



ROYAL ASCOT

DAY 1 PREVIEW

TUESDAY 16 JUNE

RACE 1

THE QUEEN ANNE STAKES (CLASS 1) (GROUP 1)
1M

PRIZE MONEY
£800,000

RACE 2

THE COVENTRY STAKES (CLASS 1) (GROUP 2)
6F

PRIZE MONEY
£200,000

RACE 3

THE KING CHARLES III STAKES (CLASS 1) (GROUP 1)
5F

PRIZE MONEY
£700,000

RACE 4

THE ST JAMES'S PALACE STAKES (CLASS 1) (GROUP 1)
1M

PRIZE MONEY
£700,000

RACE 5

THE ASCOT STAKES (CLASS 2 HERITAGE HANDICAP) (GBBPLUS RACE)
2M 4F 4Y

PRIZE MONEY
£120,000

RACE 6

THE WOLFERTON STAKES (CLASS 1) (LISTED RACE)
1M 2F 6Y

PRIZE MONEY
£125,000

RACE 7

THE COPPER HORSE STAKES (CLASS 2 HANDICAP) (GBBPLUS RACE)
1M 6F 48Y

PRIZE MONEY
£120,000

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KEVIN BLAKE TIPS



I will make no apologies. Royal Ascot is my favourite race meeting of the year. It isn't even close. Nothing compares to it in terms of the combination of fiercely-competitive world-class action on the track coupled with the most incredible setting and sense of real significance and occasion. It is in a class of its own and there is nowhere on the planet where it is more difficult for the participants to have a winner.

14:30 | QUEEN ANNE STAKES

This meeting is famous for erupting into life from the very first race and it is the Queen Anne Stakes (14:30) that opens the show in a spectacular manner. The race is made appealing from a betting perspective as I am very happy to oppose the favourite Notable Speech. He is a wonderful horse and has the most magnificent turn of foot, but the stiff straight mile at Ascot does not at all compliment that potent weapon. He is easy to oppose and that opens up an attractive range of options for how to play the race.

One that is well armed for this test is the William Haggas-trained **MORE THUNDER** and he is my

selection. The five-year-old showed remarkable improvement when dropped right back in trip to six and then seven furlongs last year, winning the Hungerford Stakes at Newbury. He shaped throughout the season that a return to a mile would be suitable and he made a highly-promising return to action in the Lockinge Stakes at Newbury when second to Notable Speech last month.

He seems sure to improve from that in sharpness terms, but more so than anything this much stiffer straight mile will very much play to his strengths. He looks to have an excellent chance.



More Thunder ridden by jockey Tom Marquand on their way to winning the Visit Malta Hungerford Stakes at Newbury Racecourse

KEVIN BLAKE TIPS

Continued

15:40 | THE KING CHARLES III STAKES

The King Charles III Stakes (15:40) is the first big international dust-up of the week. As much as it pains me, it is an inescapable reality that sprinters trained in Australia on just on a different level to the European-trained sprinters that are lining up in opposition to them this week. There are levels to everything and the level of the local sprinters simply isn't world class. In contrast, the Bjorn Baker-trained **OVERPASS** is a world-class sprinter and I reckon he'll show that to everyone on this stage.

While the Australians have enjoyed plenty of success with sprinters at Royal Ascot over the last 25 years, there have been a few busts thrown in there too. However, horses with profiles like that of Overpass, a seven-year-old gelding, appeal as being much the likeliest to

reproduce something like their best form at Royal Ascot.

The pick of his form puts him lengths clear of his rivals here, with him having run huge behind Ka Ying Rising in the Everest last October and essentially been in the mix of pretty much every Group 1 sprint that he could get involved in for the last few years. Interestingly, there is even a chance that this stiff five furlongs will prove ideal for him, as Group 1 opportunities over five furlongs in Australia are remarkably light in number, so he has spent most of his career showing great speed over six furlongs only to often fade close home.

I think he might just put on a show here and underline the gap between the hemispheres in this division.

