EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
For the community, by the community. A not-for-profit service

26th November 2026

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Epsom Racing tips for Thursday

31 July 2024



Racing returns to Epsom on Thursday, with six races on the card for what is expected to be an exciting evening of racing.

Timed perfectly to pick up punters following the day's racing at Glorious Goodwood, the action begins at 6pm, with the final race taking place at 8:35pm. The going on the Downs is good to firm, but with another day where the temperatures are set to top 30 degrees, the ground could be firm by the time racing gets underway.

Read below to find out the latest **horse racing odds** and tips from Thursday's Epsom card.

18:00 – Peter Bromwich Apprentice Handicap

The opener is a 1m2f handicap, with four-year-olds and above contesting this Class 5 contest. Having finished second over a shorter trip at Epsom earlier this month, **Chips And Rice** will run off an unchanged mark and could push the fancied Big Bear Hug.

18:30 – Pick And Place Your Stakes Challenge EBF Restricted Novice Stakes

Next up, a race for Novice two-year-olds, with a 7f trip to negotiate in this Class 4 contest. Parole D'Oro's second placed start at Ascot makes for an appealing option, however, debutant **Noble Phoenix** is an exciting newcomer and could upset the odds.

19:00 – Outdoor Advertising Is The Best British EBF Fillies' Handicap

Another Class 4 race is up next, with a 1m1/2f trip for a top prize of £7,731 on offer for the winner. **Dreamrocker** is the favourite, with a career-best win at Ascot 20 days ago representing excellent form and this should be enough to push through a 4lb rise in weights.

19:30 – Iron Maiden Red Wine Handicap

Up next, a Class 6 handicap for three-year-olds which will be run at just over seven furlongs. Having finished a strong fourth at Doncaster 21 days ago, **Moakadd** for Roger Varian is the likely frontrunner, down 1lb.

20:05 – Miles Commercial Handicap

The penultimate race of the card is a Class 5 contest, run over 1m4f and open to 4yo+ horses. Having shown a marked improvement in form so far this year, **Rogue Tornado** is expected to continue this good form as the front-runner in this race.

20:35 – Trooper 'Time People Please!' Handicap

Finally, this 6f handicap sees just five expected runners for what is a close Class 5 contest to call. With a first time visor fitted and good form this season, **Macanudo** will be expected to perform well especially when considering a drop back in grade for this race.

Selections – odds courtesy of BoyleSports

18:00: Chips And Rice – 11/4

18:30: Noble Phoenix – 6/1

19:00: Dreamrocker – 11/4

19:30: Moakadd – 3/1

20:05: Rogue Tornado – 4/1

20:35: Macanudo – 15/8

Image: Credit Paul. **CC BY 2.0**

Get a lift from Epsom's flat season.

31 July 2024

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The Flat season continues at Epsom this Thursday, with six evening races for fans to enjoy in the summer sun.

The going on the Downs is good to soft, soft in places, but with a day of sunshine forecast, it could firm up throughout the day before the first race at 5:55pm. The racing runs all the way through until 8:35, with the main attraction being the Class 4 Betfred “Bet Builder” Handicap at 8:05.

Read below to find out the latest **horse racing betting** and tips from Epsom’s card on Thursday:

17:55 – Betfred Play Fred’s 5 Million EBF Maiden Stakes

The first race of the evening will put on show some promising two-year-old horses, who will race along seven furlongs. Having been bred from Andrew Balding’s stable star Kameko, there are high hopes for Spell Master having debuted in sixth place at Newbury 14 days ago. However, Oisin Murphy’s presence on John and Thady Gosden’s **Attack** cements its place as the top pick for this contest.

18:30 – Steve Donoghue Handicap

For this Class 5 race, a slightly longer trip of 1m 1/5f awaits the runners and riders, with nine entries competing for the top prize of £4,448.90. The standout runner in the race is **Blenheim Star**, with three wins in six outings so far this year, most recently at Brighton 16 days ago, but trainer William Knight will hope that the ground firms up.

19:00 – Chantilly Handicap

Next up, the second handicap of the card sees six runners competing over a 1m 2f trip. For Jack Channon, **Amancio** is the type who can bounce back from a disappointing fifth place at Chester 34 days ago and Rossa Ryan will hope to guide home the three-year-old to a win which replicates success at Haydock on April 27.

