



Newsletter

April 2016

Welcome to the April 2016 edition of the Donn McClean Racing Newsletter.

National trends

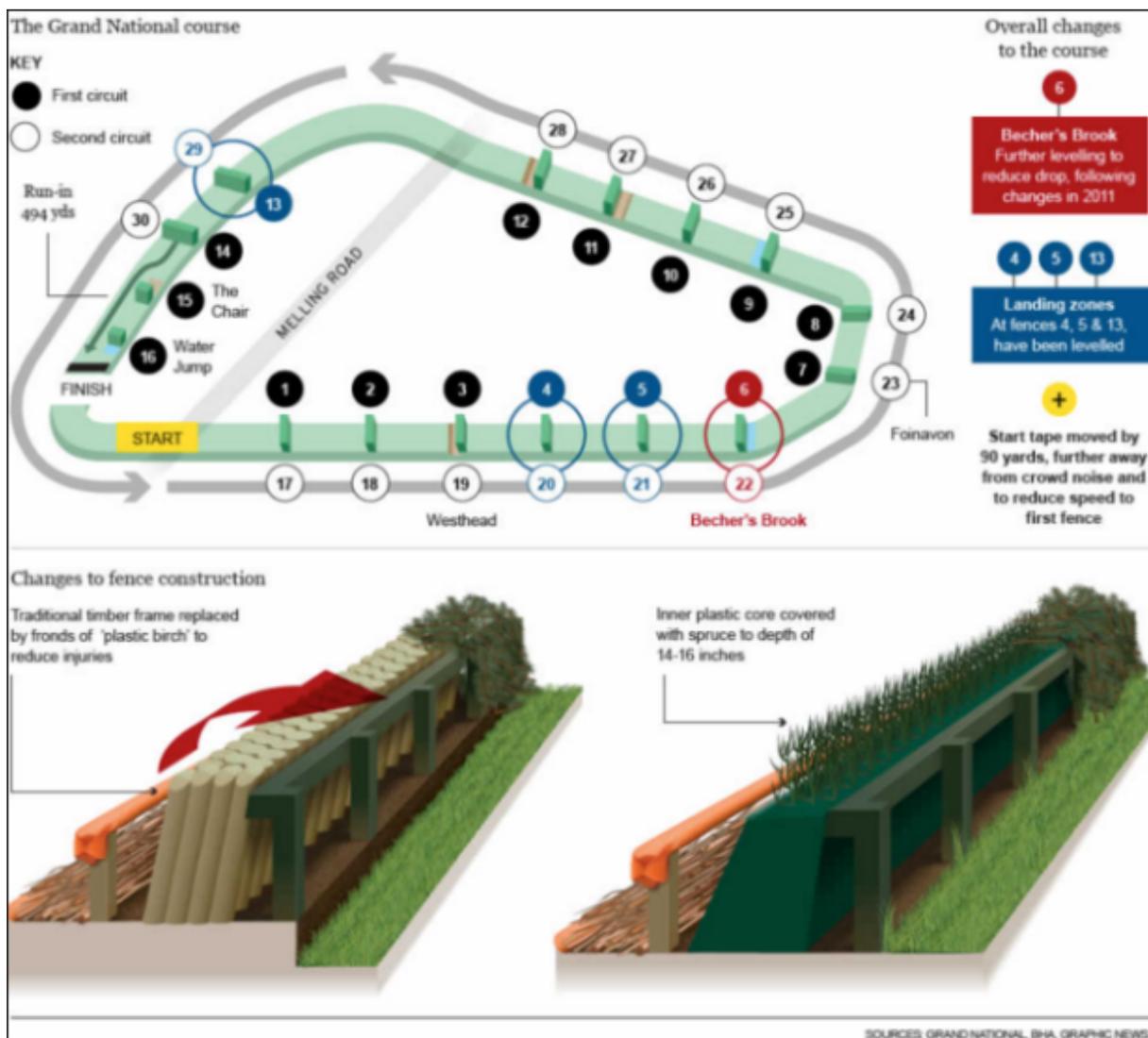
There was a time when they said that you needed a good two-and-a-half-mile handicap chaser to win the Grand National. Gay Trip won it, they said, and he was a good two-and-a-half-mile handicap chaser.

