

# THE CHELTENHAM TRAIL

Written by Andy Gibson, professional gambler and racing analyst.

PROFORM RACING



PROFORM RACING

THE PROFESSIONALS FORMBOOK



## Chronological View

**KEY:** PRE = Trail Race Preview. REV = Trail Race Review. Course\* = Meeting Statistics

Date	Course	PRE	REV	Trail Race Name	Festival Destinations
Oct 11th Sun	Chepstow		<a href="#">REV</a>	Persian War Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Neptune</a> )
Oct 25th Sun	Aintree		<a href="#">REV</a>	Old Roan Hcp Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Oct 31st Sat	Down Royal		<a href="#">REV</a>	JNwine.com Champion Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Oct 31st Sat	Wetherby		<a href="#">REV</a>	Charlie Hall Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Oct 31st Sat	Wetherby		<a href="#">REV</a>	West Yorkshire Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Nov 3rd Tue	Exeter		<a href="#">REV</a>	Haldon Gold Cup Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Chase/Ryanair</a> )
Nov 7th Sat	Wincanton		<a href="#">REV</a>	Elite Hcp Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Nov 7th Sat	Wincanton		<a href="#">REV</a>	Rising Stars Grade 2	( <a href="#">JLT/RSA</a> )
Nov 8th Sun	Navan		<a href="#">REV</a>	Navan Fortria Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Nov 13th Fri	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Hyde Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Neptune</a> )
Nov 14th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Prestbury Juvenile Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Triumph</a> )
Nov 14th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Paddy Power Gold Cup Grade 3 Hcp	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Nov 15th Sun	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Arkle Trial Grade 2	( <a href="#">Arkle/JLT</a> )
Nov 15th Sun	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Shloer Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Nov 15th Sun	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Sharp Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Supreme</a> )
Nov 15th Sun	Punchestown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Morgiana Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Nov 15th Sun	Punchestown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Craddockstown Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Arkle</a> )
Nov 21st Sat	Ascot		<a href="#">REV</a>	Coral Ascot Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle/World</a> )
Nov 21st Sat	Ascot	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Amlin Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Nov 21st Sat	Haydock	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Betfair Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Nov 26th Thu	<a href="#">Newbury*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Worcester Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">RSA</a> )
Nov 27th Fri	<a href="#">Newbury*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Berkshire Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">JLT</a> )
Nov 28th Sat	<a href="#">Newbury*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Hennessy Gold Cup Hcp Chase Grade 3	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Nov 28th Sat	<a href="#">Newbury*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Long Distance Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Nov 28th Sat	Newcastle	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Fighting Fifth Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Nov 29th Sun	Fairyhouse		<a href="#">REV</a>	Drimmore Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">JLT/RSA</a> )
Nov 29th Sun	Fairyhouse		<a href="#">REV</a>	Royal Bond Novice Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Supreme/Neptune</a> )
Nov 29th Sun	Fairyhouse	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Hatton's Grace Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Dec 4th Fri	Sandown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Winter Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Neptune</a> )
Dec 5th Sat	Sandown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Henry VIII Grade 1	( <a href="#">Arkle/JLT</a> )
Dec 5th Sat	Sandown	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Tingle Creek Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Dec 6th Sun	Huntingdon		<a href="#">REV</a>	Peterborough Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Dec 6th Sun	Punchestown		<a href="#">REV</a>	John Durkan Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Dec 12th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Bristol Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Albert Bartlett</a> )
Dec 12th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	International Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Dec 12th Sat	Doncaster		<a href="#">REV</a>	December Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">RSA</a> )
Dec 12th Sat	Doncaster		<a href="#">REV</a>	Summit Juvenile Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Triumph</a> )
Dec 13th Sun	Navan		<a href="#">REV</a>	Navan Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Neptune</a> )
Dec 18th Fri	Ascot	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Noel Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">JLT</a> )
Dec 18th Fri	Ascot		<a href="#">REV</a>	Kennel Gate Grade 2	( <a href="#">Supreme</a> )
Dec 19th Sat	Ascot	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Long Walk Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Dec 26th Sat	<a href="#">Kempton*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Xmas Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Dec 26th Sat	<a href="#">Kempton*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	King George Grade 1	( <a href="#">Gold Cup/Ryanair</a> )