19:35 – Betfred Ladies’ Derby Handicap

For the fourth race, for female amateur jockeys only, **Naasma** looks like the smart option having operated well at this C&D. One to watch out for in this race is also Roost, who is down in grade and with blinkers back on could enter the running.

20:05 – Betfred ‘Bet Builder’ Handicap

For the second Class 4 race of the evening, ten runners will take to the short 7f 3y trip. Having performed well at this C&D, **Guiteau** is the top pick for the race, although the highly rated Miss Information will be expected to produce a strong performance under the charge of Oisin Murphy for Andrew Balding.

20:40 – Betfred ‘The Classic Bookmaker’ Handicap

For the final race of the evening, 12 runners will take to the course in a race which is exclusively for three-year-olds. From a career low mark, **Bated Breeze** catches the eye, especially when first-time blinkers are added into the equation. Meanwhile, Havana Mojito is the forecast favourite having finished runner-up here 16 days ago and is at a 4lb lower mark.

Selections – odds via BoyleSports

17:55 – Attack 5/2

18:30 – Blenheim Star 9/4

19:00 – Amancio (NAP) 6/1

19:35 – Naasma 5/1

20:05 – Guiteau 3/1

20:40 – Bated Breeze (E/W) 10/1

Image: Credit Paul. **CC BY 2.0**

Epsom Downs Summer season race tips

31 July 2024

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The Summer Season kicks off at **Epsom Downs** on Wednesday evening with a competitive six-race card for punters heading to the track.

Racing gets underway at 6.20pm with a seven-runner apprentice handicap before rounding off at 9.00pm as ten runners take on the class four handicap.

*Read below to see the latest **Horse racing betting** and tips for Epsom's Wednesday card*

The opener (6.20) is an apprentice handicap over the one mile and two furlong trip with Giselles Defence arriving in the best form of the field, winning at Pontefract in May and getting back on track at Leicester 18 days ago after a poor ninth prior so should take the beating here. Of his rivals, Oj Lifestyle was a Newbury maiden winner in 2022 who hasn't fired since but is dropping down into much calmer waters here.

Race two on the card (6.50) sees seven runners head to the stalls for the maiden stakes in class four for two-year-old's and Sir Peter Fossick for trainer Charlie Johnston is taken to get off the mark on debut, a half-brother to several winners over the this seven-furlong trip so he makes plenty of appeal on paper.

Mr Wagyu is on a losing run but has a fine record at Epsom and is back for more in race three on Wednesday's card (7.25), only slightly edged out on Derby Day so has to be considered back at his favoured track. Indian Creek won this race last year off a 2lb higher mark so is set to be amongst the top end as well in this six furlong class three handicap.

Trainer Ralph Beckett's son of Galileo, Atlantic Convoy, looks ripe for improvement in handicap company and he is the selection in race four on the card (8.00) having taken a step in the right direction when seventh in a Sandown maiden last month and is up in trip here.

The penultimate race on Epsom's card arrives at 8.30 with a one mile and four furlong handicap in class six. A competitive heat, Our Papa Smurf should be bang up there for trainer Gary Moore off the back of a win at Goodwood on June 14, going up in trip here by three furlongs. Of his rivals, Angel On High can give the Moore runner plenty to think about with two thirds and a second in his last three outings.

Finally, the card comes to a close with the ten-runner handicap in class four for three-year-old's and upwards (9.00), with preference in the finale heading to Justcallmepete, who can cash in on his low turf mark – 10lb lower than when he races on the all-weather surface – to take the spoils in the card closer ahead of course and distance winner Marlay Park, who has won four times at Epsom in his career.

Epsom selections – Wednesday

6.20 – Giselles Defence

6.50 – Sir Peter Fossick

7.25 – Mr Wagyu

8.00 – Atlantic Convoy

8.30 – Our Papa Smurf

9.00 – Justcallmepete

Image: Credit Paul. **CC BY 2.0**

Student racemakers favourites at the Derby

31 July 2024



Ewell based **Nescot** (North East Surrey College of Technology) were proud to be part of this year's **Epsom Derby** Festival. Our Travel and Tourism students were once again 'Racemakers' and our Animal Management students presented personalised handmade plaques to the grooms of the Betfred Derby runners.

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NESCOT on Reigate Road, Ewell is the location for a local HUSTINGS, staged by Epsom and Ewell Times, for the Epsom and Ewell Parliamentary Candidates in the Adrian Mann Theatre at 7pm on Wednesday 26th June. All welcome.

