



ROYAL ASCOT

DAY 3 PREVIEW

THURSDAY 18 JUNE

RACE 1

THE CHESHAM STAKES (CLASS 1) (LISTED RACE)
7F

PRIZE MONEY
£125,000

RACE 2

THE KING GEORGE V STAKES (CLASS 2 HERITAGE HANDICAP) (GBBPLUS RACE)
1M 3F 211Y

PRIZE MONEY
£120,000

RACE 3

THE RIBBLESDALE STAKES (CLASS 1) (GROUP 2)
1M 3F 211Y

PRIZE MONEY
£250,000

RACE 4

THE GOLD CUP (CLASS 1) (GROUP 1)
2M 3F 210Y

PRIZE MONEY
£700,000

RACE 5

THE BRITANNIA STAKES (CLASS 2 HERITAGE HANDICAP)
1M

PRIZE MONEY
£130,000

RACE 6

THE HAMPTON COURT STAKES (CLASS 1) (GROUP 3)
1M 1F 212Y

PRIZE MONEY
£175,000

RACE 7

THE BUCKINGHAM PALACE STAKES (CLASS 2 HANDICAP)
7F

PRIZE MONEY
£120,000

CONTENTS

KEVIN BLAKE'S TIPS

PAGE 3&4

HORSE BY HORSE GUIDE

BY KATE TRACEY

PAGE 5-8

TIMEFORM TIPS

PAGE 9

TOTAL PERFORMANCE DATA TIPS

BY ADAM MILLS

PAGE 10

RACE STATS GUIDE

BY PAUL JONES

PAGE 11

GUIDE TO ASCOT

PAGE 12



KEVIN BLAKE'S TIPS



Day three of Royal Ascot brings us towards the halfway point of this wonderful meeting. Hopefully it has been lucky for you so far and if not, don't panic, the road is long and so is Royal Ascot week!

14:30 | THE CHESHAM STAKES

The Chesham Stakes (14:30) is always a really fascinating contest and it goes without saying that stamina is a big key to victory over the seven-furlong trip. One that seems to be slipping under the radar somewhat is the Fozzie Stack-trained **NOLA SOUL**.

The son of Justify realised \$220,000 at Keeneland as a foal and was quietly fancied for his debut in a seven-furlong maiden at Leopardstown that has a strong record

of producing future group winners. He was quite green through the race, but once he straightened for home and opened up his long stride, he took control of the race inside the final furlong and won with a bit to spare. Stamina is an asset for him as he is a particularly long and slow strider that is likely to be seen to even better effect on their stiff, straight track. He seems sure to improve from that experience and a big effort could well be forthcoming.



Arabian Story ridden by Oisín Murphy (left) on their way to winning the Britannia Stakes on day three of Royal Ascot 2025

KEVIN BLAKE'S TIPS

Continued

16:50 | THE BRITANNIA STAKES

The Britannia Stakes (16:50) is one of the toughest handicaps of the week, which is saying something, but I'm going to have a swing at one at a big price in the shape of **JAMESTOWN**.

The son of Ulysses has improved with each of his four starts, most interestingly finishing an excellent short-head second to Bobby McGee in a strong handicap over a mile at Naas in April. The form of that race has worked out well and he came from an unpromising position that day, so the promise of it was clear. He reverted to maiden company thereafter and turned a seven-furlong

contest at Dundalk into a procession, winning by seven lengths. The handicapper put him up 6lb for that win, but he needed every one of those pounds to sneak into the very bottom of this race. His trainer David Marnane has a wonderful record in handicaps at this meeting having won the Wokingham and the Royal Hunt Cup in the past, two races that Irish-trained horses have found it particularly tough to win over the decades.

It wouldn't be at all surprising if Jamestown makes a bold bid to add the Britannia to Marnane's Royal Ascot haul.

17:35 | THE HAMPTON COURT STAKES

The Hampton Court Stakes (17:35) is a fascinating race and Aidan O'Brien might well hold the key with **ENDORSEMENT**.

