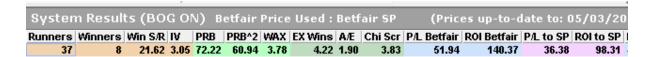**Cheltenham Festival Punting Angles with Proform – Part 5 – Friday**
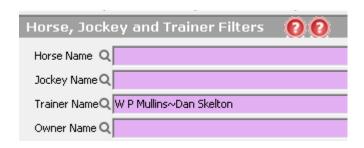
1.30 – JCB Triumph Hurdle (Grade 1)

This is not a race I tend to get heavily involved in, but my Placepot picks will revolve around horses who ran in Grade 1 company last time, regardless of where they finished. These are the results since 2012…

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
37	8	21.62	3.05	72.22	60.94	3.78	4.22	1.90	3.83	51.94	140.37	36.38	98.31

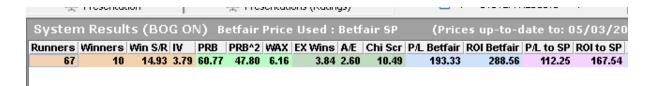*System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP (Prices up-to-date to: 05/03/20*

…this angle failed to find the winner in 2020, 2019, 2017 and 2015 but we'd have got through the Placepot in all those years bar 2015, including with the 7-1 runner-up and 10-1 third from just two qualifiers in 2017.

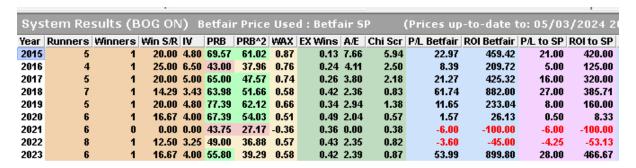### 2.10 – County Handicap Hurdle (Premier Handicap)

At first glance, this race looks to be something of a nightmare, but we can use a simple trainer angle to help narrow the field. Dan Skelton and Willie Mullins have dominated in recent years, and we can set up a basic Proform system to identify only their runners. We set the race filters to handicap hurdle, course to Cheltenham, month to March and race name contains to 'County' and then enter the following information in the Trainer Name section of the Horse tab…
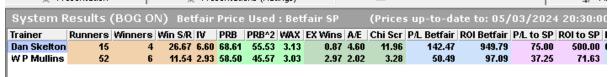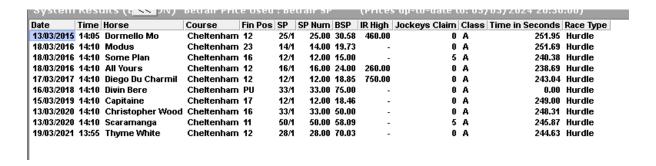
Horse, Jockey and Trainer Filters

Horse Name
Jockey Name
Trainer Name W P Mullins~Dan Skelton
Owner Name

This gives the following results…

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
67	10	14.93	3.79	60.77	47.80	6.16	3.84	2.60	10.49	193.33	288.56	112.25	167.54

System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP   (Prices up-to-date to: 05/03/20...)

Since 2015 this angle has found seven of the eight winners from a shortlist of between four and eight runners…

System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP   (Prices up-to-date to: 05/03/2024 20...)

Year	Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
2015	5	1	20.00	4.80	69.57	61.02	0.87	0.13	7.66	5.94	22.97	459.42	21.00	420.00
2016	4	1	25.00	6.50	43.00	37.96	0.76	0.24	4.11	2.50	8.39	209.72	5.00	125.00
2017	5	1	20.00	5.00	65.00	47.57	0.74	0.26	3.80	2.18	21.27	425.32	16.00	320.00
2018	7	1	14.29	3.43	63.98	51.66	0.58	0.42	2.36	0.83	61.74	882.00	27.00	385.71
2019	5	1	20.00	4.80	77.39	62.12	0.66	0.34	2.94	1.38	11.65	233.04	8.00	160.00
2020	6	1	16.67	4.00	67.39	54.03	0.51	0.49	2.04	0.57	1.57	26.13	0.50	8.33
2021	6	0	0.00	0.00	43.75	27.17	-0.36	0.36	0.00	0.38	-6.00	-100.00	-6.00	-100.00
2022	8	1	12.50	3.25	49.00	36.88	0.57	0.43	2.35	0.82	-3.60	-45.00	-4.25	-53.13
2023	6	1	16.67	4.00	55.80	39.29	0.58	0.42	2.39	0.87	53.99	899.80	28.00	466.67

Dan Skelton has a superior strike-rate to Willie Mullins…

System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP   (Prices up-to-date to: 05/03/2024 20:30:00)

Trainer	Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
Dan Skelton	15	4	26.67	6.60	68.61	55.53	3.13	0.87	4.60	11.96	142.47	949.79	75.00	500.00
W P Mullins	52	6	11.54	2.93	58.50	45.57	3.03	2.97	2.02	3.28	50.49	97.09	37.25	71.63