Our Travel and Tourism Level 2 and 3 students were part of the 'Racemaker' team on 31 May and 1 June. They used skills developed within their course to assist visitors with directions and queries, helping to ensure an excellent experience was had by all. The students benefitted from both, the preparation and employment during the event. The experience has allowed them to develop their academic and transferrable skills, from CV development to interviews and onsite advice and guidance with Epsom Downs Racecourse. They received training on the various enquiries they might receive including how to effectively deal with a range of customer service scenarios.

A team of four of our Level 2 and 3 Animal Management students also presented unique mementos made from wood off cuts that bore the names of the horses running in the Derby. These personalised and handmade plaques were presented to each groom. The students were chosen for their consistent hard work and involvement in sustainability projects as part of their course.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot, said, "We are proud of our involvement at the Betfred Derby Festival. Thanks to our staff for creating these collaborative opportunities and to our students for being excellent ambassadors for the College. It has been an incredible experience for them to be part of an internationally renowned premier racing event.

"We are hugely appreciative of Epsom Down Racecourse for inviting our students to be part of this prestigious event. Working with businesses and the community is important to us as a college and we look forward to our continued partnership that will enrich our learners with practical experiences to prepare them for their careers."

Jennifer Fasad and **Jemma Brodie**, Travel and Tourism lecturers at Nescot also expressed their gratitude. They said, "A huge thank you to the team at Epsom Downs Racecourse who ensured a comprehensive training programme was given to all learners involved. The opportunity to gain first hand customer service skills at an event of this scale offers them an all-important experience as they consider career paths in the travel, hospitality and events industry."

Zoe Brown, Head of Curriculum, Animal Studies, commented, "Our students were thrilled with the invitation to go behind the scenes in the stables area and meet the people who care for the horses. It's been an amazing experience for them. Thanks to Epsom Downs Racecourse for organising this opportunity. We are delighted that the personalised plaques were well received and we've been asked to provide them next year too."

Tom Sammes, General Manager at Epsom Downs Racecourse, said "We were pleased to offer students from Nescot the opportunity to be part of the 'Racemaker' team at the Betfred Derby Festival. Their enthusiasm and commitment to learn and execute their roles is commendable, and the whole team were professional and dedicated across the two days.

"We were also delighted to help the students present the beautifully designed plaques to the grooms of the Betfred Derby runners and want to thank them for their hard work in the build up to the event.

"Epsom Downs Racecourse is looking forward to offering a range of different projects to support study programmes for young people throughout the rest of the year. Nescot is a huge part of the local community, and we want to help them continue to make a positive impact on the young people that come through their doors."

Travel and Tourism student Frankie said, "We had such a great time working as part of the Racemaker Team. The guidance and the allocation of roles and locations was clear and organised. This opportunity has allowed me to develop my leadership skills. I was proud to be placed on the radio as a team leader during the second day."

Another student Josh added, "It was an amazing experience! Helping customers has developed my confidence. I had some fantastic personal moments and even had the opportunity to see the beautiful race horses in the winner enclosure."

This is the second year that our Travel and Tourism students have worked alongside The Jockey Club as part of the Beacon Project that was set up in in Autumn 2022. This collaboration offers our students work experience opportunities with various projects at Epsom Downs Racecourse to aid with their studies and understanding of the racing industry and career opportunities it presents.

Nescot's Travel and Tourism students as part of the 'Racemaker' team at Epsom Downs Racecourse for the Betfred Derby Festival along with Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO. Photo credit: Nescot

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Computer's gift of a Trojan Horse?

31 July 2024



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The computer won the Derby! On the eve of yesterday's famous Epsom flat race Epsom and Ewell Times published winner tips Los Angeles from Royal Ascot Odds and first to cross the finishing line **City of Troy** from a super-computer. What other gifts for humanity might be brought by AI?

An Epsom and Ewell Times reader put £50 on both tips and came away with a £100 profit thanks to the brain-power of a super-computer. He said "One swallow does not make a summer. So, I won't be inclined to follow computer tips every time but thanks for this one"

No Royal could be spotted on Epsom Downs this Derby Day but our own leading citizen Mayor **Steve Bridger** and Mayoress Carol Bridger took centre stage in the Royal Box of The Queen's Stand. Another Epsom and Ewell highlight was **Helin Konyar** a Ukraine scholar of the local **Laine Theatre Arts** leading the National Anthem just before the Derby stakes. The King and Queen attended Oaks Day on Friday.