The son of Wootton Bassett has proven to be progressive throughout his career and has improved from start-to-start this season. His form from his runs in the Derby trials at Leopardstown earlier this season reads well with him finishing close to the Derby winner Christmas Day and the Derby third James J Braddock as well as the Group 1 winner Pierre Bonnard. He had his sights lowered on his most recent start in the King George V Cup at Leopardstown and duly bolted up by seven lengths from his stable mate Amadeus Mozart.

This represents a step back up in class and a drop back in trip, but he very much looks to be the form pick and can continue his progression with another success here under Ryan Moore.



Trinity College ridden by Ryan Moore on their way to winning the Hampton Court Stakes on day three of Royal Ascot 2025

KEVIN BLAKE'S BEST BETS

14:30 | THE CHESHAM STAKES



NOLA SOUL

16:50 | THE BRITANNIA STAKES



JAMESTOWN

17:35 | THE HAMPTON COURT STAKES



ENDORSEMENT

16:15 | THE GOLD CUP

HORSE BY HORSE GUIDE

BY KATE TRACEY



The blue riband event of the entire Royal Ascot week is the Group 1 Gold Cup run on Thursday over 2m 4f.

For many years there has been a group of horses who have shared the staying spoils between them. The likes of Trawlerman, Sweet William, Kyprios and Coltrane have all had their own private battles. But in 2026 we could see a changing of the guard, with young pretenders emerging to try and grasp the baton from their elder rivals. The showpiece contest is set to be another enthralling battle...

1. AL NAYYIR (1)



Jockey: James Doyle | **Trainer:** Tom Clover

One of the elder statesman in the race is the eight-year-old Al Nayyir, who has certainly done the stable merry-go-round in his career. He started life with Charlie Appleby for one run before being switched to Doug Watson for 2022. In 2023 he joined Romain Le Dren Doleuze before Georges Doleuze then took over. Then in 2024 he joined Julien Carayon for one run before returning to these shores and the stable of Tom Clover. He's only officially won once for Clover in 11 starts, with that success coming in Meydan in February of this year. The other time he managed to get his head in front came in September 2024 in a Listed contest, but he was subsequently disqualified after testing positive for a banned substance. He has looked in the best form since that run in his three starts this campaign, resulting in a good second behind the re-opposing Rahiebb in the Group 2 Yorkshire Cup last time out. He wouldn't mind softer ground to see him to even better effect, but that looks very unlikely.



Sweet William ridden by Robert Havlin (right) on their way to winning the Longines Sagaro Stakes at Ascot 2026

2. AL RIFFA (8)



Jockey: Dylan Browne McMonagle | **Trainer:** Joseph O'Brien

Al Riffa was a somewhat surprising declaration, having been expected to run in the Hardwicke Stakes instead - the race he finished second in last year. He took the step up in distance to 1m 6f in his stride on his subsequent start when winning the Group 2 Curragh Cup before going in again over the same track and trip in the 2025 Irish St Leger. The stamina tests kept on coming, and he was an eyecatcher in the Melbourne Cup when staying on strongly from the back to eventually finish seventh. Following efforts around the world have been very encouraging, most notably last time out when a close third behind Caballo De Mar at ParisLongchamp. Again, that trip was over 2m. However, he still hasn't shown he's assured to get this specialist trip, but he's a highly-talented horse who may have more doors to unlock still.

3. CABALLO DE MAR (11)



Jockey: Oisin Murphy | **Trainer:** George Scott

Trainer George Scott has continued to rapidly climb the ranks of late and secured his first domestic Group 1 win courtesy of Bay City Roller in the Coolmore Coronation Cup at Epsom. His leading hope for Royal Ascot is Caballo De Mar, who unlike many of his rivals here doesn't have any stamina doubts. He more than proved he's able to stay 2m 4f when winning the Group 1 Prix du Cadran at ParisLongchamp in October ahead of stalwart-stayer Coltrane. That was also Scott's first Group 1 victory. Since that success, he ran a lesser race at Saint-Cloud when not on a going day before running well on his reappearance in Meydan. A career-best effort followed when tested against some of the best stayers around in the Group 3 Sagaro Stakes, finishing a short-head second to Sweet William over 2m, before he proved his love for ParisLongchamp once again by winning the Group 1 Prix Vicomtesse Vigier over 2m last time out. He's shown massive improvement since being beaten four times in handicaps off marks in the 60s in 2024, and he is now a dual Group 1 winner. But he does have to show it at the top level at Ascot now.