They hunted around for the first circuit, went the theory. The first lap was all about survival. No dramatics, no heroics, just get your horse from the take-off side of each of the 16 big green spruce fences to the landing side safely. Stay on your horse's back and avoid the carnage that would inevitably be going on around you. Then, if you were still upright and in the race after you had jumped the water and started out on the second circuit, you could start to race.

The final circuit of the Grand National, the part over which they really only raced, is two and a quarter miles long. Ergo, a good two-and-a-half-miler. QED.

But Gay Trip won it in 1970. Since then, many two-and-a-half-milers have tried, and every single one of them has failed. And even since they moved the start up closer to the Melling Road and decided that, actually, it was a four-and-a-quarter-mile race, not a four-and-a-half-mile race at all, you have still needed bucketloads of stamina to get the trip. (Gay or not.) They don't go any further than this in any other race in Britain or Ireland so, hunt around for a circuit if you like, but you still have to get home.

History tells us that there are a few other things that you ideally need: a preparation that has been geared for the National from a long way out, a relatively low weight and a relatively high age. Many Clouds confounded all the trends last year, an eight-year-old who carried 11st 9lb and who had run in the Gold Cup at Cheltenham, for whom the Grand National was probably an after-thought or, at best, a nice option after the Gold Cup.



He should be better-equipped for the race this year, a nine-year-old rated just 5lb higher than he was last year with just 1lb more to carry, who has specifically been geared for the race this year by Oliver Sherwood. He is the correct favourite, no question, even if Red Rum is still the last horse to win back-to-back Nationals.

So six of the last eight winners have carried 11st or more, but the National is a slightly different race since they softened the bellies of the fences, replacing those unforgiving wooden poles with a bouncy Easyfix synthetic, and since they shortened it a little. (The brooks have long-since been covered over.)



There have been three renewals since that happened and, small sample size though that is, those three results make for interesting reading.

Two of the three winners and five of the nine placed horses were 10 years old or older, while eight of the nine placed horses were nine or older. So you still need an older horse. (Five of the last six winners were 10 or older, and Bindaree in 2002 was the last eight-year-old before Many Clouds.)

You want a 10-year-old or an 11-year-old ideally, but a nine-year-old would do. The message is that you should think twice before you back that eight-year-old who has caught your eye and, if you spot a seven-year-old who you think might be a National horse, put him into your 2018 or 2019 diary.

On the weight thing, two of the three winners since the latest modifications to the course and four of the nine placed horses carried 10st 7lb or less. Also, eight of the nine placed horses carried 10st 13lb or less. So you are still looking for a horse with no more than 10st 13lb on his back, and ideally even less than that.

Of course, a young horse could win it and a horse with lots of weight could win it. Even a young horse with lots of weight could win it, just as one did last year. (Wonderful Charm anyone?) But history tells us that the percentage call is to look towards the lower end of the handicap, and towards the higher end of the age scale.

Cheltenham wrap

The 2016 Cheltenham Festival was a good one for Private Clients of Donn McClean Racing in the end.

It took a little while to ignite, there were frustrations and near-misses in the early part of the week (like Yorkhill winning the Neptune Hurdle when we had backed him for the Supreme).

Our two bets in the three-mile handicap chase on the first day, Holywell (advised at 12/1) and Morning Assembly (advised at 14/1) travelled well down the hill and shaped as if they would be involved in the finish, but neither of them could get the better of the gallant Un Temps Pour Tout up the hill. At least both horses were placed, so the each-way money was saved.