Students of Epsom's Laine Theatre Arts. Helin Konyar front row centre in yellow dress.

City Of Troy (3-1 Favourite) banished the memory of his disappointing run in the QIPCO 2000 Guineas with a breathtaking performance to clinch victory in the 245th Betfred Derby at Epsom Downs today.

The colt, sired by Justify, secured a record-extending 10th win in this prestigious Classic for his trainer Aidan O'Brien, while jockey Ryan Moore celebrated his fourth Derby triumph.

City Of Troy, racing on the inside, was settled towards the rear among the 16 runners as stablemates Euphoric and Los Angeles led the field.

Rounding Tattenham Corner, City Of Troy began to make an impressive move, surging to the front in the final quarter mile. He maintained his momentum, finishing strongly to fend off Ambiente Friendly by two and three-quarter lengths, with Los Angeles trailing three and a quarter lengths behind in third.



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The Derby jockeys. Epsom Racecourse 1st June 2024 c. Epsom and Ewell Times

“It was hard to know what would happen today, but I was very sure we still had the best horse before the race,” Ryan Moore said to ITV Racing. “Newmarket… it didn’t happen. I can’t pretend that we knew it would happen [today], but we do know that he has a big engine, he showed himself to be a brilliant two-year-old. The Guineas… we got a few things wrong. But it’s great that he could come back today. He’s still a little bit immature, that’s the first time he’s run around a bend, hopefully there’s plenty more to work with.”

Moore reflected on the race’s turning point, stating, “We did a few things wrong at Newmarket, today we rectified it and put it right.”

On the sensation of guiding City Of Troy through the final stages, Moore said, “He was going to win very easily. With the loose horse in front of him, he was still a bit unsure, and then he galloped out strong. He quickened well and then kind of waited, you have to be delighted with what he has done today.”

“I had to find a little bit of room. The race kind of opened up, loose horse in there, he travelled well into the straight, and he picked up and went to the front very easily and very quickly,” Moore recounted. “Then I felt he was still a little bit inexperienced, with the loose horse in front of him he wasn’t quite sure what to do – he was pricking his ears, then he changed his leads near the line and went on again. I’m just delighted that a horse who showed so much as a two-year-old – he was very good at two – and the Guineas, we got a few things wrong on the day and it’s great that Aidan’s got him back and brought him here today. He didn’t lose faith in the horse, stuck to the plan and it has paid off. We believed that if he turned up like we thought he would, he’d be too good for them, and he was.

“I was always happy where I was. It’s never going to be 100% smooth with a field that size, where we were, but I was able to pick a path. He took me there early and easily, and the race was over and he was in control of it a fair way out.

“He’s special – he won the Dewhurst, won a Group Two as early as July, won the Dewhurst, then to come here, and it’s the first time he’s been round a bend, and obviously it’s a big step up in trip. We thought he was the sort of horse, and once again Aidan’s brought him here, he’s turned up and it all worked out great,” Moore concluded to ITV Racing.

Epsom Downs witnessed a remarkable performance today, marking yet another chapter in the illustrious careers of City Of Troy, Aidan O’Brien, and Ryan Moore.

Human versus computer tips for Derby winner

31 July 2024



One of the biggest Flat races of the season arrives at Epsom Downs on Saturday afternoon as the £1.5 million Epsom Derby takes centre stage in the sporting world.

The Group 1 contest, open to three-year-old horses only, is run over the 1m4f distance at the track, and in 2024, 16 runners have been declared for the showpiece race to battle it out for the £882,408 top prize at 4:30 on Saturday.

Many eyes will be focused on City Of Troy, trained by Ballydoyle maestro Aidan O’Brien, who looked like a world-class prospect as a two-year-old before being well-beaten at odds-on in the 2000 Guineas to start his three-year-old campaign. O’Brien won this race last year with Auguste Rodin, who also flopped in the Guineas before bouncing back, but City of Troy hasn’t got the best stall draw from stall number one, which has seen his odds drift slightly.

Another O’Brien runner, **Los Angeles**, could be the play in the Derby. A winner of the Group 1 Criterium de Saint-Cloud back in October, he backed that up with a win in the Derby Trial at Leopardstown on May 12 and will relish the step up in trip at Epsom.