16:20 | ST JAMES'S PALACE STAKES

The final race of interest is a real belter, the St James's Palace Stakes (16:20). The focus of the contest is sure to be the rematch from the 2000 Guineas between Bow Echo and Gstaad. My own view is that the two should be a little closer together in price than they are, but the one that is the wrong price in the market at the time of writing is the Aidan O'Brien-trained **PUERTO RICO**.

The son of Wootton Bassett was a teak-tough juvenile that raced eight times and progressed relentlessly from start-to-start. He really took off in terms of improvement when stepped up to seven furlongs and then a mile, winning the Champagne Stakes at Doncaster, the Prix Jean-Luc Lagardere at Longchamp and the Criterium International at Saint-Cloud. In fact, he finished the

season with an official rating of 119 making him the equal of Gstaad and 4lb higher than Bow Echo.

Now, their fortunes have turned slightly this year, with Bow Echo producing a brilliant performance to beat Gstaad in the 2000 Guineas before Gstaad advertised that form with a fine victory of his own in the Irish 2,000 Guineas. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico let his supporters down when just fourth in the Poule d'Essai Des Poulains, but the market seems to have overreacted to that defeat. He is very comfortable making the running and it would be very dangerous for his rivals to underestimate him.

I can see him very much outrunning his odds.

KEVIN BLAKE'S BEST BETS

14:30 | QUEEN ANNE STAKES



MORE THUNDER

15:40 | KING CHARLES III STAKES



OVERPASS

16:20 | ST JAMES'S PALACE STAKES



PUERTO RICO

QUEEN ANNE STAKES

HORSE BY HORSE
GUIDE

BY TOM COLLINS



1. CICERO'S GIFT (DRAWN 6)

*Jockey: Jason Watson | Trainer: Charlie Hills*

Talented miler but he looked a cut below Group 1 level prior to causing an almighty shock at 100-1 in the Queen Elizabeth II Stakes on Champions Day here in October. Unsurprisingly, that form hasn't worked out particularly well and his two subsequent defeats suggest it was something of a fluke. Unlikely to feature at the business end, especially as he prefers softer ground.

2. DAMYSUS (3)

*Jockey: James Doyle | Trainer: John & Thady Gosden*

Flashy and unexposed four-year-old who comes here with something to prove. His victories in the Group 3 Darley Stakes and Group 3 Earl Of Sefton Stakes in October and April respectively hinted that he may have the talent to make his mark at the top level, but his most recent sixth-placed finish on the Lockinge proved that he remains someway off the best milers in the country. Connections stick to this trip, but his future may lie over further.

3. DOCKLANDS (4)

*Jockey: Mark Zahra | Trainer: Harry Eustace*

Never write off a course specialist - that is what you are always told in this game - and Docklands would be a prime example of a horse who runs all of his best races at one course. Eight appearances at Ascot, from handicap company all the way up to Group 1s, have resulted in three track-and-trip victories and five places. His most notable success came in this race 12 months ago when he fended off Rosallion and Notable Speech among others, but he enters this renewal after an ambitious overseas preparation and will have to be right at his best to retain his crown.

4. FIRST CONQUEST (2)

*Jockey: Ryan Moore | Trainer: Charlie Appleby*

Longest price on the board and the obvious third string from the Charlie Appleby stable despite the interesting booking of Ryan Moore. First Conquest has only raced away from Godolphin bases at Newmarket and Meydan on two occasions, and those efforts were underwhelming at much lower levels. He was firmly put in his place by Opera Ballo at Sandown when last seen, and his role here is questionable given his closing style and lack of quality.

5. MORE THUNDER (9)

*Jockey: Tom Marquand | Trainer: William Haggas*

Rapid improver last year once switched to the care of William Haggas, which saw him progress from a handicap win off a mark of 87 to a Group 1 fourth-placed finish in the Prix de la Foret. On that route he took in the Wokingham handicap at this meeting, a race he almost certainly should have won but for leaving his challenge too late. This season's reappearance in the Lockinge proved that he can play a major role at the top level and he was interestingly just 0.03s slower than Notable Speech through the final two furlongs. He should strip fitter for that run and make a big impact in this contest.