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Date	Course	PRE	REV	Trail Race Name	Festival Destinations
Dec 26th Sat	<a href="#">Kempton*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Kauto Star Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">RSA</a> )
Dec 26th Sat	Leopardstown*	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Racing Post Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Arkle/JLT</a> )
Dec 27th Sun	<a href="#">Kempton*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Wayward Lad Novice Grade 2	( <a href="#">Arkle</a> )
Dec 27th Sun	<a href="#">Kempton*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Desert Orchid Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Dec 27th Sun	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Dial-A-Bet Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Chase/Ryanair</a> )
Dec 27th Sun	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Future Champions Novice Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Supreme/Neptune</a> )
Dec 28th Mon	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Lexus Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Dec 28th Mon	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Christmas Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Dec 29th Tues	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Ryanair Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Dec 29th Tues	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Topaz Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">RSA</a> )
Dec 29th Tues	Newbury		<a href="#">REV</a>	Challow Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Neptune</a> )
Jan 1st Fri	Cheltenham		<a href="#">REV</a>	Dipper Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">JLT</a> )
Jan 1st Fri	Cheltenham		<a href="#">REV</a>	Relkeel Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Jan 2nd Sat	Sandown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Tolworth Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Supreme</a> )
Jan 3rd Sun	Naas		<a href="#">REV</a>	Lawlor's Hotel Novice Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Neptune</a> )
Jan 9th Sat	Punchestown	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Moscow Flyer Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Supreme</a> )
Jan 9th Sat	Chepstow		<a href="#">REV</a>	Finale Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Triumph</a> )
Jan 16th Sat	Warwick	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Leamington Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Neptune/Albert Bartlett</a> )
Jan 21st Thu	Gowran Park		<a href="#">REV</a>	Galmoy Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Jan 23rd Sat	Ascot	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Clarence House Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Jan 23rd Sat	Haydock		<a href="#">REV</a>	Rossington Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Albert Bartlett</a> )
Jan 23rd Sat	Haydock		<a href="#">REV</a>	Champion Hurdle Trial Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Jan 23rd Sat	Haydock		<a href="#">REV</a>	Altcar Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">JLT</a> )
Jan 24th Sun	Leopardstown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Arkle Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Arkle/JLT</a> )
Jan 24th Sun	Leopardstown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Irish Champion Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Jan 30th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Cotswold Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Jan 30th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Classic Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Neptune/Albert Bartlett</a> )
Jan 30th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Finesse Juvenile Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Triumph</a> )
Jan 30th Sat	<a href="#">Cheltenham*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Cleeve Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Jan 30th Sat	Doncaster		<a href="#">REV</a>	River Don Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Albert Bartlett</a> )
Jan 30th Sat	Doncaster	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Lightning Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Arkle</a> )
Jan 31st Sun	Punchestown		<a href="#">REV</a>	Tied Cottage Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Feb 6th Sat	Sandown	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Scilly Isles Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">JLT</a> )
Feb 6th Sat	Wetherby	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Towton Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">RSA</a> )
Feb 6th Sat	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Irish Gold Cup Grade 1	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Feb 6th Sat	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Flogas Novice Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">JLT/RSA</a> )
Feb 6th Sat	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Deloitte Novice Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Supreme/Neptune</a> )
Feb 6th Sat	<a href="#">Leopardstown*</a>		<a href="#">REV</a>	Spring Juvenile Hurdle Grade 1	( <a href="#">Triumph</a> )
Feb 13th Sat	Newbury	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Game Spirit Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Chase</a> )
Feb 13th Sat	Newbury	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Denman Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Gold Cup</a> )
Feb 13th Sat	Newbury		<a href="#">REV</a>	Betfair Hcp Hurdle Grade 3	( <a href="#">Supreme</a> )
Feb 13th Sat	Warwick	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Kingmaker Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Arkle</a> )
Feb 13th Sat	Gowran Park		<a href="#">REV</a>	Red Mills Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Feb 14th Sun	Navan		<a href="#">REV</a>	Boyne Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Feb 20th Sat	Ascot		<a href="#">REV</a>	Reynoldstown Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">RSA</a> )
Feb 20th Sat	Ascot	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Betfair Ascot Chase Grade 1	( <a href="#">Ryanair</a> )
Feb 20th Sat	Haydock		<a href="#">REV</a>	Prestige Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Albert Bartlett</a> )
Feb 20th Sat	Haydock	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Rendlesham Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">World</a> )
Feb 20th Sat	Wincanton	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Kingwell Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle</a> )
Feb 27th Sat	Kempton	<a href="#">PRE</a>	<a href="#">REV</a>	Pendil Novice Chase Grade 2	( <a href="#">JLT</a> )
Feb 27th Sat	Kempton		<a href="#">REV</a>	Dovecote Novice Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Supreme</a> )
Feb 27th Sat	Kempton		<a href="#">REV</a>	Adonis Juvenile Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Triumph</a> )
Feb 28th Sun	Fontwell		<a href="#">REV</a>	National Spirit Hurdle Grade 2	( <a href="#">Champion Hurdle/World</a> )

