

# **NTF National Hunt 2018/19 'To Follow' List**



*An alternative 20 to keep in mind for the  
2018/19 NH Season*

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# NTF 2018/19 'To Follow' List

*An Alternative group of National Hunt runners to keep in mind this season...*

This 'to follow' list aims to be different from most of the others you will read this season. In this guide there is no room for a **Henderson, Nicholls, Mullins or Elliott** runner. I wanted this list to consist of runners that may just have slipped under the radar a bit over the last season or two. I could easily have filled the list with potential superstars from the big four yards, I probably would have been highlighting a few Cheltenham Festival winners in the process, but the facts are I'll be covering most of those types of animals by default when I run my [full National Hunt service](#), the big yards will have runners in all the top races and we will get to know their 'stars' at close quarters through my **NTF race analysis guides** and **exclusive weekend notes**.

My aim for this list was to exclude runners from the 4 'superpowers' and try and find a bit of value elsewhere. Obviously looking for value in a list of horses to follow before the season has begun is a pretty tricky thing to do but, hopefully, I have managed to pull together a list that includes at least some runners that have slipped under the radar of the mainstream.

The runners in this guide WILL win races. Will they win races at The Cheltenham or Aintree Festivals? Possibly not but, like the runners from the main 4 NH yards, all things Cheltenham & Aintree will be covered in-depth in the **full NTF National Hunt service** and besides, there is so much more to the Jumps season than just the Cheltenham & Aintree Festivals, we jumping fans would do well to remember this!

As is the case with all NTF guides the info contained here is available for you to utilise for your own punting activities how you see fit. I have tried to include each horse's ideal conditions but most of these are young improvers and any race trends or preferences may not have revealed themselves yet.

All horses on this list went in my notebook for one reason or another last term and I exhaustively reviewed their runs over the summer & autumn months as I pulled this FREE NTF Guide together.

**Happy National Hunt Punting**

**Ben (NTF) – [www.narrowingthefield.co.uk](http://www.narrowingthefield.co.uk)**

## **NORTHERN SOUL (R Jefferson) 5yo**

**Career form** 51-

There was a lot to like about this youngster's battling victory at Market Rasen on his second start last season, with a sustained battle down the home-straight showing he had learned a great deal from his debut 5<sup>th</sup> over CD, whilst also showing he possessed plenty of guts to get down and dirty to secure the victory.

Being a son of Presenting gives hope that 3m trips could be within range in time but for now he looks the type that will be at his best over the 2m4f-2m5f trips.

I asked trainer Ruth Jefferson for her thoughts on plans on the youngster...

***"Soul is fine, at this rate he may take in another bumper for a run before hurdling as it's too hard to school here still. Will start over 2m4f, he looks like a 3miler but so far none of the family have stayed beyond 2m6f so we will see!"***

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f-2m5f Novice Hurdles*

## **DONNA'S DELIGHT (S Thomson) 7yo**

**Career form** 6/219/14232-

This big, strapping chasing type has always looked like one who should make an impact over fences, with connections of the horse stating that **"He's got one job and one job only this horse, that'll be over fences"**. With that in mind the solid form he showed in his five starts over hurdles last season was a strong indicator that he's a horse with plenty of talent under the bonnet.

Despite already having nine starts on his CV he has been relatively tenderly handled with a chasing career in mind and been given time to fill into his large frame, something that should benefit him plenty this season.

In conversation with trainer Sandy Thomson he had the following to say about his charge...

***"Donnas Delight will go chasing this season. He perhaps was not strong enough to race over further than 2m4f last season, but he certainly ran some cracking races.***

***I am fortunate to have 4 cracking novice chasers for the season ahead, 3 of who could certainly be very decent horses, so plans are fluid, but Donnas Delight would certainly be a horse worth following for the season ahead."***

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice/Novice Handicap Chases | Ground with cut underfoot looks ideal*

## **BARTON KNOLL (J Mackie) 6yo**

**Career form** 692/215U-224

This 6yo properly went in my notebook when he ran 5<sup>th</sup> at Aintree on his second start last season. This is what I stuck in my notebook at the time...

