NTF Weekend Notes – 3rd, 4th & 5th November

Friday

N/A (National Hunt cards all cancelled)

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Saturday

1255 Ascot – Class 4 2m3.5f Conditional Jockey's Novices Handicap Hurdle | Soft – 11 ran

1st – REBEL INTENTIONS

A wind-op (Apr-May 2023) and re-application of the Tongue-Tie seems to have worked wonders for this one... recording form of 8-1-2-1 since then... and he could have more to offer now they seem to have straightened his breathing out. He won here off 95 and given he started Handicap life on 108 there's plenty chance he's got more to come before he reaches his ceiling. Off the back of this run I also noted the record of Emma Lavelle in Condition/Conditional & Amateur jockey HURDLE contests with her male horses aged 4yo-6yo... 11/30 | 37% S/R | +£67.80 – W&P 16/30 | 53% S/R – E/W +£77.81... she wouldn't have many running each year in these races, but she does win more than the market expects...

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130 Ascot – Class 3 2m3f Novices Limited Handicap Chase | Soft – 9 ran

1st – SIR PSYCHO

An impressive win from the 7yo, who was having his first start for Harry Derham here. The drop in trip looked a smart move as he was well-beaten over further on his last two starts and 2m3f or less may prove to be ideal for him. Not one I'd have hard and fast PC for but I'd tentatively suggest the following right now... C2 or less | 2m3f or less = 111414 (4/6 – all 4 career wins)...

2nd – PASSING WELL

A solid intro to the chasing game and I suspect it won't be long before he opens his chasing account from his current mark of OR 122. He'll appreciate longer trips than this, with his two wins to date coming over 2m4f & 2m5f, and 3m could well be in range for him at some point.

3rd – TWINJETS

A decent effort on chase debut for the 6yo but he did jump to his left plenty and he has done that previously when racing on a right-handed track. He did win going right-handed over hurdles and in bumpers but it will be harder to get away with such antics over fences and he may ultimately prove best going left-handed over fences. He's by the sire Jet Away and his offspring *can* improve for their first chase (indeed they seem to improve with each early chase start) and he's another that should be winning over fences sooner rather than later, probably on a left-handed track.

4th – ARE U WISE TO THAT

I expected plenty better than this from the 6yo but he was another that jumped out to his left and he just never really looked happy on this right-handed track (first run going this way round) and he seemed to be taking off on the wrong leg at most of his fences. He lost ground at a lot of his fences but made it up relatively easily between his fences, suggesting he's still got plenty juice in his current mark of OR 125, but the constantly jumping out to his left took its toll and he could just never land a blow. Worth forgiving the run due to him not handling the RH track and he's worth keeping on the radar for when he goes back to a LH track.

5th – CRUZ CONTROL

Not sure he really wants much further that 2m1f and he did seem to struggle to see out this 2m3f trip. This is the second time he's run past 2m1f and both times he's looked a probable non-stayer... still early days for him yet and his stamina boots may yet come but for now his PC may be somewhere along the lines of... 2m1f or less | Soft or Heavy = 111 (3/3 – all 3 career wins).

6th – SCARFACE

Probably wants better ground than this and also probably wants at least a little further... he's now 0/4, 1p on Soft and 0/5, 1p over 2m3f or less so PC for him may be somewhere around... >2m3f | G/S or quicker | C2 or less = 5311 (2/4, 1p)... although I'd remain flexible for now... I had him pegged as one that should improve for going chasing *last* season (they stayed hurdling last season) and had also noted that he holds plenty stamina influences in his pedigree, so again trips further than this 2m3f should be where he's seen to his best...

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205 Ascot – Class 1 2m1f Handicap Chase | Soft – 9 ran

1st – BOOTHILL

The drop in trip from 2m4.5f did the trick here and took his record in Oct-Dec off breaks of 21+ days and over 2m1f or less to... 1111311 (6/7, 1p)...might get hammered for this 4L win and it will be interesting to see just how much he is put up by... I had him better than the 149 he ran off here but probably not by much... *he was raised 6lbs to OR 155... which probably puts him very near his ceiling...