6. NOTABLE SPEECH (1)

*Jockey: William Buick | Trainer: Charlie Appleby*

Explosive miler with exceptional acceleration and five Group 1 victories to his name, which makes him one of the best horses to currently wear the famous Godolphin silks. His talent and suitability to the trip and ground aren't up for debate, but an elusive Ascot victory still awaits (0/2 at the track). He pulled hard en route to finishing fourth in this race last year and will be better suited to a faster-run renewal, a situation that may occur if stablemate Opera Ballo is forwardly ridden. If he is within range after settling in the early part of the race, watch out!

QUEEN ANNE STAKES

HORSE-BY-HORSE GUIDE

Continued

7. OPERA BALLO (7)



Jockey: Billy Loughnane | **Trainer:** Charlie Appleby

'Enthusiastic' and 'energetic' are two words that come to mind alongside 'uber talented' when analysing Opera Ballo. A son of Ghaiyyath, if you couldn't guess by his style of racing, this four-year-old is the new face on the scene and warrants unlimited respect based on his victories in the Group 1 Jebel Hatta and Group 2 bet365 Mile. A case can be made that he was flattered by the way the latter contest was run (104.45% Finishing Speed Percentage and he was forwardly placed), but this may transpire in a similar way. His CV doesn't come close to Notable Speech's at this stage but the handicapper has already awarded him an identical official rating.

8. TEN BOB TONY (8)



Jockey: Kieran Shoemark | **Trainer:** Ed Walker

A couple of Group 3 victories, including a gutsy strike in the Tattenham Corner Stakes ten days ago, headline this flashy colt's portfolio and much more will be needed to strike at this higher level. All of his best form has come on rain-softened ground and the weather forecast doesn't indicate that he will be favoured by the going description on Tuesday.

9. ZEUS OLYMPIOS (5)



Jockey: Clifford Lee | **Trainer:** Karl Burke

If you like Opera Ballo, surely you also have to shortlist this colt given he firmly put that rival in his place when a two-length victor of the Group 2 Joel Stakes at Newmarket last season? Zeus Olympios travelled powerfully throughout that contest and left Opera Ballo in his wake as he quickened clear for an emphatic victory off level weights. That form was reversed in a slowly-run bet365 Mile in April, and Zeus Olympios was only third behind Notable Speech and More Thunder in the Lockinge, but neither formline gives him much to find on the market protagonists.



TOM COLLINS'S VERDICT



Notable Speech is a star performer and a repeat of his winning performances in either the Breeders' Cup Turf in November or last month's Lockinge would make him hard to beat. However, his winless Ascot record and unsurprisingly skinny price left me looking elsewhere and **MORE THUNDER** stood out as an exceptional alternative. William Haggas's charge has just two lengths to find with Notable Speech on their Newbury efforts and should be fitter for this assignment. Zeus Olympios would be my other shortlisted runner for the tricast.

TIMEFORM TIPS

RACE

1

1st **NOTABLE SPEECH** (6)

2nd **OPERA BALLO** (7)

3rd **MORE THUNDER** (5)

RACE

2

1st **CONFUCIUS** (5)

2nd **GREAT BARRIER REEF** (10)

3rd **CUT A DASH** (6)

RACE

3

1st **OVERPASS** (9)

2nd **NIGHT RAIDER** (8)

3rd **MISSION CENTRAL** (26)

RACE

4

1st **BOW ECHO** (1)

2nd **GSTAAD** (2)

3rd **PUERTO RICO** (5)

RACE

5

1st **REACHING HIGH** (4)

2nd **BAHADUR** (11)

3rd **TIM TOE** (19)

RACE

6

1st **ROYAL RHYME** (14)

2nd **GHOSTWRITER** (8)

3rd **GALEN** (6)

RACE

7

1st **REAL DREAM** (6)

2nd **HALLELUJAH U** (5)

3rd **STRESSFREE** (2)



Runners and riders in the Ascot Stakes during day one of Royal Ascot



Gstaad ridden by Ryan Moore on their way to winning the Coventry Stakes during day one of Royal Ascot



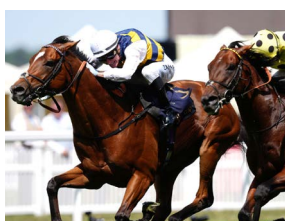
Haatem ridden by James Doyle (near-side) on their way to winning the Wolferton Stakes during day one of Royal Ascot

RACE STATS GUIDE

BY PAUL JONES



No one knows more about the crucial trends behind the races at Royal Ascot than Paul Jones, who has compiled comprehensive Stats Guides for every Group 1 race on the Tuesday of Royal Ascot 2026.