…and it can also be argued that he has been responsible for more than four County Hurdle winners (thanks to my mate George for this theory) as he was assistant to Paul Nicholls when the master of Ditcheat used to do well in this race, sending out the winner in 2004, 2006 and 2009 (Skelton had his first runners in his own right in 2013). Nicholls sent out the winner again in 2014 but, since the height of the Skelton/Mullins domination his runners have achieved the following positions…

System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP   (Prices up-to-date to: 05/03/2024 20:30:00)

Date	Time	Horse	Course	Fin Pos	SP	SP Num	BSP	IR High	Jockeys Claim	Class	Time in Seconds	Race Type
13/03/2015	14:05	Dormello Mo	Cheltenham	12	25/1	25.00	30.58	460.00	0	A	251.95	Hurdle
18/03/2016	14:10	Modus	Cheltenham	23	14/1	14.00	19.73	-	0	A	251.69	Hurdle
18/03/2016	14:10	Some Plan	Cheltenham	16	12/1	12.00	15.00	-	5	A	240.38	Hurdle
18/03/2016	14:10	All Yours	Cheltenham	12	16/1	16.00	24.00	260.00	0	A	238.69	Hurdle
17/03/2017	14:10	Diego Du Charmil	Cheltenham	12	12/1	12.00	18.85	750.00	0	A	243.04	Hurdle
16/03/2018	14:10	Divin Bere	Cheltenham	PU	33/1	33.00	75.00	-	0	A	0.00	Hurdle
15/03/2019	14:10	Capitaine	Cheltenham	17	12/1	12.00	18.46	-	0	A	249.00	Hurdle
13/03/2020	14:10	Christopher Wood	Cheltenham	16	33/1	33.00	50.00	-	0	A	248.31	Hurdle
13/03/2020	14:10	Scaramanga	Cheltenham	11	50/1	50.00	58.09	-	5	A	245.87	Hurdle
19/03/2021	13:55	Thyme White	Cheltenham	12	28/1	28.00	70.03	-	0	A	244.63	Hurdle

2.50 – Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle (Grade 1)

This race can blow the Placepot wide open, as it did last year when the first three finishers were priced at 18-1, 150-1 and 28-1. We could have backed all 287 runners on the 16 occasions this race was run as a Grade 1 contest and made a profit (+£1.25 to a £1 level stake at SP, +£166.79 at Betfair SP after 2% commission). However, there are a few stats and trends that can help us to narrow the field and perhaps even help us to identify the winner…

Finishing position last time out
Last-time out winners have taken seven of the 16 Grade 1 running's of the Albert Bartlett, though backing all 147 qualifiers would have returned a loss of £79.75 to a £1 level stake at SP (expected winners = 11.46, A/E = 0.61). Eight of the 16 winners finished second, third or fourth in their prep race, with the other winner finishing tenth.

Days since last run
Those who raced within the past 28 days were just one from 64 (2012 winner Brindisi Breeze).

Running style
Horses ridden patiently in their final start before Cheltenham had an eight from 91 record since 2008 for a profit of £59.00 to a £1 level stake at SP (expected winners = 4.95). This simple angle identified the 18-1 winner and 150-1 runner-up from just two qualifiers last year (the Tote Exacta paid £2,820 to a £1 stake).

Prep race
13 of the 16 winners contested a Grade 1, 2 or 3 race in their final start before the festival.

Proform System

Backing horses who finished second, third or fourth in their prep race and who had been off the track for more than four weeks, would have found eight winners from 65 bets since 2008 for a huge profit of £141.00 to a £1 level stake at SP. Those qualifiers ridden patiently in their prep race were five from 22 for a profit of £84.00 (expected winners = 1.19)…

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
65	8	12.31	2.21	44.57	34.27	5.24	2.76	2.89	10.36	290.42	446.80	141.00	216.92

System Results (BOG ON) Betfair Price Used : Betfair SP   (Prices up-to-date to: 05/03/20

…at the time of writing, seven of the first eight in the betting were last-time out winners, so we could be in for yet another shock result. JOHNNYWHO, fourth to Gidleigh Park in Grade 2 company here on Trials Day, looks to be crying out for the step up to 3m and is top of my early shortlist.