3rd – SAINT SEGAL

A decent seasonal return for the 5yo and he's likely still to have more offer over fences after only 5 chase starts. He does tend to come for his first run off a break as well, with form off a break of 50+ days of... 34601 (the 1 coming on career debut). This was his first run off a wind-op as well and the Jane Williams runners generally need the first spin on the track off the op... her runners are 1/14, 2p on first run off a wind-op... no hard and fast rules when it comes to Prime Conditions for the 5yo but the following may be where he proves best right now... DSLR <50 | 2m1f or less = 21112 (3/5, 2p)... another I'd be flexible enough on just now though...

4th – CAP DU MATHAN

May well improve for this outing as he's 1/4, 0p off breaks of 121+ days compared to 3/11, 4p off breaks of 45 days or less. All 4 of his wins have come in Jan-Feb so he may just be one that peaks deeper into the winter months as well. I'd be happy enough to extent his Prime Months to Nov-Feb and would look at some loose PC for him as... Nov-Feb | <2m4f = 4113251133 (4/10, 3p – all 4 career wins)...he's yet to win in 3 starts above C3 level but I'd be surprised if he wasn't at least able to be competitive in handicaps above C3 level from on or around his current mark of OR 135...

5th – FRERE DARMES

Travelled smoothly enough into this around 4 out/3 out but he weakened tamely when push came to shove and I wonder if he just needs a wind-op to help him see out his races better... he's had a tongue-tie on for his last 2 starts but it seems to have made little to no improvement in him...

7th – RED ROOKIE

Generally doesn't come to his peak until we turn into January so I was surprised to see him near the head of the market for this... I still have PC for him as... Jan-March | 2m1f or less = 13F1111 (5/7, 1p – all 5 career wins – F came when outclassed in the G1 Arkle)... and another run or two before the end of the year will hopefully help him get his mark down a few more pounds (which is always handy)... *he was dropped 2lbs to OR 138 for this run...

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315 Ascot – Class 2 2m Handicap Hurdle | Soft – 12 ran

2nd - ALTOBELLI

The winner – Knickerbockerglory – was able to control this from the front whilst ALTOBELLI was held up out the rear and had to make up plenty ground to try and lay down his challenge. That ultimately made life difficult for him, especially on seasonal debut and on Soft ground, but he was well clear of the 3rd (8.5L+ back to the others) and he looks like he should be able to pick off something at least half decent off his OR 131 mark and with his unexposed profile (only his 4th Hurdle start and first in a handicap)...*went up 1lb to OR 132 for this run...

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345 Ascot – Class 1 3m Handicap Chase | Soft – 11 ran

1st - VICTTORINO

Wasn't the easiest to assess pre-race but he clearly had plenty up his sleeve. Will be interesting to see how the handicapper reacts as the winning margin was relatively wide (6L), but I don't think the win was definitely in the bag had one or both of YEAH MAN or UNANSWERED PRAYERS jumped the last (both fell). The win did, however, improve Venetia record at Ascot under the following... Ascot | Chasers | Nov-Dec... to... 21/94 | 22% S/R | +£96.42 – W&P 40/94 | 43% S/R...*put up 4lb for the win to OR142, which I think is fair...

3rd – ELDORADO ALLEN

I thought he was surprisingly short for this at 11/2 and it's very unlikely he would have placed had there not been some carnage at the final fence. He does go well fresh and he does go well at this time of the year but I thought he struggled a bit last year and he just doesn't look like he'll recapture his form he showed in the 2021/22 season. I actually have a suspicion that he's a horse that maybe isn't all that comfortable carrying big weights... carrying 11-07+ he is 0/13, 4p whilst carrying 11-06 or less he is 5/12, 1p (he carried 11-07 here with the jockey claim taken into account)... he's not easy to pin to Prime Conditions but if he is going to be winning again I wonder if it may be under the following... G2 or less | carrying 11-06 or less | Good to Soft = 1111 (4/4 – 4 of his 5 career wins)... maybe being a little flexible on the ground condition...

4th – ZHIGULI

Took his record at Ascot to 0/6, 0p and he's really not a Class 1 player (now 0/3, 0p at C1 level – 0/6, 1p at C1 & C2 level). On the plus side for him he will come on for this run and he should get dropped a little in the ratings (he was 2lbs above his last and highest win mark here). He's one that loves testing ground so connection will be happy if it keeps raining and I have Prime Conditions for him as... C3 or less Hcps | 2m4f+ | Soft or Heavy | OR 126 or less = 111711 (5/6 – all 5 career wins)... the 7th came at Ascot...*dropped 1lb to OR 127 for run...