*"The Midnight Legend gelding very much looks like a chaser in the making and I wouldn't expect to see the best of him until sent over the larger obstacles. Well worth sticking in the notebook for when he's sent over fences."*

*He caught my eye a number of times after that without quite managing to get himself in the winners' enclosure but that just heightened my thinking that he's crying out for the larger obstacles, his large frame making him look the ideal type to reach greater heights over fences.*

*In a brief chat with the yard they confirmed chasing was the plan for the 2018/19 season...*

***"Our intention is to send him chasing this year. He is a fine big horse with plenty of scope, so we are very excited about the coming season for him."***

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Novice/Novice handicap Chases on decent ground*

## **SIMPLY THE BETTS (H Whittington) 5yo**

**Career form** 13420-1

I was continually note-booking this big, strong 5yo last term and it was a little bit of a surprise that it took him 5 starts to break his maiden hurdler status. That win actually came at the start of this season at Warwick, so he is still able to contest novice races this term, something the yard confirmed to me would be the initial plan...

***“Simply the Betts is in great order and will remain over hurdles this year as he is still a novice...”***

He certainly has the size to jump a fence but I would be shocked should his current hurdle mark of OR 130 not be some way below his true ability and a crack at a valuable hurdle handicap pot in the early part of this season would make sense, it's a mark that, in my opinion, needs to be exploited should they stick with their plans and stay hurdling.

He's a horse that still looks a very exciting talent for his ever-improving yard.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Novice/Handicap Hurdles up to 2m4f*

## **ANOTHER STOWAWAY (T George) 6yo**

**Career form** 542/U222P-2

This 6yo has just been passing the time over hurdles until it was time for him to go chasing, something he had a brief taste of at Kempton in May. He bumped into the Paul Nicholls trained Amour De Nuit that day, a horse rated 9lbs his superior over hurdles and with vastly more racecourse experience to his name (31 starts to 9), so the 5L second he posted was more than a solid opening effort.

Being by Stowaway out of an Un Desperado mare very much points to him being a chase prospect so the fact he's yet to open his account in nine starts (3 bumper, 5 hurdle, 1 chase) is not a huge concern and I'd expect that to be rectified sooner rather than later, especially if able to replicate his 3/4L 2<sup>nd</sup> to the Nicky Henderson trained On The Blind Side (Aintree – 29<sup>th</sup> Oct).

His second to the Paul Nicholls trained Coup De Pinceau at Musselburgh in February also rates as a solid piece of form and it's now just a case of putting it all together over the larger obstacles.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m5f+ Novice Chases | May prove best on galloping tracks*

## **SATURDAYNIGHTFEVER (F O'Brien) 6yo**

**Career form** 457-

This 6yo looks an interesting long-term prospect. He's by King's Theatre out of an Alderbrook mare and he's loosely related to some high-class types (Get Me Out Here & Harbour Pilot) and he'll be of plenty interest when going hurdling this season and then, presumably, chasing in the 2019/20 season.

He's made good progress in the middle stages of his three bumper starts before fading out of things in the final furlong or two and he just struck me as one that just needed his bumper season to get to grips with the racing game.

It may have also been that he wants longer trips to be seen at his best and hopefully connections will look to try him over some mid-range trips when he's sent hurdling.

He's better than his finishing efforts suggest, and I'd expect to see much improved form from him when he meets with hurdles this term.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Hurdles*



## **COOLE HALL (R Dobbin) 6yo**

**Career form** 2/12116-

Another of those horses that continually entered my notebook last season and he was a model of consistency all season until finding heavy ground and Grade 2 opposition beyond him in the Prestige Novices' Hurdle at Haydock in February, a race where he also had to concede weight to the rest of the field.

Prior to that he had won 3 of his 4 seasonal starts, with his sole defeat being a close second at Kelso over 2m6.5f.