Away from the Irish challengers, Macduff for trainer Ralph Beckett is expected to be in contention. Fourth in the Royal Lodge on his final start as a two-year-old, he returned at three with a decent second to Arabian Crown in the Sandown Classic Trial and is another who will enjoy the further trip.

Trainer Andrew Balding is no stranger to having big-priced runners go well in this race and he has an outside chance with Sayedaty Sadaty, runner-up in Listed races at Newcastle and Newmarket this session but could well take a giant leap forward here. Sea The Stars won the Derby in 2009 and Bellum Justum, one of his offspring, could pose a real threat for Balding, with top-jockey Oisin Murphy on board.

Before the big one, however, there is no shortage of action elsewhere on the Epsom card with another seven races on offer, kicking off at 1:25 with a Class 2 handicap over the 1m2f trip. Balding could get the card off to a perfect start for him with Portsmouth, scoring in fine style at Epsom in the season opener last month and backed it up with a runner-up finish at Goodwood.

Nine runners will take on the Group 3 Princess Elizabeth Stakes, race two on the Epsom card, at 2:00. Preference is for

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Dahlia Stakes runner-up Running Lion, who is down in class and she should take plenty of beating. The progressive Sparks Fly, who excelled as a three-year-old, rates as the main danger, very much up in class but wasn't disgraced in handicap company at Haydock on seasonal return.

The third race on the card (2:35) is the Group 3 Diomed Stakes. Of the eight runners tackling the extended mile distance, Embesto for trainer Roger Varian is taken to get the better of last year's winner Regal Reality, who is back for more this weekend and also cannot be ruled out having placed in both starts this year.

The lead-up to the Derby cranks up with the five-furlong "Dash" at 3:10 for three-year-olds, and a whopping field of 20 will head to the start. Due For Luck is back on track this season having finished a neck third at Chester last time out to rediscover some form. Another who can bounce back is Vince L'Amour, a winner of a pair of handicaps at Ripon and Catterick last month and was a strong second when up in grade at Chester but bombed out last time around at York. Grandlad and Knicks, both winners last time out, are also ones to keep an eye on in a very competitive Dash.

Clarendon House should be too strong for his rivals in the second "Dash" on the card at 3:45, a winner at York just over a fortnight ago from the re-opposing Looking For Lynda. Sylkie Wilie rates the chief threat, however, handily weighted for this one having not won in 14 outings but was runner-up in this race last year and arrives off the back of a fifth of 15 in a Musselburgh handicap.

The Derby takes all the attention at 4:30 before two further races wrap up the Derby meeting for 2024. It's tough to look past Ziggy in the Class 2 handicap (5:15), who returned from 15 months off with a second at Epsom's season opener. In the finale (5:50), the selection is for Mr Wagyu, who is taken to kick on with his superb record in this race having won it in 2022 and was third last year.

Epsom selections – Saturday from **Royal Ascot Odds**

1:25 – Portsmouth
2:00 – Running Lion
2:35 – Embesto
3:10 – Vince L'Amour
3:45 – Clarendon House
4:30 – **Los Angeles**
5:15 – Ziggy
5:50 – Mr Wagyu

SuperComputer Predictions

City of Troy has been given a staggering 29.9% chance of winning the 2024 Epsom Derby on Saturday, according to the Best Payout Online Slots SuperComputer.

The SuperComputer is created by generating a specific code, which simulates the race 1,000 times, after being fed information relating to factors such as conditions, weight, jockey, trainer, and form, as well as betting market odds.

With the going officially declared as Good to Soft for the big day itself, the Aidan O'Brien-trained City of Troy has emerged as the huge favorite for the race, with a win percentage chance of 29.9%.

In second place is Ancient Wisdom at 11.8% and then Dancing Gemini at 10.2%. However, the chances of Ambiente Friendly also making a late surge for top spot are just 10.1% as well.

A spokesperson for Best Payout Online Slots said:

"Sports fans have throughout history relied on their 'gut feeling' or 'instinct' to make predictions for a season, which can certainly be blighted by personal preferences or bias. However, the Best Payout Online Slots SuperComputer aims to remove the sentiment and emotions of predictions and instead replace these inexact methods with logical and intelligent predictions relying on data. By creating the code, we can simulate the race and create as accurate a model as possible – leading to the final matrix of positions we see above."

How does the SuperComputer work?

The SuperComputer is a probability model, not determined by human predictions or bias. What happens is the SuperComputer estimates the outcome of the race based on a horse's current strength (based on factors such as conditions, weight, jockey, trainer, and form) and betting market odds.