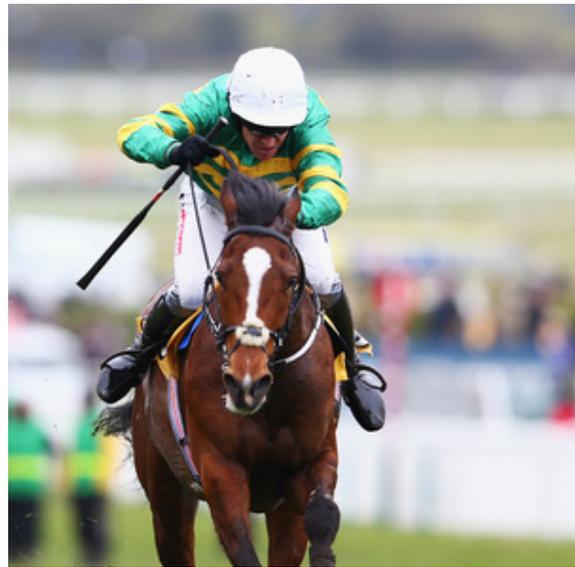


Then, in the last race on the first day, the Close Brothers Novices' Handicap Chase, Bouvreuil (advised at 14/1) travelled beautifully through the race and arrived at the final fence looking a likely winner, but he was just out-gutted by Ballyalton up the hill. The consolation prize, again, was that he finished second, so at least the place part of the bet copped.

It wasn't until the last race on the second day that we got our first winner of the meeting, Ballyandy (advised ante post at 7/1) in the Champion Bumper. And that nearly didn't happen either. Nigel Twiston-Davies' horse got caught in a pocket on the run down the hill and, from a lovely position just behind the pace, he found himself shuffled back to 13th or 14th before the turn-in.

He only got up to win by a nose in the end, but he did well to win, coming from the position in which he found himself. He is obviously a highly talented horse, perhaps still an under-rated horse, and we may get him again.

Cause Of Causes (advised ante post at 8/1) landed the Kim Muir Trophy on Thursday. Under a supremely cool ride from Jamie Codd, the Gordon Elliott-trained horse was well back in the field from early, but he picked up impressively on the run around the home turn. So impressively, in fact, that he was in front by the time he landed over the second last fence, and he bounded clear to win by 12 lengths.



Friday started well, with Ivanovich Gorbatov (advised ante post at 6/1) winning the Triumph Hurdle. There was never really much of a sweat, JP McManus' horse travelled like the best horse from a long way out, and he picked up nicely when Barry Geraghty asked him to, coming away from Apple's Jade on the run-in.

And the profitable week was sealed when Ibis Du Rheu (advised at 18/1) landed the Martin Pipe Hurdle. Paul Nicholls' horse was under pressure from a fair way out, but he stayed on strongly for Jack Sherwood to post an impressive victory.

Clients who were betting at €100 per point made a net profit of **€2,225** for the 2016 Cheltenham Festival.

Good year so far

Cheltenham aside, 2016 has been good all round so far for Private Clients. They backed six winners in January, including [Flintham](#) (advised at 10/1), who landed a Pertemps Qualifier at Warwick, [Cloudy Too](#) (advised at 10/1), who landed the Peter Marsh Chase at Haydock, [Empire Of Dirt](#) (advised at 10/1), winner of the Leopardstown Handicap Chase at Leopardstown, and [Smad Place](#) (advised at 7/1), who landed the BetBright Chase at Cheltenham.

The winning theme continued in February, with [Bleu Et Rouge](#) (advised at 12/1) winning the Deloitte Hurdle at Leopardstown, and [Different Gravey](#) (advised at 8/1) and [Bangkok Pete](#) (advised at 12/1) both winning big handicap hurdles at Ascot, and it followed on into March, before Cheltenham started, with [Sametegal](#) (advised at 9/1) winning the Greatwood Gold Cup at Newbury and Mossspark (advised at 13/2) winning a decent handicap chase at Sandown. Then after Cheltenham, [No Duffer](#) (advised at 9/1) won at Haydock and [Value At Risk](#) (advised at 4/1) won at Fairyhouse.



The 2016 Flat season also got off to a good start on Saturday with two recommended each-way bets in the Lincoln, [Secret Brief](#) (advised at 20/1) who won the race, and Birdman (advised ante post at 25/1) who finished fourth.

Private Clients of Donn McClean Racing have made a net profit every year since the service went live in 2009. Clients who are betting at €100 per point are now showing a net profit of **€10,875** for 2016 to date, and they are sitting on some decent ante post positions for the Aintree Grand National on Saturday.