# Supreme Trail

## TRENDS

## PREVIEW

## REVIEW

## KEY NOTES



### British Trail



### Irish Trail

**Nov 15<sup>th</sup> Sun  
Cheltenham**

[Preview](#) [Stats](#)

**Sharp Grade 2**

★  
[Review](#)

**Dec 18<sup>th</sup> Fri  
Ascot**

**Kennel Gate Grade 2**

★  
[Review](#)

**Jan 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat  
Sandown**

**Tolworth Grade 1**

★★  
[Review](#)

**Feb 13<sup>th</sup> Sat  
Newbury**

**Betfair Handicap Grade 3**

★★★★  
[Review](#)

**Feb 27<sup>th</sup> Sat  
Kempton**

**Dovecote Grade 2**

[Review](#)

**Nov 29<sup>th</sup> Sun  
Fairhouse**

**Royal Bond Grade 1**

★★★  
[Review](#)

**Dec 27<sup>th</sup> Sun  
Leopardstown**

[Stats](#)

**Future Champions Grade 1**

★★  
[Review](#)

**Jan 9<sup>th</sup> Sat  
Punchestown**

[Preview](#)

**Moscow Flyer Grade 2**

★★★★  
[Review](#)

**Feb 6<sup>th</sup> Sat  
Leopardstown**

[Stats](#)

**Deloitte Grade 1**

★★★★  
[Review](#)



**SUPREME****PREVIEW**

I think it is important to take a close look at all of the short price favourites at the festival in an attempt to see how much their price is due to hype and how much down to actual substance. In the case of **Min**, he is one of the weaker Mullins favourites on what he has achieved on the racecourse. This is not the same as saying he cannot win, because clearly that is one possible outcome; what I am strongly suggesting, however, is that his current price of around **7/4** is shorter than it should be. Furthermore, it would be no surprise to see him drift between now and next Tuesday.

He travelled in a keen manner for most of the contest at **Punchestown** last time out and jumped quickly and cleanly throughout; additionally, he quickened right away from his rivals in between the final two flights without Ruby having to move a muscle. He posted a very fast time on ground that was described as testing. The third horse home on that day, **Ball D'Arc** has won twice since including a grade two race on his most recent outing, and is now rated 143; nonetheless, I doubt very much that he ran to that sort of level behind the Supreme Hurdle favourite.