The machine then simulates the remaining games in a season 1,000 times and constructs an average league table from the 1,000 simulations, to rule out anomalous results.

Top Tips for Oaks Day at Epsom Racecourse

31 July 2024

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One of the biggest Flat race meetings of the British racing calendar is upon us as day one of the Derby meeting gets underway at Epsom Downs today.

The seven-race card has more than £1million in prize money up for grabs as the big gun trainers send their stars to Surrey for one of the most prestigious race days of the season.

The £550,000 Group 1 Betfred Oaks is the highlight on day one but not far behind that is the another Group 1, the Coronation Cup, with a prize pot of £445,000 up for grabs.

The Epsom card on Friday gets underway with the Woodcote Stakes (2.00), a six-furlong contest in class two for the two-year-old's. New Charter looked a handy type for trainer Richard Hannon when chasing home a current Royal Ascot favourite at Newmarket a fortnight ago and is taken to go one better at Epsom, but will face stern competition from Teej A, who won her maiden at Chester in fine fashion and will be bang up there once again.

The second race of the day is off at 2.35 and is a class two handicap over the extended mile trip, with 16 runners set to head to the starting stalls. Preference in this one goes Bopedro ahead of stablemate at David O'Meara's yard Blue For You, who finished third and fourth respectively in a handicap at York's Dante meeting earlier this month and both should improve at Epsom.

The first Group 1 on the card is race three at 3.10 – the Coronation Cup – and a small field of five will battle it out for the £252,360 first prize. Defending champion Emily Upjohn, trained by John and Thady Gosden, is back for more in 2024 and is the one to beat over the 1m4f trip once again. Luxembourg, a four-time Group 1 winner for master trainer Aidan O'Brien, rates as the obvious danger but needs to bounce back from a poor showing in the Dubai Turf at Meydan last time out. Feed The Flame is an intriguing runner in this one as well, heading over from France for trainer Pascal Bary having finished third of nine in the Prix Gany at Longchamps and connections opting to throw him into a Group 1 on British debut.

Fourteen runners look set for the start in race four of the cracking Epsom card on Friday at 3.45 – the Nifty 50 handicap – over the 1m2f distance. Ben Brookhouse's I Still Have Faith shaped well on seasonal reappearance at Nottingham after a fine 2023 campaign and is taken to score a fifth career win ahead of two Karl Burke runners in Bolster in Liberty Lane, who both won last time they were on track and will have plenty to say in proceedings.

The Group 1 Betfred Oaks is the feature race on day one at Epsom (4.30) and this year's renewal looks a belter, with £311,905 heading the way of the winner. That could well be Ylang Ylang for trainer O'Brien, who was a promising fifth in the first classic of the season in the 1000 Guineas at Newmarket and should relish the step up in trip here for a yard looking for a seventh win in the race since 2015.

Cheshire Oaks winner Forest Fairy looks to be a main player in the Oaks for trainer Ralph Beckett, who is no stranger to success in this race having won it with Look Here in 2008 and Talent in 2013, while Irish trainer Dermot Weld also has a live chance with Ezeliya, who has two wins from three starts and recently scored in a Group 3 at Navan.

After the big one, there are two more races on the Epsom card for punters to find a winner. The Listed Surrey Stakes (5.10) can go the way of Balmacara, trained by Eve Johnson-Houghton, who was a ready winner at Doncaster just over a month ago in a novice stakes contest.

Finally, the day one card comes to a close at 5.40 with the 12-runner class two handicap over the seven furlong trip and preference in the finale goes to the Roger Varian-trained Mission To Moon, who returned from a seven-month absence to score in fine style at Goodwood a month ago and is bred from a family who gets better with age.

Epsom selections – Friday (via **Royal Ascot odds**)

2.00 – New Charter

2.35 – Bopedro

3.10 – Emily Upjohn

3.45 – I Still Have Faith

4.30 – Forest Fairy

5.10 – Balmacara

5.40 – Mission To Moon

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Should the Epsom Derby go back to Wednesday?

31 July 2024



The first Wednesday of June used to be for many an unofficial bank holiday. Office, retail and factory staff parties filled **Epsom Downs** enjoying a day off and the annual **Epsom Derby** flat-race. The Epsom High Street shops used to close.

Of course, this year the Epsom Derby will take place on Saturday 1st June and the shops will remain very much open.