Docklands winning the Queen Anne Stakes in 2025

QUEEN ANNE STAKES

TUESDAY 16TH JUNE, 14:30PM

Group 1 | Class 1 | 4YO plus

☑ POSITIVES:

Contested the Lockinge Stakes
Four-year-olds
Owned by Godolphin

☒ NEGATIVES:

Failed to win a Group 1
Aged over five
Fillies/mares (unless a Breeders' Cup winner)
Seasonal debutantes



American Affair ridden by Paul Mulrennan (left) on their way to winning the King Charles III Stakes during day one of Royal Ascot

KING CHARLES III STAKES

TUESDAY 16TH JUNE, 15:40PM

Group 1 | Class 1 | 3YO plus

☑ POSITIVES:

Last-time-out winners
Trained in Australia
Contested the Temple Stakes
A top-four finish in the Prix du Gros-Chene
Fillies/mares
Previous winner of the race

☒ NEGATIVES:

Finished outside the first two last time out
Failed to win a Group 1 or Group 2
Failed to win a Group race over 5f



Field Of Gold ridden by Colin Keane on their way to winning the St James's Palace Stakes

ST JAMES'S PALACE STAKES

TUESDAY 16TH JUNE, 16:20PM

Group 1 | Class 1 | 3YO only

☑ POSITIVES:

Ran in both the 2000 Guineas and Irish 2,000 Guineas
A Group 1 winner (especially a European Guineas)
The favourite
Trained by Aidan O'Brien (especially if contested the Irish 2,000 Guineas) or John & Thady Gosden
Drawn low
Won last season's Coventry Stakes

☒ NEGATIVES:

Yet to contest a Group 1, unless trained by John & Thady Gosden
Failed to finish in the first four in any form of 2000 Guineas, unless trained by John & Thady Gosden
Fewer than two starts this season

ROYAL ASCOT

HORSES TO FOLLOW

BY DECLAN RIX



15:05 | COVENTRY STAKES

(GROUP 2) (2YO) – 6F

CUT A DASH



As the market suggests, Ballydoyle trainee Confucius will take a fair bit of stopping in Tuesday's Coventry Stakes, but the Richard Hannon-trained **CUT A DASH** looks a solid value alternative at a double figure price on the back of an impressive York debut success.

The nicely bred son of Starspangledbanner overcame pre-race inexperience and early in-race greenness to score by a ready 2+ lengths under Sean Levey, who despite never getting serious with his mount, was striding strongly away from his rivals in the final furlong.

That was over the minimum trip, but the Hannon camp are confident going a sixth furlong will unlock further improvement. Racing over 5f on debut should see him nice and sharp early, in a race many around him in the market won sit and sprint type races on the build-up.

It's not hard to see Denford Stud-owned colt taking a nice step forward with that run under his belt, while Cut A Dash also looks well-drawn in stall 19, next door to the favourite and positioned around many leading chances.

15:40 | KING CHARLES III STAKES

(GROUP 1) (3YO+) – 5F

AMERICAN AFFAIR



There were fewer people than me disappointed with the then 105-rated **AMERICAN AFFAIR** winning a Royal Ascot Group 1 with the world watching last year. I'm sure I wouldn't have felt like that if I backed him, but it's been clear for quite a while, European sprinting isn't in a great place. That makes Aussie raider Overpass the correct favourite this season.

While the case, this year's renewal really does look like setting up well for American Affair in his quest for back-to-back victories. Drawn in 18, he is next door to the favourite with the likes of JM Jungle (14), Big Mojo (17), Overpass (19), Aspect Island (20), Jakajaro (23), Mission Central (24) and Asfoora (26) all close by.