**Min** will line up in the opening race with just two runs in weakly contested races to his name; moreover, he will have no experience of the track, the likely ground or the fast and furious big field pace that the Supreme always has to offer. With it being the first race of the festival the field often go even quicker for the Supreme in comparison to any other race at the festival. **Min** might be even better on quicker ground and in a more competitive race; however, he has yet to prove it. Therefore, in my opinion, his overly short price is more to do with his connections recent history in this race rather than on anything he has achieved thus far.

**Altior** has been absent from the race track since Boxing Day at **Kempton** when he beat **Open Eagle** by 13 lengths. This was the first time he has raced behind anything resembling a fast pace. He looked briefly in trouble on the turn for home but shot clear in impressive fashion when taken wide to challenge at the second last flight. He drew well clear of the field from thereon in and had a lot more in hand than the winning margin would suggest. His final circuit time and sectional times compared well with those of **Faugheen** on the same card; consequently, this augers well for his Supreme claims, particularly when one remembers how readily the 2015 Champion Hurdle winner pulled clear of the 162 rated **The New One**.

He had pulled very hard in each of his previous outings this season; consequently, I would suggest that he has done well to remain unbeaten considering how much he has been disadvantaged by the slow early pace in three of his four races. He was just as impressive as **Min** when beating nothing first time out at **Chepstow**, and again when beating the 138 rated **Open Eagle** last time out. In between those two performances at **Ascot** his sectional times and final circuit time compares very favourably with those of **Nabucco** later on in the card; if we chose to take this comparison literally then **Altior** would be a 150 rated horse at least.



Unlike with the favourite, we have racecourse evidence that **Altior** will be suited by a competitively run race; likewise, we also know that he can post a very good time on good to soft ground and on good going which might well be very significant. All in all, he appears to hold rock solid claims for the Supreme Hurdle, even in comparison with the favourite.

The Grade One Tolworth Hurdle at **Sandown** is often a good trial for the Supreme Hurdle. The winner of the 2016 renewal was **Yorkhill** who put up an excellent effort which was particularly pleasing to the eye. He also won in a fast time considering the state of the ground; moreover, he easily brushed aside a horse in **O O Seven**, who is now rated 150 to win by a very comfortable two and a quarter lengths. Being by Presenting, **Yorkhill** might be better still on a sounder surface and it would be no major surprise were he to emerge as the number one contender from the Willie Mullins yard. On the flip side, the horse he beat, **O O Seven**, had to be stepped up to compete over three miles at **Musselburgh** before acquiring his elevated mark. The third home **Agrapart** went on to win the Betfair Hurdle off a mark of 137 and is now rated 150. I suspect that his new mark might be more than a little flattering, however, as the front runners almost certainly held a significant advantage in the Betfair Hurdle.

At **Huntingdon** in January the Nicky Henderson gelding **Buveur D'air** probably made his only mistake at the last hurdle when he was already well clear of a moderate field. He beat a 116 horse by a comfortable 14 lengths giving 7lbs, so the form in itself adds up to very little; the same could be said, however, for one or two of the Willie Mullins hotpots at the festival including **Min**. Previously **Buveur D'air** had put in a much more polished round of jumping on his hurdles debut at **Newbury** in comparison to the odds on favourite **Wait For Me**. He posted a good time and drew well clear of the highly regarded runner up. One downside to the form is that this was a race for hurdles debutants so the unique amount that each will improve for the experience is open to much wider margins compared to races packed with more experienced horses. The other point to make is that the second home **Wait For Me** clouted more hurdles than he jumped which must have seriously affected the strength of his finish.

**Tombstone's** second place finish in the Grade One Deloitte Hurdle last time out will read a lot better than it actually was in reality, as he was one of only two horses to finish off his race. I don't think his festival claims were done any harm by his narrow and possibly unlucky defeat to **Long Dog** in his previous outing at **Leopardstown's** Xmas meeting. His latest effort, however, is a little more concerning. Although he will have a chance if improving for competing on better ground, he is trading at about **10/1** which is quite short on what he has achieved.