He's by Flemensfirth out of a Saddlers' Hall mare so his pedigree very much points towards him improving further once he meets the larger obstacles and there's every chance he'll stay three miles before his novice chase season is up, indeed it will probably end up being the longer trips where he excels at.

If they play their cards right there is every chance this 6yo will prove to be the best horse in the Dobbin yard.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Novice Chases over 2m5f+*

## **SPIDER'S BITE (H Daly) 6yo**

**Career form** O71/3361P--

This looks your typical Trevor Hemmings type who only has one aim in life; to become a staying chaser.

He was given plenty time to learn his trade last season with three starts over 2m3f – 2m5f trips before being unleashed over 3 miles at Ludlow, where he opened his account in eye-catching fashion. That race has actually worked out remarkably well, with the three that finished in behind him running nine times since, winning six of those races and placing on one other occasion.

Spider's Bite himself disappointed next time out at Ayr but that could easily have been down to the Good ground he met with that day and he does seem like he'll be at his best with at least the minimum amount of cut underfoot to go to war on.

He'll start this season on OR 128 but all being well he should prove to be significantly better than that over the larger obstacles and it would be no surprise to see him turn into a real staying type, with marathon chases eventually being a regular option for him.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Novice/Novice Handicap Chases | 2m5f+ | Good to Soft or softer possibly ideal*

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NTF is continually progressing to stay ahead of the game. The NTF Front-Runner-Focus angle has been in development for a couple of seasons and I'll be looking to capitalize on the angle this season after a couple of years of fine-tuning. The full NTF National Hunt package will be available at an EXCLUSIVE discounted rate to previous members and members of the NTF FREE list. The doors to the service will be opening mid-late October...

**Make sure YOU don't miss out!**

## **LEGAL EYES (B Pauling) 5yo**

**Career form** 22-

This Court Cave gelding finished runner-up on both his bumper starts last season and it was the second of those runs, where he finished a neck behind fellow list member Northern Soul, that he really stood out.

The way he kept on battling away all the way to the line showed he's a gritty type who won't shirk a battle and it would be a major surprise should he not open his account this term.

He also settled much better on that second start than he had on debut at Bangor, looking a more polished horse with the debut run under his belt, and there should be any amount of improvement to come when he's sent hurdling.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Novice Hurdles | 2m – 2m4f*

## **CANELO (A King) 5yo**

**Career form** 225141-

This sizable Mahler gelding rounded off his novice hurdle campaign in solid style, opening his account at the fourth attempt at Doncaster in February then ending the season with an impressive victory at Fontwell. Sandwiched between those efforts was a staying on 4<sup>th</sup> in the EBF Final at Sandown, a race where he didn't get the best of runs as they turned for home but still finished off strongly up the hill.

Chasing looks his ultimate aim, however, and I'd expect his upward curve to continue when meeting fences this season.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Novice/Novice Handicap Chases | 2m5f+*

## **EUXTON LANE (O Sherwood) 6yo**

**Career form** 3572117 -

Like plenty on this list it's all about chasing for this lad so given that he reached a rating of 139 over hurdles it's not hard to think he could be pushing 150 when he goes over fences.

It took him a couple of runs to get the hang of the jumping game but when things clicked for him on his fourth hurdling start at Fontwell his abilities really shone through, travelling strongly throughout the race and cruising clear to win by a very easy 17L.

He was then stepped up slightly in grade and in trip at Newbury next time out and was equally impressive in the manner of that victory, again travelling sweetly throughout the race and pulling away from his rivals with the minimum of fuss.

Connections then decided to gun him up to Grade 1 level for his final start, in the Mersey novices' Hurdle at Aintree, and he was far from disgraced in that company, finishing an 11 length 7<sup>th</sup> of 11.

He was expertly campaigned by Oliver Sherwood last season and it all bodes well for him to really show what he can do when he's sent chasing this term, he looks a very exciting prospect for the Grand National winning trainer.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m - 2m5f Novice Chases*

## **JOKE DANCER (Sue Smith) 5yo**

**Career form** 6/6215115-

This 5yo looks a big beast of a horse and one that will very much appreciate a switch to fences this term.