5th – BEAUPORT

Never looked like getting involved at any stage of this race and plenty about this run suggested they have other plans in mind for him. Either that or he doesn't actually stay these trips and they were trying to conserve stamina and sneak him into the race from out the back (which clearly didn't work!). He's now 0/4, 1p over 3m+ and although I have thought that he would stay 3m+ trips I would possibly be questioning that now... I'll remain flexible for now but I'm leaning towards his PC being somewhere along the lines of... 2m4f – 2m7.5f | undulating or slightly undulating tracks = 11222131 (4/8, 4p)... Soft or Heavy ground also being a positive...*dropped 2lb to OR 140 for the run...

PU – MONBEG GENIUS

They are likely to have grander plans for this one and although a PU on the CV is never great I do 'think' it's excusable, outside of his career debut run he is now 44(of 4)P off breaks of 70+ and also 43P on RH tracks... so he should come on for this effort and also probably appreciate going back left-

handed. I'd have probable PC for him as... LH tracks | DSLR <43 = 31111 (4/5, 1p – 4 of his 5 career wins)...

UR – MUCHO MAS

Not for the first he showed a tendency to go to his left here and although he has won going right-handed, the higher up the class levels you go the harder it is to get away with such actions. He remains unexposed over fences after only 5 chase starts and I don't think his mark of OR 129 will prove beyond him, so he's worth keeping on the radar and preferably for when going back left-handed. He is 3 from 3 in December so any entries next month are worth looking out for.

UR – FLEGMATIK

Wouldn't be wanting it this Soft (0/8, 3p on Soft or Heavy) and I wouldn't be convinced he's a Class 1 type (0/5, 1p at C1 level). A drop in the ratings from his current mark of OR 139 would be beneficial and I'd be looking at PC for him as... C2 or less | Oct-Feb | G/S or quicker = 4/9, 2p – all 4 career wins... he also seems to need/prefer going RH, especially over fences (0/2, 0p LH tracks compared to 3/15, 3p over fences)...*dropped 1lb to OR 138 for this run...

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107 Ayr – Class 4 2m4.5f Handicap Chase | Good to Soft – 12 ran

1st – EVERYDAY CHAMPAGNE

First run for Nick Alexander here and won this like one who still has plenty more to offer over fences. Looks like one with relatively tight PC to his name... Handicaps on LH tracks | >2m4f | G/S or quicker = 12113 (3/5, 2p – all 3 career wins)... although we can maybe be a little flexible on some of those conditions now he has moved yard... worth noting off the back of this win the record of Nick Alexander when a horse has its first run for him after moving from another yard, especially when meeting the following conditions.. first run for N Alexander (moving from another yard) | 5yo-8yo | DSLR 21-300 = (since 2012) 9/41 | 22% S/R | +£58.68 – W&P 13/41 | 32% S/R...

2nd – I AM GONNA BE

Chase debut and debut for the Lucinda Russell yard and this was a solid first outing for the 6yo over the larger obstacles. Lucinda Russell Chase debutants at AYR generally, for whatever reason, struggle to win (maybe she sends runners here she thinks will come on for the outing and it's a nice fair track to start them at...) and they are now 2/34 | 6% S/R | -£22.06 – W&P 5/34 | 15% S/R... so he could kick on from this on his next start (her chasers on second start that had their debut run at Ayr have marginally better stats).

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215 Ayr – Class 3 2m4.5f Handicap Chase | Good to Soft – 10 ran

4th – FAMOUS BRIDGE

Moved into contention well as they turned into the straight but he did start to need some pushing around 2-out and then made an untidy jump at the last as his fitness levels hit a bit of a flat

spot...before coming on again near the finish... none of which was all that unexpected as he does tend to come on for a run and he's now 0/4, 2p off breaks of 121+ days. He should come on for the run and he's one that remains with potential for the season ahead.

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115 Wetherby – Class 3 2m3.5f Handicap Chase | Soft – 13 ran

3rd – HAPPY AND FINE

Plenty to like about this opening effort over fences from the 6yo he took to the larger obstacles in fine fashion. He should be up to defying his current mark of OR 121 without too much hassle and the cheekpieces that he's worn for the past 5 starts continue to do a solid job on him (11333 – 2/5, 3p since applied).