At that same **Leopardstown's** meeting, **Supasundae** beat **Silver Concorde** in convincing fashion. He looked good in the finish but will need to be quicker over his first couple of hurdles at **Cheltenham**. He nearly stopped in front over the first



hurdle at **Leopardstown** and was then slow over the second. A reproduction of this start would result in him being beaten before the third hurdle in the Supreme. On the plus side, he is versatile on the ground, he has a verdict over **Yanworth** to his name, he is improving and he looks interesting at a big price. How he copes with the early pace will be interesting but no more so than with **Min**.

**Silver Concorde** has a lot to find to beat **Supasundae** on that **Leopardstown** run; however, his **Cheltenham** bumper win on good going offers some encouragement for his chances. He will hopefully improve significantly for racing on a sounder surface; nevertheless, even though he has only raced on soft ground over hurdles thus far, the fact that he is still a maiden after three tries over the smaller obstacles is still a major concern.

## Conclusions

There is obviously a possibility that **Min** will turn out to be close to the standards set by **Vautour** and **Douvan**; this being the case, he would probably win the Supreme Hurdle with something to spare. On the evidence before us at this point in time, however, I would advocate that **Altior** has the stronger credentials of the two and, as such, still represents a solid each way play at **4/1**, both for a single bet plus each way multiple purposes. For those of you that supported him at bigger odds, I would suggest that a free **14/1** bet is preferable to a **20/1** play which still includes, relatively speaking, plenty of risk.

There appears to be four very strong contenders for this contest as well as a couple of interesting outsiders; therefore, although I believe that **Supasundae** has a good chance of outrunning his price, I have chosen to play him each way at a double figure price 'without the favourite' rather than at bigger odds in the win market.

**SUPREME****REVIEW****FULL RESULT****13:30 Cheltenham – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>ALTIOR</b>	4/1 (2F)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	MIN	15/8 (F)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	BUVEUR D'AIR	10/1

Trainer: Nicky Henderson, Jockey: Nico de Boinville  
14 ran, Distances: 7l, 1½l.

**ALTIOR (1<sup>st</sup>)**

He travelled and jumped so well off this good gallop and recorded a fast time as he drew well clear of some very good horses. Although the Champion Hurdle was run in a faster time, as he was held up just off the pace he recorded the same time as Annie Power from the first hurdle to the winning line. He has a very strong profile for a Champion Hurdle contender and must be very high on the shortlist for next season.

**MIN (2<sup>nd</sup>)**

He took off miles too early at the third flight and as a consequence jumped the fourth very carefully. I don't think it made any difference whatsoever. He is clearly a very good horse and was simply beaten by an exceptional rival on the day.

**BUVEUR D'AIR (3<sup>rd</sup>)**

He drifted like a barge and was held up out the back. He finished off his race in very pleasing fashion but was never able to latch onto the front two from his starting point. I would mark him up as the second best horse in the race considering the way the contest unfolded. Unlike his winning stable companion he will be a better horse on a softer surface.

**TOMBSTONE (4<sup>th</sup>)**

He ran a very solid race and stayed on well without ever being competitive with the best horses. He was outpaced as they came down the hill which may leave his connections feeling they might have gone for the Neptune.

**CHARBEL (5<sup>th</sup>)**



He enjoyed a positive trip round and led most of the way. He jumped well and this fifth place finish appears to be a true reflection of his ability level.

### **MISTER MIYAGI (6<sup>th</sup>)**

He was inconvenienced by a bad mistake at the first flight which put him on the back foot. It is possible that he is flattered by running past beaten horses. Nonetheless, this was still a positive run.