He should have filled into his massive frame with another summer on his back and I'd expect him to become a serious player on the novice chasing scene, at least on the north circuit but possibly further afield as well.

His three wins have all come on heavy ground so he not afraid to slog it out through testing conditions and that's a trait that will stand him in good stead through those long cold north winter months.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m-2m5f Novice Chases | Ground with plenty cut in it*

## **TRESHNISH (S Smith) 5yo**

**Career form** 63/213177-

Very much another of those Sue Smith chasing types for the season ahead so the fact he was picking up hurdle races along the way last term suggests there's plenty talent under the bonnet.

He looks a typically tough Sue Smith type and he'll be of plenty interest when he goes up in trip over fences (2m4f+).

He's a young horse with plenty of potential.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Chases*

## **REMASTERED (D Pipe) 5yo**

**Career form** 26/21-

Won well from the front (something I always like to see) at Chepstow on his debut for Pipe and he looks a decent recruit for the Pond House team.

The 5yo had some decent bumper form in Ireland but it's his breeding that interests me the most, being by Network out of a Martaline mare, a combination that gives him plenty of scope to make a real impact over hurdles and, eventually, fences.

The fact he easily dealt with Kateson at Chepstow, who went on to finish second in the G2 bumper at Aintree and would be one of the top 10 bumper runners of last season this side of the Irish Sea, tells us all we need to know about the potential of this 5yo.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m – 2m5f Novice Hurdles*

## **PRESENT RANGER (D Skelton) 5yo**

**Career form** 533-

They went slow and steady with this full-brother to National winner Ballabriggs last term and he looks every inch a long-term project.

He's yet to race over further than 2m3.5f (three starts to date) so I'd expect significant improvement to come when meeting with at least 2m5f trips and, eventually, 3m+ trips. The handicap mark he gained after his three starts last season – OR 121 – is probably extremely exploitable for when he goes over those longer trips.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice/Novice Handicap Chases*

## **MOONLIGHTER (N Williams) 5yo**

**Career form** 16-

This Midnight Legend youngster won his debut outing at Bangor in imposing fashion, pulling away to win by a comfortable 6L at the line.

He was then given a break of 70 days before being pitched into the Listed Bumper at Newbury on Betfair hurdle day, a race that ultimately proved too hot for him at that early stage of his career, albeit he only started to fade in the final couple of furlongs.

He's a big long-striding type, however, and he was always going to be more suited to hurdling and eventually chasing so I'd expect performances more akin to his debut run when he meets with timber this season.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m – 2m5f Novice Hurdles*

## **MIND'S EYE (H De Bromhead) 6yo**

**Career form** 22/211004-

This 6yo was highly tried on his last three hurdling starts and although he came up short in all of them he did catch my eye in the final of those starts, the 2m G1 Top Novices' Hurdle at Aintree.

He travelled like a dream for most of that contest but his finishing effort very much suggested that he'll be seen to better effect over 2m4f and longer trips. I'd be confident of him really come into himself when sent chasing this season and he should prove some way better than the finishing position of those final 3 hurdle starts.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m4f+ Novice Chases*



## **MERCENAIRE (N Williams) 4yo**

**Career form** 8/132P-

This well put together French-bred youngster wasted no time at all in opening his hurdling account, landing the odds in impressive style at Exeter last November by a very easy 25L margin on UK debut.

He then found himself in the G1 Juvenile Finale Hurdle at Chepstow, where he ran with credit in 3<sup>rd</sup> behind the high class We have Dreamed, before jumping into an all aged Novices' event where he bumped into the well touted Vision Des Flos.

He ended the season with a disappointing PU in the Fred Winter at the Cheltenham Festival, a race where he was never really travelling and probably found the hustle and bustle a bit too much for him.