In a bold statement aimed at reviving the charm and prominence of the Epsom Derby, retired jockey **Dane O'Neill** has suggested returning the event to its traditional Wednesday slot. This proposal comes in light of apparent declining attendances and the Derby's diminishing distinctiveness against competitors like Royal Ascot.

O'Neill was speaking to Boyle Sports, who offer the latest odds for the Epsom Derby event, said "I think they have messed things up by moving it around a lot, and as a result has lost its identity for the wider public. We have seen it under several different guises. For the aficionado it is always going to be the Epsom Derby, one of the mainstays of English racing, but they have changed it so much that it has lost its spark."

For much of the 20th century, the Epsom Derby was synonymous with the first Wednesday in June. This midweek scheduling created a unique atmosphere, drawing massive crowds not only for the race but also for a festive day out. Historically, even Parliament would adjourn to allow members to attend, highlighting the event's national significance.

However, in 1995, the race was moved to Saturday in a bid to boost attendances and television ratings, a decision that has since been met with mixed reactions.

The switch to Saturday was intended to increase visibility and attendance, capitalizing on the weekend's leisure time. Yet, O'Neill and other critics argue that this move has diluted the Derby's unique character, making it just another event in a crowded sporting calendar. O'Neill believes that returning to a Wednesday would help restore the Derby's distinctiveness and might reignite public interest by creating a midweek spectacle that stands out on its own.

Epsom's course is renowned for its challenging nature, likened by O'Neill to a rollercoaster ride with its steep climbs and sharp turns, particularly at Tattenham Corner. This distinctive track demands exceptional skill from both horse and jockey, adding to the race's allure and prestige.

The Derby remains a cornerstone of English flat racing, celebrated for its history and the high calibre of competition it attracts.

Do you have a view? Write to our letters page.

Images credit: @EpsomRacecourse

Epsom Derby week read?

31 July 2024



A tale of triumph and tragedy, dreams and disasters aptly describes the life of **Bernard Dillon**, as detailed in a new book by **Stephen Fernane**. This captivating biography delves into the extraordinary journey of Dillon, who won the prestigious **Epsom Derby** in 1910 on **Lemberg**. The 2024 Epsom Derby takes place on Saturday 1st June.

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Dillon on 1910 Derby winner Lemberg Agence Rol – Gallica Digital Library Public Domain

For the first time since Bernard's death in 1941, a book captures his astonishing rise to success and his subsequent fall from grace due to heavy drinking. From a talented apprentice to a shrewd professional, Bernard Dillon won the Epsom Derby and the Grand Prix de Paris, epitomizing a life of sporting triumph and human tragedy.

In 1901, at the tender age of thirteen, Bernard left Kerry with dreams of becoming a jockey in England. Remarkably, within three years, he had become the most popular sporting personality in both Britain and Ireland.

Stephen Fernane reveals that his fascination with Bernard's sporting achievements and the overshadowing sadness of his later years inspired him to write this book. The fact that Bernard's story is not widely known also motivated him.

As reported in the Irish Independent on 25th May the author said;

"Discovering Bernard's career and learning about all he achieved is what inspired me to write it. The inner demons that led to his demise in later life are just as fascinating. To think that very little is known about someone as colourful and complex as Bernard Dillon is astonishing," Stephen said.

The book, titled *The Life and Times of Bernard Dillon: The Narie that Won the Derby*, nods to Bernard's birthplace at Caherina in Strand Road, Tralee, in 1887.

"I want to bring Bernard home for the book launch. To bring his story back to where it all started, and present it to people who might not know about him. That is the best tribute I can give him. Bernard is a 'Narie' for sure, which is why the Kerins O'Rahilly's GAA Club is the appropriate venue. It's his spiritual home as he was born only a few yards from the clubhouse," Stephen explained.

Bernard Dillon's journey from 1901 to 1911 was anything but smooth as he grappled with celebrity and adversity. Sadly, his downfall included domestic abuse and the mistreatment of his wife, the famous music hall artist Marie Lloyd.

Bernard and Marie met in 1905 and began a turbulent relationship. They were Edwardian England's first celebrity couple, with Marie eighteen years older than Bernard. However, notoriety came at a cost. Bernard's downfall began when he lost his jockey's licence in 1913 over gambling allegations, marking the end of his reputation as a superstar.

Stephen believes it was essential to write Bernard's story due to the fragmented way it exists in the archives. With Marie Lloyd being the more famous personality, information about Bernard's life is usually viewed through the lens of Marie's biographers rather than Bernard's perspective.