### **SUPASUNDAE (7<sup>th</sup>)**

Unlike two or three horses that ultimately finished in front of him, he raced prominently and was placed to try and win the race. Consequently, I would mark him up on his finishing effort.

### **NORTH HILL HARVEY (9<sup>th</sup>)**

He can be marked up on his finishing position as he was travelling well on the outside just behind the leaders when blundering away his claims at the second last flight. He might be very well in for a good ground handicap before the end of the season.

### **BELLSHILL (13<sup>th</sup>)**

It was disappointing to see him drop out so early as he was under pressure at the top of the hill and going nowhere. This performance from the second last flight was probably quite similar to his previous finish at Leopardstown.

### **SILVER CONCORDE (14<sup>th</sup>)**

He was well fancied by his trainer and he had his ground. He is a classy individual but not one I would trust over hurdles again until he proves otherwise.

## SUPREME NOVICES HURDLE

## KEY NOTES

### BUVEUR D'AIR

29<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Huntingdon – He probably made his only mistake at the last hurdle when he was already well clear of a moderate field. He beat a 116 horse by a comfortable 14 lengths giving 7lbs so the form in itself adds up to very little; the same could be said, however, for one or two of the Willie Mullins hotpots at the festival. Nonetheless, he won this in impressive fashion and posted a very good final circuit time in the process. Given the name of his trainer plus the lack of strength in depth in the race at this stage one would have to think that there is a decent chance that he will be competitive in the Supreme Hurdle based on his two runs over the smaller obstacles thus far.

### MIN

9<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Punchestown – It would be difficult to find fault with Min after this super impressive comfortable victory in the Grade Two Moscow Flyer Hurdle. This race has been won by Douvan and Vautour in the previous two years and the post-race smile on Ruby Walsh's face plus his positive comments would imply that he sees this horse in the same light as the two previous winners.

He travelled in a keen manner for most of the contest and jumped quickly and cleanly throughout; furthermore, he quickened right away from his rivals in between the final two flights without Ruby having to move a muscle.

Willie Mullins suggested that he will probably follow in Douvan's path and head straight for the festival rather than take in the Deloitte Hurdle along the way. This being the case, he will line up for the Supreme with just two runs in weakly contested races to his name; moreover, he will have no experience of the track, the likely ground or the fast and furious big field pace that the Supreme always has to offer. With it being the first race of the festival the field often go even quicker for the Supreme in comparison to races later in the day/week. Min might be even better on quicker ground and in a more competitive race; however, he has yet to prove it and yet is trading as short as **5/4** favourite for the opening race of the festival which is ridiculous on what he has achieved thus far.

### LE PREZIEN

8<sup>th</sup> January 2016 – Doncaster – He jumped well on the whole, travelled supremely well throughout the race, never came off the bridle and drew right away in effortless fashion to beat relatively little in a runner up who will be better in handicaps and on



faster ground. It would be no surprise if he turns out to be well up to the step up in class which is surely what is in store for him next. I think the Nicholls horses are, unusually, a little under the radar at the moment due to the yard having such a shocking time of it lately. If the stable had been winning all before them, as usual, and this one had benefitted from more positive comments than most then I don't think he would be amongst the rags in the market for the Supreme Hurdle. We don't know how good he is due to the weak nature of the opposition; however, that comment would also apply to one or two from the Mullins yard that are currently a lot shorter than this one in the festival markets.

## **YORKHILL**

2<sup>nd</sup> January 2016 – Sandown – This was a remarkable run as he was still cantering when taking up the running at the last flight. This was a fast run race considering the state of the ground and he easily brushed aside a horse rated 145 to win by a very comfortable two and a quarter lengths. He should be better still on a sounder surface and it would be no surprise were he to emerge as the number one Supreme Hurdle contender from the Willie Mullins yard.

