
47	0	0.00	0.00	41.70	28.44	-3.12	3.12	0.00	3.34	31.91	-47.00	-100.00	-47.00	-47.00	-45.16	-47.00	-100.00

All 47 runners were beaten (expected number of winners = 3.12). Not good news for supporters of current favourite MARINE NATIONALE, only fifth at the Dublin Racing Festival.

2.50 – Ultima Handicap Chase (Premier Handicap)

At last, the first handicap of Cheltenham 2024 and one where ten-year-trends are helpful. The SP (Starting Price) of the runners might be our best guide to this 3m1f contest, as nine of the last ten winners returned at odds of 11-1 or shorter.

Backing all 58 qualifiers would have returned a profit of 27.50 to a £1 level stake at SP (expected winners = 5.37, A/E = 1.68) and last year's seven qualifiers included the first five finishers.

With bookies offering enhanced place terms perhaps we should throw the form book aside and back the front of the market each-way just before the off when we have a good idea of what sort of SP they are going to return?

Alternatively, we could play the qualifiers in Tote Exactas and Trifectas. In 2020, the five qualifiers included the first four home (15-2, 10-1, 11-2 and 11-2) and we'd have nailed the one-two-three (9-1, 5-1 and 15-2) in 2017, again from five selections, with the Tote Trifecta paying £472.70 to £1 and the Exacta returning £89, almost double the CSF.

3.30 – Unibet Champion Hurdle Challenge Trophy (Grade 1)

The antepost market for this race has been turned upside down after CONSTITUTION HILL scoped badly following his racecourse gallop at Kempton.

At the time of writing, he was trading at 2.74 on the exchanges, with STATE MAN leading the way at 1.98. I've no strong statistical angles to attack this race with but those wanting an each-way play might want to consider the Wilie Mullins-trained ECHOES IN RAIN, a sometimes-keen sort who appreciates an end-to-end gallop.

She's seen the back end of State Man in small-field Grade 1 hurdles this winter but has run with credit at the last two Cheltenham festivals, finishing fourth and fifth in the Mares' Hurdle when not quite seeing out the 2m4f trip.
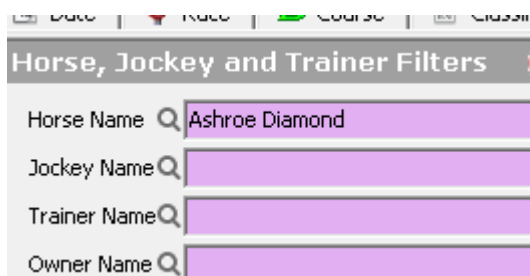
There's almost £50k in prize money for third place and that looks a realistic target.

4.10 – Close Brothers Mares' Hurdle (Grade 1)

The market is headed by LOSSIEMOUTH (1.75 on the exchanges at the time of writing) but she's a keen sort who might not appreciate the step up in trip. I'm going to take her on with ASHROE DIAMOND who has a fantastic record against her own sex.
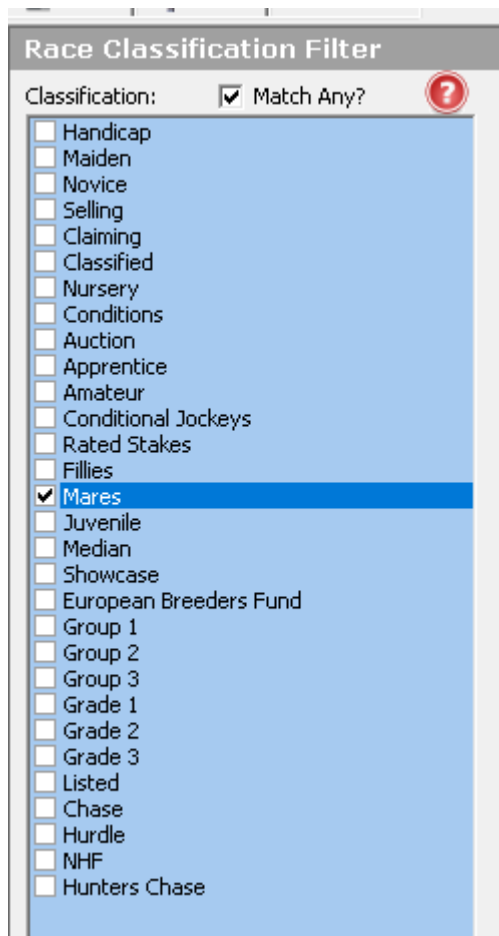
Pre-computers, I used to write out file cards for individual horses with details of what I perceived to be their ideal race conditions but now I just use Proform…

Start a new system and enter 'Ashroe Diamond' in the Horse Name section of the Horse tab…

Tick 'Mares' in the Classification tab and leave the other options unticked…

Then click Run System to give the following results…

Five wins from six starts for a profit of £6.90. The sole defeat came by just half a length after meeting trouble in running when 16-1 for Leopardstown bumper. She'll do for me.