It's not hard to see the main action playing out more standside, a little like last year, but hopefully this time around jockey Paul Mulrennan can get his mount well covered up. The pair didn't manage to achieve that last year but still managed to win; and I remain convinced he can improve further if obtaining protection from the elements.

Twenty-four days ago American Affair ran a huge race in the Temple Stakes despite market weakness. Again though, Mulrennan failed to get any cover for his mount, and in a strongly run race on holding ground, were picked off late by Night Raider. Under the circumstances, it was a huge effort on his second run back after an injury, suggesting he is ready to peak on Tuesday.

ST JAMES'S PALACE STAKES PREVIEW

16:20PM | GROUP 1 | CLASS 1 | 3YO ONLY

2000 Guineas winner Bow Echo looks set to head the market for the three-year-old colts' contest on the opening day of the Royal meeting.

Still unbeaten for George Boughey, Billy Loughnane's mount will once again meet Gstaad, who chased him home at Newmarket before going on to win the Irish equivalent at the Curragh.

Talk Of New York and Puerto Rico are both interesting contenders amongst the field of six, with a whopping £396,970 up for grabs for connections of the winner.



Puerto Rico ridden by Sean Levey on their way to winning the Betfred Champagne Stakes during St Leger Day of the Betfred St Leger Festival 2025 at Doncaster racecourse.

DECLAN RIX...

"This is the race of the week! We've got the winners of the 2000 Guineas, the French 2000 Guineas and the Irish 2000 Guineas all clashing over a mile on the round track at Ascot. However, I am not going to be siding with any of the Classic winners - I like **PUERTO RICO** who is surely overpriced here.

"He was my horse to follow at the start of the season, and he was a little bit disappointing in the French 2000 Guineas behind Rayif. If you go back, his two-year-old form has been franked this season, and he won two Group 1s in France last year without being asked serious questions. At the prices, he is the one to play."

KATE TRACEY...

"So many people are trying to get **BOW ECHO** beat, but I don't see why. Nothing suggests from the last day that Gstaad can reverse the form. His ratings show how good of a performance that was, being only behind Frankel's [Guineas winning] performance in 2011.

"Physically, the George Boughey team say he has progressed nicely and grown plenty - so it will be interesting to see how he has developed since Newmarket. He has such a good temperament, and Billy could put him anywhere - point and shoot."

SAM BOSWELL...

"On form Bow Echo is the one as he looks to remain unbeaten, but there is something nagging at me to think he may struggle here. I am going to side with the value play **PUERTO RICO** here - who has some class form from last year.

"I think he had excuses last time in the French Guineas. After being moved to the French Classic from the English Classic, he may have been a little bit rusty. He will be on the pace here and I think he may be able to dictate on the front end."

PROVEN PERFORMERS IN GROUP 1S AT ROYAL ASCOT – TPD

This race seemed like the most obvious place to start. The clash between **BOW ECHO** and **GSTAAD**, the 1-2 from the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket, is likely to be one of the races of the week. We also have the exciting **TALK OF NEW YORK**. He ran the fastest final furlong in the field on his latest start, but I have been able to pick too many holes in his form to be able to make a really strong case for what would be at least a slight upset in the market.



Bow Echo ridden by Billy Loughnane on their way to winning the TPT Fire Supports St Michaels Hospice EBF Maiden Stakes at Newbury Racecourse

I'll start with some of the expected average figures. The St James's Palace Stakes winner has reached an average speed figure of 35.7mph, rising to an average late speed figure of 37.7mph. The stride averages over this course and distance comes out at 23 ft and 2.35 strides per second as overall race average figures. So, if we take that as the baseline, then both the main players come out with a longer stride and **BOW ECHO** has also achieved an average stride frequency of 2.36 per second in the 2,000 Guineas.

GSTAAD had the better top speed figure of the pair at Newmarket, and he backed that up when recording a similar figure in the Irish 2,000 Guineas at the Curragh, but he has work to do with **BOW ECHO**. If we take the sectional times as a working example from Newmarket, **BOW ECHO** was the faster of the pair in each of the final 6-furlong splits in the 2,000 Guineas. In fact, he was 0.83s, around 5-6 lengths faster over that section of the race.