16:15 | THE GOLD CUP

HORSE-BY-HORSE GUIDE

Continued

4. DUBAI FUTURE (5)

**Jockey:** David Probert | **Trainer:** Saeed bin Suroor

The oldest horse in the line-up, with Dubai Future still going at the age of 10. A winner of 10 of his 39 career starts and amassing nearly £2m in prize-money, he's been a credit to all involved. Most of his career is spent abroad nowadays, where he's been able to pick up valuable prizes with wins in Meydan and Bahrain in recent years. However, he did notch a domestic success last time out when causing an upset at 28/1 in the Group 3 Henry II Stakes at Sandown. He beat the re-opposing Sweet William by a neck that day, reversing the Sagaro Stakes form on the same terms in the process. He finished 14-lengths third in the Gold Cup last year, but he can continue to give a good account of himself at this level despite his advancing years.

5. SWEET WILLIAM (9)

**Jockey:** Robert Havlin | **Trainer:** John & Thady Gosden

A quirky character who is also remarkably consistent, as well as a wonderful stalwart of the staying division and a real fan favourite. His owner-breeder Philippa Cooper of Normandie Stud only adds to this gelding's popularity. Now a seven-year-old, however, it feels as though he's been around for twice that long, which is testament to those around him regarding his longevity and appetite to run him. Considering his previous physical (and by many accounts mental) issues, he's had a fantastic career already, with that ability showing no signs of waning. He also has a very good Ascot record, as showcased by his success on his seasonal bow in the Group 3 Sagaro Stakes when fending off the re-opposing Caballo De Mar by a short-head into second. The biggest question for Sweet William has always been his stamina for 2m 4f, which he's yet to answer, and at the age of seven he's unlikely to find those extra reserves at this stage of his career. He's a solid each-way proposition, but unless this is run at a crawl and doesn't drag the stamina out of his rivals, he may be found wanting once more in the closing stages.

6. TRAWLERMAN (2)

**Jockey:** William Buick | **Trainer:** John & Thady Gosden

The reigning champion following his emphatic win in the 2025 Gold Cup, in the process going one better than he managed the previous year when second to Kyprios. The key question for him this year, however, is an entirely different preparation. The positive is that this different prep hasn't been caused by a physical issue, as such, but instead by an eye-sensitivity ailment. Due to this, he will be sporting an equine version of ski goggles in the parade ring and on his way down to the start. He won't be allowed to run in the aid for understandable reasons, but hopefully he won't feel any negative effects after having them removed. Due to his eye issue, we haven't seen him on a racecourse since 18th October 2025, when he was a game winner of the Group 1 Long Distance Cup on British Champions Day. For a stayer, it is hardly ideal to have had no sort of race conditioning before a race as tough as the Gold Cup. The question must also be asked as to how he is intended to be ridden. We are used to seeing Trawlerman exposing his rivals' stamina, which he seemingly has a bottomless pit of, often grinding them into submission from the front. If he isn't cherry ripe, it'll be interesting to see if those same tactics are deployed once again this time around. He is the proven quantity in this sphere though, and there will be no hiding places if he's on song.

7. CARMERS (4)

**Jockey:** Billy Lee | **Trainer:** Paddy Twomey

Carmers is the first of the four-year-old fraternity, and he remains lightly raced after just seven career outings, winning four of them. He won his first three starts, resulting in success in the Group 2 Queen's Vase at last year's Royal meeting. He had the re-opposing Furthur, Rahiebb and Scandinavia all in behind him that day. However, Scandinavia and Rahiebb then comfortably turned that form around in the St Leger at Doncaster in September. Last time out was much better from him when stepping up to 2m for the first time and also switching from blinkers to a visor. He was well on top in that Listed event at Down Royal, but this will pose a much larger question.