4.50 – Boodles Juvenile Handicap Hurdle (Premier Handicap)

Don't laugh but I love this race. The 'Fred Winter' has been part of the Cheltenham festival for 19 years and with nine winners priced between 25-1 and 80-1 punters could be forgiven for going for a pint instead of a bet.

The race seems to be getting progressively more difficult and simply backing all 266 runners in the past 12 years would have seen us make a profit of £60.50 to a £1 level stake at SP (+22.74% on turnover).
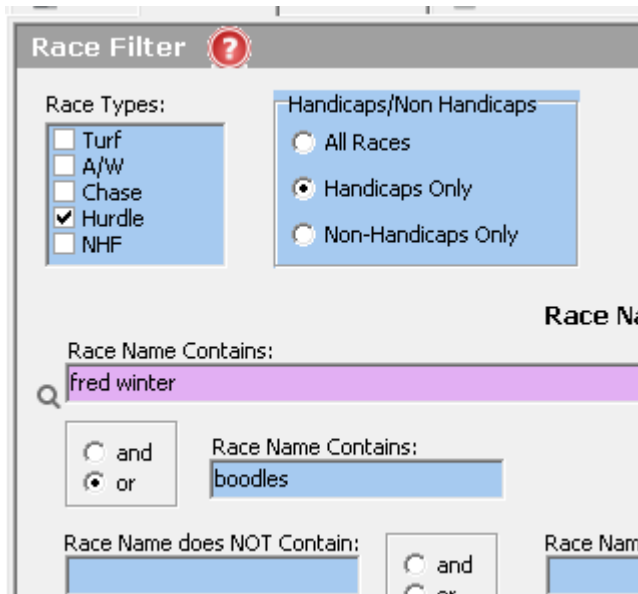
At Betfair SP, the profit was £226.33 after 2% commission (+85.09% on turnover). I'm not suggesting that we back the entire field but there are some simple systems that can help us to find the winner.

Broadly speaking there are two types of Fred Winter winner: -

1) those who drop in grade after running in Graded juvenile contests, in which they usually struggled to get involved under patient tactics, finishing fourth or worse, and

2) those brought along gradually who had often won a low-grade contest on their third outing over hurdles. It's the first group that I'm most interested in because the market usually underrates them.

We can set up simple Proform system to identify the qualifiers. As with our previous systems we select 'March' in the Month area on the date tab, click the years we want to study (I've gone back 12 years this time) and then enter the following info in the Race tab...

We then type '>3' in LTO Finishing Position the LTO Horse tab to find those who finished fourth or worse last time out, giving the following results...

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	50%SR	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	bsp DD	TEW_PL	TEP_PL	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
75	7	9.33	2.07	48.87	35.08	4.96	2.04	3.43	12.41	45.33	341.37	455.16	-13.00	344.65	-62.12	194.00	258.67

We'd have found seven of the 12 winners in the study period (from 75 bets) and made a whopping profit.

Since this race was introduced, horses who ran second or third in their prep race in Britain or Ireland have a terrible record...

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	50%SR	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	bsp DD	TEW_PL	TEP_PL	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
159	0	0.00	0.00	49.87	32.59	-6.71	6.71	0.00	7.01	35.22	-159.00	-100.00	-159.00	-159.00	-156.47	-159.00	-100.00

...and I'll be eliminating them from my calculations.

Best of luck on Day One.

by Andrew Mount

Racing pundit/journalists with daily tipping/analysis columns for [GG.co.uk](GG.co.uk), SportsLens.com and Tote.co.uk. I also write a weekly column for Racing & Football Outlook.

Past lives include racecourse bookmaker, author of the Trend Horses books for Raceform, full-time pro punter and racehorse owner.