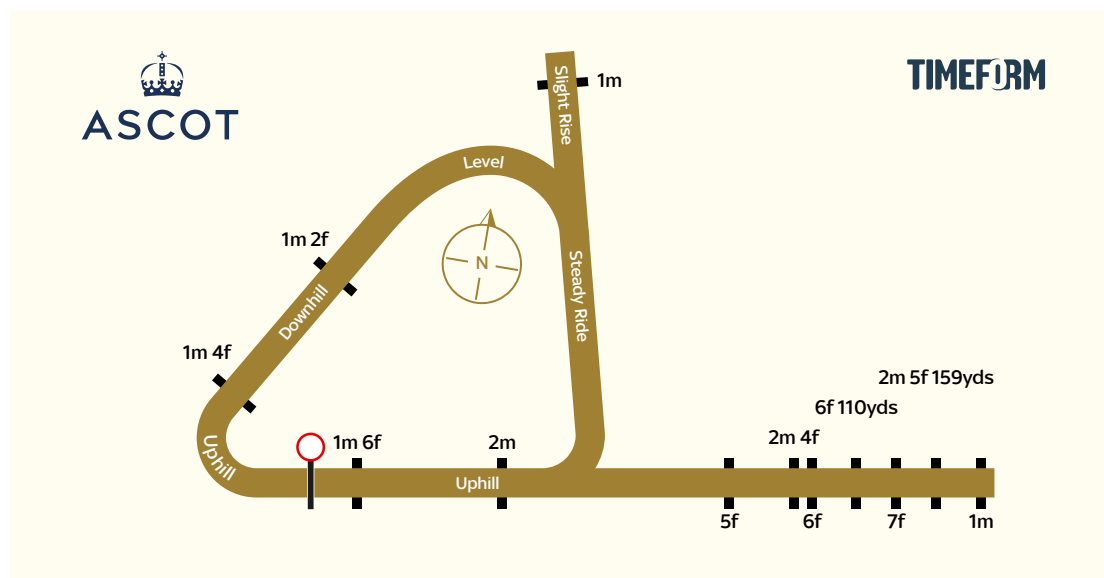
Aidan O'Brien's colt may well have improved for the benefit of that run when winning in Ireland, but **BOW ECHO** would be equally entitled to improve, and I don't really buy this idea that **BOW ECHO** was trained to win the Guineas and as a result there is no more improvement to come. He's won all 4 starts to date and we really don't know where his ceiling may be. In the last 20 years, only Kameko (2020) and Cockney Rebel (2007) have run faster winning times in the Guineas, and I'd have to make the case that his speed will be suited by going around the bend at Ascot just as much.

GSTAAD could also improve, but he will need to. At the time of writing, there is better than even money available that an unbeaten three-year-old classic winner will uphold a winning margin of nearly 3 lengths, and the data would suggest that **BOW ECHO** is the better option as a result.

GUIDE TO ASCOT

By Classic-winning jockey and Sky Sports Racing presenter **Jason Weaver**

“ Because the run-in on Ascot’s round course is relatively short, positioning - jockeyship in other words - is key. It goes without saying that in steadily-run races you want to be towards the sharp end but, whatever the pace, you can get into trouble trying to come through rivals late on. We’re still learning about the straight course, following the relaying a few years back, but in my view it’s more pace-dependent than draw-dependent. Given the right pace to chase, I reckon you can win from anywhere. ”



The round course is a right-handed, triangular circuit of fourteen furlongs, with a run in of 2½ furlongs. There is a straight mile course and the Old mile course which joins the round course in Swinley Bottom. Despite the downhill run into Swinley Bottom and relatively short run-in from the final turn, Ascot is galloping in character. Since the redevelopment, the turn into the straight has become more sweeping and those ridden prominently can be difficult to peg back. Nowadays, the ground in the straight drains quicker than the rest of the course, meaning going descriptions can vary.