## **ALTIOR**

26<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – Kempton – This was the first time he has raced behind anything resembling a fast pace. He looked briefly in trouble on the turn for home but shot clear in impressive fashion when taken wide to challenge at the second last flight. He drew well clear of the field from thereon in and had a lot more in hand than the winning margin would suggest. By my watch he was only just behind the time set by Faugheen later on in the day from the first hurdle to the winning post. The Champion Hurdler was less than a second faster than Altior in between the fourth last and the third last flights; however, from thereon in there was nothing between them right up to the line. This time comparison is a huge compliment to a novice hurdler like Altior especially considering how easily Faugheen brushed aside the 162 rated runner up. Altior is a very strong contender for the Supreme for which he is now a **8/1** shot – for those that chose to support him at **20/1** it is now possible to trade out for a free **10/1+** bet on him if you so wish.

15<sup>th</sup> November 2015 – Cheltenham – The slow early pace was certainly not in his favour once again. For the third time running he travelled very keenly through most of the contest. He may not have been helped by the loose horse as it rather lit him up after the third hurdle – he was already buzzy enough so this was not what he needed. The leader injected some pace after the fifth hurdle and from there to the sixth he was about three seconds quicker compared with Old Guard in the Greatwood. He took it up after the second last and really kicked for home down the hill and was about two

seconds quicker compared with the Greatwood winner between those two hurdles. He appeared to be getting slightly the second best of the argument with Maputo half way up the hill but responded well to pressure to be well on top close to the line. The runner up finished badly lame which might be the end of his career – it is impossible to judge how much this affected the final 100 yards when Altior re took the lead.

He has overcome adversity in each of his latest two contests and shows a really willing attitude. He will surely be better still off a fast pace, he is versatile with regard to the ground and is trained by the right man for the festival novice hurdles. Judging by the various interviews with NH he does not appear to have a more obvious contender for the Supreme. All things considered **20/1** for that race appears to be more than fair and as he is most likely to be rested until his pre festival prep run his price can only go one way unless something goes wrong at home.

31<sup>st</sup> October 2015 – Ascot – He was very keen again and was still running away as they began the turn for home. He took the lead at this point which was more by default than design and drew clear with the DS runner. He had a lot work against him here as he pulled so hard off this dawdle of a pace and then hit the front a long way from home which would not have suited him. I would seriously mark him up on this effort and he should be even better when he settles off a faster pace. His sectional times and final circuit time compares very favourably with Nabucco later on in the card; if we took this comparison literally then Altior and Ch'Tibello would be 150 horses at least. Of course, we cannot take it literally; nonetheless, it is one small indicator amongst many others to take into account. He will take high rank this season – one negative is that he is unproven on anything other than a sound surface.

## YANWORTH

18<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – Ascot – He made all the running here for the first time which was no doubt all part of his education. If we could be sure that he was going for the Supreme then the **16/1** that SkyBet were offering immediately after the race would be more than generous. He is obviously a high class recruit to the novice hurdle division and will be one of the top few novices at the spring festivals over this trip and/or, possibly, the intermediate trip offered in the Neptune. He has brushed aside a decent 132 rated novice hurdler with the minimum of fuss and his performance here has to be that of a 145+ horse. He has a strong Cheltenham Festival run to his name and will surely be one of the best, if not the best, of the British contenders for whichever race he goes for. If a double figure price is on offer when the NRNB rules come into operation then he will be an interesting betting proposition for the Supreme.

## TOMBSTONE



Written by Andy Gibson, professional gambler and racing analyst.

27<sup>th</sup> December 2015 – Leopardstown – He was stopped twice in his run in the latter stages and would have gone very close with a clear run today. He travelled really well throughout the contest and might be a little bit forgotten in the festival markets due to this loss; however, I do not think his chances for March were lessened in any way by this narrow defeat against a real staying type on heavy ground. I would not be surprised if he did not turn out to be one of the top couple of Irish horses for the Supreme or Neptune and I will watch his next race with great interest.