"He wrote his memoir in 1922 which has largely been ignored until now. While he does not explain the more violent side to his personality in the memoir, I was able to solve this by reading through many court sittings he appeared before," Stephen said.

"Even though the court charges are upsetting to read, my aim is to show Bernard's opposing sides – not just him as a famous jockey. There are examples of closeness and intimacy between the couple that have never been written about before now," he added.

"There is a chapter about Bernard and Marie being incarcerated at Ellis Island in 1913 because they were unmarried. It's staggering to imagine two of the most famous people in Edwardian England being detained with hundreds of immigrants.

"They were the Posh and Becks of their time, for sure. As for Bernard's active service during WWI, a judge accused him of engaging in more violence in London than on the Western Front! Nothing was ever straightforward in Bernard's life from the time he left Tralee in short pants," Stephen explained.

Stephen sums up Bernard's life as 'totally unorthodox' and emphasizes that the book is about more than just horseracing.

"I wouldn't want anyone to get the impression the book is solely about horses. Significant though they are in Bernard's life, there is an undertone to the book that symbolizes a tragic love story between two people trying to deal with fame and

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infamy," he said.

"This is a global story that started in a quiet Kerry street and extended to far-off places like America, South Africa, and the Middle East. I just felt it was time for Bernard's story to be told in his own words. I think the book is fair to him and shows that no matter how successful we are in life, we are vulnerable to self-destruction," Stephen said.

The Life and Times of Bernard Dillon: The Narie that Won the Derby will be launched on June 6.

The book is priced at €15 and is available at www.buythebook.ie/bernarddillon.

Top image: By Leslie Ward – Published in Vanity Fair, 12 September 1906, as "Men of the Day" Number 1031. Public Domain and background By Hywel Williams, CC BY-SA 2.0

Epsom's flat season springs into action

31 July 2024



The Flat racing season gets underway at Epsom on Tuesday with the Spring Meeting – a competitive six-race card to kick off the new campaign at the Surrey track.

Racing gets underway at 2.10 with a 13-runner handicap before rounding off at 5.05 with another big field handicap, this time with 11 set to head to post.

The opener (2.10) gets the new season underway and it's set to be a fast and furious 5f sprint. Last year's winner of this race, Lihou, is back to defend his crown having returned to the turf after some less than impressive outings on the all-weather over the winter. The chief threat to the reigning champion could come from Glory Hunter, who won in the mud over this distance at Thirsk a fortnight ago.

Race two on the card (2.40) is the Blue Riband Trial Stakes, seen by many as a trial for the Epsom Derby later this year. Chief Little Rock doesn't hold a Derby entry but sets the standard in the Trial on Tuesday, having finished second in both the Beresford Stakes at the Curragh and the Autumn Stakes at Newmarket. Arabic Legend is worth keeping an eye on as well, second in a listed race at Salisbury last season before switching to a new yard having disappointed in the Autumn Stakes.

The third race of the afternoon (3.20) is a class two handicap over the 1m2f trip around Epsom and the preference is for Qitaal, trained by Charlie Johnston, who returned to racing after two years off to score at Doncaster and can defy a 7lb hike in the weights here to make it two wins from his last two runs.

Race four (3.55) sees 13 runners head to the start for the 1m4f handicap in class three and Sussex trainer Gary Moore sends Champagne Piaff to Epsom – and with a very eye catching jockey booking to boot with one of the world's best Flat jockeys, Ryan Moore, set to get the ride. He is very much of interest in this one, but could find stern competition from Splendent, who is back at his optimum trip having previously ran over two miles and not found it to his liking.

The penultimate race on the card (4.30) is a novice stakes over the extended one mile trip and the selection is for the Harry Charlton-trained Midair, second of nine in a Goodwood maiden and subsequently only narrowly beaten at Kempton in the final strides last time out.

Finally, the Epsom card comes to a close (5.05) with the 1m handicap for three-year-old's and the preference here is for Mr Baloo, who secured a third career win at Kempton last time out and a winner of a Nursery contest at Epsom back in October last year so track experience could come to the fore.

Epsom selections – Tuesday (*via* **Punchestown odds**)

2.10 – Lihou

2.40 – Chief Little Rock

3.20 – Qitaal

3.55 – Champagne Piaff

4.30 – Midair

5.05 – Mr Baloo

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