16:15 | THE GOLD CUP

HORSE-BY-HORSE GUIDE

Continued

8. FURTHUR (6)

**Jockey:** Colin Keane | **Trainer:** Andrew Balding

A notable jockey booking is Colin Keane riding Furthur for Andrew Balding. Another four-year-old in the line-up, who similarly to the other younger horses has stamina to prove here. His final start of last season came when finishing 11th in the Melbourne Cup over 2m at Flemington. He was too keen that day before making some brief headway, but ultimately he made no meaningful impression after being held up. He was subsequently gelded and has run respectably twice since without posting much to write home about. He was fourth at York behind Rahiebb and Al Nayyir, eventually beaten 7-lengths, before a similar effort when sixth behind Dubai Future and Sweet William at Sandown last time out. He has plenty to prove at this level.

9. RAHIEBB (10)

**Jockey:** Ray Dawson | **Trainer:** Roger Varian

The apple of Roger Varian's eye and the wildcard runner in this year's Gold Cup. Another four-year-old, he too will be taken into uncharted territory over this trip of 2m 4f. He has just the eight career starts to his name, winning two, and was very impressive last time out when landing the Group 2 Yorkshire Cup Stakes over 1m 6f. The gallop was steady at York, but he stayed on strongly in the closing stages, despite edging to his left under pressure, to register his first win since his debut, looking as though a stronger gallop would suit him as well as a further step up in trip. He already has previous with Scandinavia after finishing a neck second to him in the St Leger on his final start at three. That was also his first season after being unraced at two, so he's entitled to bundles more improvement. The intertwining form lines with his Ballydoyle foe can also be found in the last season's Queen's Vase when Rahiebb finished third, half a length ahead of Scandinavia in fifth. He's going to need to take a big step forward again to be winning this, and his stamina must also be taken on trust, but he gives the impression he has more to come still.

10. SCANDINAVIA (3)

**Jockey:** Ryan Moore | **Trainer:** Aidan O'Brien

The new potential staying star on the block, and with all the right connections to expect him to be exactly that. It's also what you want and expect from a St Leger winner. He took the Classic prize in 2025 under Tom Marquand in gutsy style after being ridden to the fore and digging deep inside the final furlong to fend off all challengers. The question that will be thrown in his direction following his St Leger success is that of his trainer; of Aidan O'Brien's previous eight Leger winners, only one - Leading Light - went on to win the Gold Cup at Ascot. However, Scandinavia is of a different ilk, as he was already a Cup winner last year when becoming just the second three-year-old to win the Goodwood Cup in 25 years. Now a winner of his last five races, his only defeat in his last seven starts came at last year's Royal Ascot when only managing to finish fifth in the Group 2 Queen's Vase - a race won by Carmers. In the past year he's won over a range of trips, including 1m 2f, 1m 5f, 1m 6f and 2m, yet stamina doubts over this very searching distance of 2m 4f remain. Scandinavia is a horse who only just does enough, which has been a true hallmark of some of the great stayers. That was showcased last time out when landing the Group 3 Levmoor Stakes at Leopardstown. He was being niggled along from some way out and that pressure continued inside the final furlong. However, he still found enough to take that Group 3 contest, taking his seasonal record to two-from-two. It is expected that his true ability will only surface the higher he climbs. We didn't get to see the full extent and longevity of Kyprios's rein at the head of the staying division, but we may have found his successor in a relatively short time.



Scandinavia ridden by Tom Marquand on their way to winning the Betfred St Leger Stake, Doncaster 2025

16:15 | THE GOLD CUP

HORSE-BY-HORSE GUIDE

Continued

11. MISS ALPILLES (7)



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

Miss Alpilles is a likeable mare who has really managed to get her act together over the past year. Her improvement started when winning a Goodwood handicap over 1m 6f off a mark of 78. Following that success her confidence evidently grew, and she subsequently won a Listed race when upped to 2m for the first time at Newmarket on her final start of last season. She looks to have taken a similar approach of improving for racing this season based on her first two outings, having first finished third at 40/1 in the Sagaro Stakes behind Sweet William and Caballo De Mar - but ahead of Dubai Future - which was a solid reappearance. She then took that form forward to finish second at York back against her own sex in the Group 3 Bronte Cup Fillies' Stakes over 1m 6f, where the very talented Danielle - rated 16lb superior to Miss Alpilles - eventually beat her by just over a length. She won't mind stepping back up in trip here, and for all that the Gold Cup is a whole different ballgame, she isn't without a chance at a huge price.