8th – MOUNT TEMPEST

A disappointing run from the 6yo and he never looked overly comfortable at any stage in truth. Could also be that he doesn't want these mid-range trips either as he is now 678 (0/3) over 2m3f+... no hard and fast PC for him but could be that he's best under... 2m1f or less | DSLR <60 | fields of <10 = 311 (2/3, 1p – both career wins)... although still early days for him so happy to remain flexible for now...*dropped 3lbs to OR 116 for this run...

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150 Wetherby – Class 1 Listed 1m7.5f Mares Hurdle | Soft – 6 ran

1st – YOU WEAR IT WELL

A career best from the 6yo and she could prove very hard to beat against her own sex this season (Jamie Snowdon said after the race that the plan was to keep her to Mares Hurdle races this season). This win took her record in Mares races to 11112 (4/5, 1p) and she looks relatively flexible on the conditions front. She was able to easily deflect the attentions of fellow front-runner Stainsby Girl in this and still have enough in the tank to repel the classy LUCCIA down the home straight, and her dogged battling qualities will likely make her a hard mare to get the better off this season.

3rd – KATEIRA

Well-beaten come the line but she should come on for the run and I think she'll be a better horse over 2m4f+ this season. The two ahead of her (You Wear It Well & Luccia) are likely better than her over these 2m-ish trips so no major surprise she couldn't match it with them and hopefully they stick her up in distance off the back of this run (she won over 2m4.5f last season and also finished second in a G1 at Aintree over 2m4f).

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225 Wetherby – Grade 2 2m7.5f West Yorkshire Hurdle | Soft – 6 ran

6ᵗʰ – GA LAW

Can't imagine this was anything more than a run to get him tuned up for the season ahead over fences. Soft ground has never been ideal for him either and he's now 0/4, 0p on Soft. He's probably not going to turn into a Grade 1 player (I did think there was potential of that at one point) and I'd be looking at PC for him as... G2 or less | G/S or quicker = F132111 (4/7, 1p – all 4 career wins)...F came at last fence when still bang there...

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300 Wetherby – Grade 2 3m0.5f Charlie Hall Chase | Soft – 4 ran

PU – AHOY SENOR

I've said this plenty times before... but he just does not jump fences well enough to be a serious player in the top races, whether that is jumping out to his right/left or just making an ugly shape at too many of his fences, and I just don't get the love for him in the chasing division... I think for some reason he's a 'fan favourite' and he starts at a price far too short than what his ability (over fences) really warrants. He won a poor Cotswold Chase last season mainly because none of the others wanted to or were able to win it and I really think they need to go back hurdling with him and try and make him into a Big Bucks type character... he's clearly got a massive engine in him and he'll be able to use that much better over the smaller obstacles were his scrappy jumping won't be anywhere near as much of an issue... he could just ping away off the front over hurdles and grind the opposition into the ground...he'd be a massive player in the Stayers Hurdle... aside from all that he also needs his first run back off a break of >42 days (now PF5U2 off such breaks), so again, he really shouldn't have been 3/1 second fav here (despite it being only a 4-runner race)... if he does have Prime Conditions then I suspect it's the following... LH tracks | DSLR <43 = 213121111 (6/9, 2p – all 6 career wins)...

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SUNDAY

120 Carlisle – Class 3 2m4f Novices' Limited Handicap Chase | Soft – 5 ran

1ˢᵗ - TRELAWNE

I thought there was plenty to like about this effort from the 7yo and he jumped with real authority here on chasing debut. He posted good figures throughout his career and this was another career best... he looks one to keep firmly on side this season.

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230 Carlisle – Class 1 2m4f Intermediate Chase | Soft – 4 ran

1st – THUNDER ROCK

Was set some tough tasks last season on his first term over fences and it was good to see him get back in the winners' enclosure on this drop in class. This win took his record at Listed level & below to... 1111112131 (8/10, 2p), whilst he is 0/5, 1p at graded level... although depending on what the handicapper does off the back of this, he could well have a Class 1 Premier Handicap in him... he's probably not a Grade 1/Grade 2 player, however...

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340 Carlisle – Class 3 3m2.5f Handicap Chase | Soft – 11 ran

3rd – YES INDEED

Yet to open his account for Jonjo O'Neill since moving over from France (now 0/9, 4p over here)... but he looks well-handicapped to me off OR 127, even more so when you consider he started life over here off OR 142. He's looked much better since his wind-op last season (4-2-2-3 since then), and he should be opening his UK account before too long... some headgear may be beneficial to him (although not a deal breaker)...

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