3.30 – Boodles Cheltenham Gold Cup Chase (Grade 1)

I opposed GALOPIN DES CHAMPS last year as he was unproven in big fields over fences, but he sauntered home by seven lengths from BRAVEMANSGAME. The Willie Mullins-trained eight-year-old was beaten by Fastorslow at Punchestown the next twice but bounced back with a pair of Grade 1 wins at Leopardstown and perhaps simply prefers a left-handed track. Here's his form split by course direction…

Course Direction	Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
LH	9	7	77.78	7.52	84.26	81.56	2.81	4.19	1.67	3.52	12.25	136.10	10.52	116.92
RH	7	3	42.86	2.63	74.64	66.97	-1.24	4.24	0.71	0.92	-1.52	-21.72	-1.97	-28.17

…the first defeat came when a 100-1 sixth of 13 in a Grade 1 novices' hurdle at the 2021 Dublin Racing Festival and the other when falling at the last fence when 12 lengths clear in the 2022 Turners. He'll be going in my Placepot, and I'll have back-up in the shape of CORACH RAMBLER, whose record in March/April stands at 1111 (4-4), including victory in the last two renewals of the Ultima Handicap Chase at this meeting.

4.10 – St. James's Place Festival Challenge Cup Open Hunters' Chase

As a general rule, it pays to race up with the pace on the New Course at Cheltenham but that goes out of the window in the 'Foxhunters' as they amateur jockeys usually go too fast and set the race up for a closer. This is a breakdown of the past ten winners, split by Proform's pace abbreviation (L = led, P = prominent, h = held up)…

Pace Abrrev	Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
H	149	9	6.04	1.35	39.21	29.79	2.22	6.78	1.33	0.76	257.75	172.99	53.25	35.74
L	11	0	0.00	0.00	60.84	51.73	-0.32	0.32	0.00	0.32	-11.00	-100.00	-11.00	-100.00
P	64	1	1.56	0.35	41.87	29.82	-1.94	2.94	0.34	1.34	-43.08	-67.32	-47.00	-73.44

One angle of attack could be to lay those looking to jump off in front just before the off, but that's no help when it comes to finding selections for the Placepot. Last year, the first three finishers were priced at 66-1 ('midfield'), 28-1 ('midfield') and 50-1 ('prominent') which helped to contribute to a dividend of over £25,000 (if you played via the Tote's website and got your 10% boost on winnings). One fascinating stat is the fine recent record of ten-year-olds (last ten renewals)…

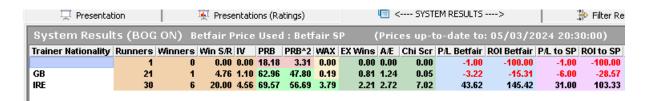| Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
47	6	12.77	2.86	45.67	36.51	3.37	2.63	2.28	4.55	334.65	712.02	130.63	277.93

…simply putting all horses from this age group in our Placepot perm would have seen us negotiate this tricky leg in nine of the last ten years. We'd have bombed out completely in 2019 when both qualifiers pulled up but the three other years in which this angle failed to find the winner produced the 40-1 second in 2014, 14-1 second in 2016 and 66-1 third in 2018. I'm not 100% convinced by the logic of this angle but I thought it was interesting enough to mention and TIME LEADER could prove to be the pick of the bunch.

4.50 – Mrs Paddy Power Mares' Chase (Grade 2)

I'm tempted to oppose the front two in the betting in this 2m4.5f contest as DINOBLUE has yet to race beyind 2m1f and ALLEGORIE DE VASSY jumped markedly out to her right when runner-up (13-8 favourite) in last year's renewal. I will chance a small each-way bet on course expert PINK LEGEND, as big as 80-1 at the time of writing. The Venetia Williams-trained ten-year-old has form figures on Cheltenham's New Course of 1231 (2-4), with both defeats when 33-1 for this very race. She only went down by half a length to Elimay in 2022 and was eight lengths behind Impervious last year.

5.30 – Martin Pipe Conditional Jockeys' Handicap Hurdle

Iroko won this race last year after prepping in a handicap but horses who did so are just four from 207 during the history of the race for a loss of £147.00 to a £1 level stake at SP….

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
207	4	1.93	0.44	43.46	28.80	-4.09	8.09	0.49	2.15	-121.94	-58.91	-147.00	-71.01

…Iroko (6-1) was one of 12 qualifiers last year so we could have laid them all to level stakes and still made a profit. In the six years from 2017 to 2022 the combined score was 0-72.

Horses who prepped in a Graded contest had a good record…

Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
52	7	13.46	3.10	65.91	52.07	3.98	3.02	2.32	5.57	39.51	75.98	24.00	46.15

…especially those trained in Ireland…

Trainer Nationality	Runners	Winners	Win S/R	IV	PRB	PRB^2	WAX	EX Wins	A/E	Chi Scr	P/L Betfair	ROI Betfair	P/L to SP	ROI to SP
	1	0	0.00	0.00	18.18	3.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	-1.00	-100.00	-1.00	-100.00
GB	21	1	4.76	1.10	62.96	47.80	0.19	0.81	1.24	0.05	-3.22	-15.31	-6.00	-28.57
IRE	30	6	20.00	4.56	69.57	56.69	3.79	2.21	2.72	7.02	43.62	145.42	31.00	103.33

by Andrew Mount

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