Those experiences should, however, stand him in good stead for his second season hurdling and the 131 mark he starts this season from certainly looks like one he should be able to take advantage of, with a number of handicap options appealing throughout the season. The 4yo Handicap Hurdle at Chepstow in October must be a tempting starting point, if the ground has enough cut underfoot for him.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*Handicap Hurdles up to 2m4f | Ground with cut underfoot*

## JUST DON'T ASK (C Longsdon) 6yo

Career form 3211-

This 5yo looks every inch a chaser in the making, with plenty size and scope about him to make a decent impact over the larger obstacles.

He made a nice compact shape at his hurdles last season with his smooth front-running style and if he's able to translate that to fences then it's not hard to see him being hard to catch off the front end.

Longsdon had this to say about the horse on his website...

***"He is not the most straightforward to train, but he has got an engine and I can see him running in all those soft ground staying chases in the future. He is not devoid of speed on slower ground, but, in the long term, he will be a proper staying chaser. He is already a decent horse, rated 132 and you won't be seeing him until mid-November at the earliest. Then, he could well go chasing. He is a strong traveller in his races so, at this stage of his career, he won't run over further than 2m4f."***

### **Ideal Conditions**

2m4f/5f Novice Chases (possibly 3m+ by end of season) | Possibly prefers cut underfoot

## **GOOD BOY BOBBY (N Twiston-Davies) 5yo**

**Career form** 1131-

Very few, if any, bumper runners impressed me more than this lad last season and not many are able to win three bumpers in a season, given the penalty that needs to be lumped round to achieve that.

Despite closing out his season with a win a Wetherby it was his demolition job at Chepstow in January, where he sluiced through the Welsh mud to win by a going away 9 lengths without breaking sweat, that really caught my eye, a performance that fully indicated he looks likely to be a serious weapon went sent hurdling and, eventually, chasing.

He's a big, robust, well put together beast with family connections to the likes of Voler La Vedette and Hennessy and is one that very much needs to be kept firmly on the radar.

### ***Ideal Conditions***

*2m - 2m5f Novice Hurdles | Possibly best with cut underfoot*

## Closing notes...

Hopefully you find the info in this FREE NTF guide enjoyable and are able to make use of the material included within. The aim of this guide is to pinpoint a group of horses that are slightly out with the mainstream and will improve for going Novice Hurdling or Novice Chaser, or for a couple of them going down the handicap route. The traits & preferences of the runners in this list will become more apparent as the season develops and I will be looking to update it exclusively to members of the **full NTF subscription service** as we reach deeper into the season. Unlike my Summer Stunners guide, where we were fully aware of the likes & dislikes of the horses on the list, we will have to approach this list a bit more carefully and almost 'learn as we go along' with many of the runners on the list.

'To Follow' lists can be tricky to produce profits from, but they do help you focus the mind and help you get to know the ins and outs of yards and, more specifically, the likes and dislikes of specific horses. If you can source patterns in amongst a horse's wider form then profits are there waiting for you.

Personally, I didn't see the point in stuffing my list full of Nicholls, Henderson, Mullins & Elliott runners as that information is freely available in wider racing press and I'll also be covering their runners on **the full NTF Service** as we glide through the 2018/19 season. Instead I wanted to try and bring to your attention some of the 'lesser lights' of the game but still ones I feel can win plenty of races between them this National Hunt season.

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Happy National Hunt Punting

**Ben (NTF)**

[www.narrowingthefield.co.uk](http://www.narrowingthefield.co.uk)

## Thanks...

Big thanks to the following trainers for taking the time to speak to me about their runners...

**Ruth Jefferson** – [@NRuthJefferson](https://twitter.com/NRuthJefferson)

**Sandy Thompson** – <https://sandythomsonracing.co.uk/index.php>

**John Mackie** – [John Mackie Racing](http://JohnMackieRacing.com)

**Harry Whittington** – <http://harrywhittington.co.uk/>

**Charlie Longsdon** – <http://www.charlielongsdonracing.com/>