KATE TRACEY'S VERDICT



It is incredibly difficult to escape **SCANDINAVIA**, and I have high hopes he's going to be the new staying kid on the block, which will hopefully see him ruling this division for many seasons to come.

The runner I think has been overlooked in the market at a monster price, however, is **MISS ALPILLES**. This is a big ask for her, but she has proven she stays 2m and arrives here in good order, so she might be worth taking a small each-way chance on.



Scandinavia ridden by Tom Marquand riding to post before the Betfred St Leger Stakes, Doncaster 2025

TIMEFORM TIPS

RACE

1

- 1st **AIX LA CHAPELLE** (1)
- 2nd **NOLA SOUL** (3)
- 3rd **TIME FOR THE MOON** (11)

RACE

2

- 1st **JOULANY** (6)
- 2nd **ENCELADUS** (10)
- 3rd **TIERRA DEL TORO** (2)

RACE

3

- 1st **LEGACY LINK** (9)
- 2nd **GILDED PRIZE** (5)
- 3rd **JOHANNA WALSH** (7)

RACE

4

- 1st **TRAWLERMAN** (6)
- 2nd **SCANDINAVIA** (10)
- 3rd **RAHIEBB** (9)

RACE

5

- 1st **WE'RE GOOSERS** (10)
- 2nd **CREST OF FIRE** (26)
- 3rd **RICHIE'S ROCKET** (12)

RACE

6

- 1st **ENDORSEMENT** (3)
- 2nd **MOUNTAIN CAT** (9)
- 3rd **MY LOVE IS KING** (10)

RACE

7

- 1st **VAFORTINO** (8)
- 2nd **COLOMBIER** (18)
- 3rd **HICKORY** (25)



Garden Of Eden ridden by Ryan Moore winning the Ribblesdale Stakes on day three of Royal Ascot 2025



Trawlerman ridden by William Buick on their way to winning the Gold Cup on day three of Royal Ascot



Never So Brave ridden by Oisin Murphy on their way to winning the Buckingham Palace Stakes on day three of Royal Ascot 2025

TOTAL PERFORMANCE DATA TIPS

BY ADAM MILLS

14.30 | THE CHESHAM STAKES

AIX LA CHAPELLE



It's a slightly unoriginal selection to start day 3, but I was very impressed by the performance of **AIX LA CHAPELLE** on his debut at the Curragh 2 weeks ago that it was very hard to see past him in this year's Chesham Stakes.

Aidan O'Brien has won this race seven times and this son of Justify really looks like he fits the right profile. He finished ahead of Bull Shark on his debut earlier this month and whilst that horse didn't do a great deal for this form when down the field in the Coventry Stakes, I think he did far too much in front on the far side of the field and so I would rather judge Aix La Chapelle on what he achieved than the collateral form. He was helped by having a target to aim at, but he readily picked up in the closing stages at the Curragh, running the fastest final 2 furlongs in the field and gaining over a half a second on the runner-up in the final 2 furlongs. His stride length peaked above 8m on that occasion and he shaped like a horse who will be perfectly suited to the Ascot hill.

I couldn't find too many runners in this field that matched our recorded race averages for a winner of this race and so if he repeats the promise of his debut run, I would expect it will be enough for Aix La Chapelle to give his trainer an 8th success in this race.

16.50 | THE BRITANNIA

LAUREATE CROWN



The Britannia is a very competitive handicap and I'm having to write this in advance and hope that I am on the right side of the draw, but I was at Sandown on the day that **LAUREATE CROWN** won last time and was suitably impressed by his data to think that he could win again.

Jamie Spencer rides at a 30% strike rate for Hugo Palmer in handicaps and so the switch from Oisín Murphy doesn't cause any concern. Laureate Crown made up ground from the rear at Sandown on a day when it suited horses that were closer to the pace. He ran the fastest split for both the final furlongs, despite looking to be slightly awkward on the outside of the field, recording a race best late speed figure of 36.6 mph.

He has now won both starts this season and looks to have found plenty of improvement as a three-year-old. A winner here on debut last July in a race that contained 9 subsequent winners down the field, he looks perfectly suited to Ascot and should get a good pace to track from stall 16. Having run faster closing sectionals than Organise at Sandown, the difference in price between the pair seemed too big to ignore.



Mickley ridden by Callum Rodriguez on their way to winning the Britannia Stakes on day three of Royal Ascot 2024

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 some of Thursday's key races.



Humidity ridden by James Doyle (second left) on their way to winning the Chesham Stakes 2025

THE CHESHAM STAKES

THURSDAY 18TH JUNE, 14:30PM

Class 1 | Listed Race | 2YO

☑ POSITIVES:

- Had just one start
- The favourite
- Trained by Aidan O'Brien or the Cole, Gosden or Johnston stables
- Owned by Godolphin
- Fillies

☒ NEGATIVES:

- Outside the first four in the betting



Runners and riders break from the stalls during the Ribblesdale Stakes 2025

THE RIBBLESDALE STAKES

THURSDAY 18TH JUNE, 15:40PM

Group 2 | Class 1 | 3YO plus

☑ POSITIVES:

- Contested a recognised Oaks trial
- Won a Group or Listed race
- Trained by Aidan O'Brien or by John & Thady Gosden
- Owned by Juddmonte
- Last-time-out maiden winners
- Did not contest a Group race as a two-year-old

☒ NEGATIVES:

- Not won either of last two starts



Trawlerman ridden by William Buick on their way to winning the Gold Cup 2025

THE GOLD CUP

THURSDAY 18TH JUNE, 16:15PM

Group 1 | Class 1 | 4YO plus

☑ POSITIVES:

- Trained by Aidan O'Brien or John & Thady Gosden
- Won an Ascot Gold Cup or Queen's Vase
- Contested the Henry II Stakes
- Godolphin-owned contenders
- Likely to start no bigger than 15/2
- Won earlier in the season
- Drawn in the lower half

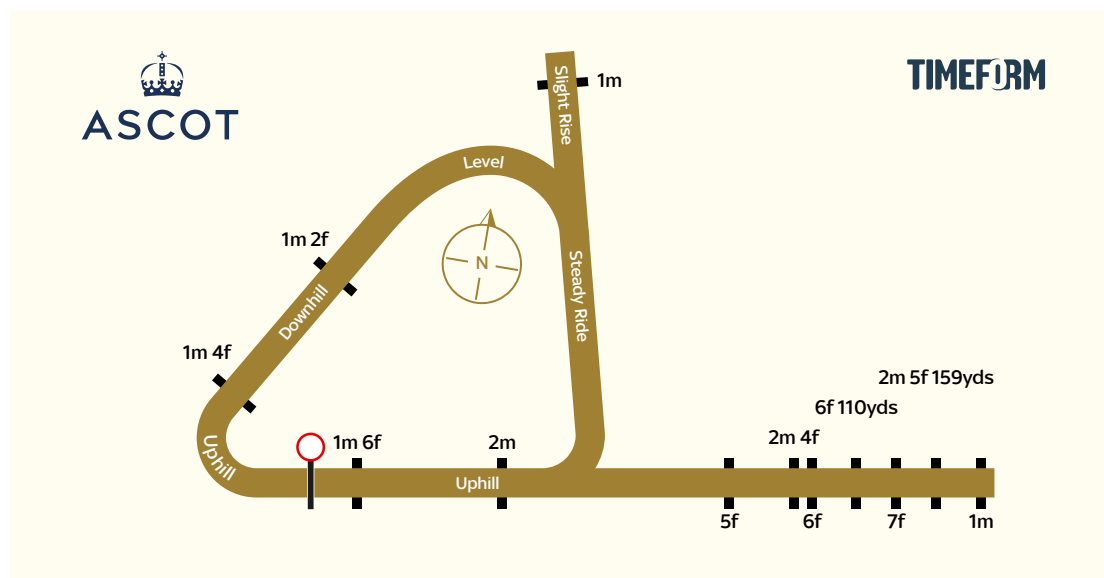
☒ NEGATIVES:

- Aged six or older

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.

