

# Smurfit Kappa Champion Hurdle

## In-Running Guide

3.20pm, Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March

### **Finding the winner?**

#### **The Stats**

*(last 10 renewals with most recent results on right and in bold)*

Winner's Age	7, 8, 7, 9, 7, 8, 8, 7, 5, <b>6</b>
Winner's SP	4/9f, 8/15f, 10/1, 9/2, 33/1, 7/2 jf, 7/4f, 16/1, 10/1, <b>22/1</b>
Fate of Favourite	1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , PU, 3 <sup>rd</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , 14 <sup>th</sup> , <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>
Winning Distance	3 1/2, 4, 3, 11, 5, nk, 1, 3, 1, <b>nk</b>
Previous run	1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , 1 <sup>st</sup> , <b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>

#### **Previous Winners**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Odds</b>
2009	Punjabi	6	N J Henderson	22/1
2008	Katchit	5	A King	10/1
2007	Sublimity	7	John G Carr	16/1
2006	Brave Inca	8	C Murphy	7/4F
2005	Hardy Eustace	8	D Hughes	7/1F
2004	Hardy Eustace	7	D Hughes	33/1
2003	Rooster Booster	9	P Hobbs	9/2
2002	Hors La Loi III	7	J Fanshawe	10/1
2000	Istabraq	8	A O'Brien	8/15F
1999	Istabraq	7	A O'Brien	4/9F

## **The Trends**

- **16 of the last 21 winners had winning form at Cheltenham.**

*(Go Native, Zaynar, Khyber Kim, Punjabi, Celestial Halo and Sublimity are the main contenders with winning form at Cheltenham)*

- **22 of the last 26 winners won their prep race.**

*(Not a great trend for supporters of leading fancies Zaynar, Punjabi and Celestial Halo)*

- **17 of the last 19 winners were within the first six in the betting.**

*(Solwhit, Go Native, Zaynar, Medermit, Khyber Kim and Punjabi look to be the leading pretenders to the crown this year)*

## **In-Running Trading Advice**

There is no hiding place in the quest for the hurdling crown and you have to side with a horse with the speed to hold his position early on, with, more often than not, the winner being in the van throughout. Even last year, when Osana, running very freely in first-time blinkers, went off like a scalded cat, Punjabi and Celestial Halo, who were separated by only a neck at the finish, were stalking the leaders from an early stage. It was not your archetypal Champion, in that Osana's kamikaze role had the field strung out at half-way, turning the race into more of an endurance test than a tactical speed battle, but still only fourth-placed Crack Away Jack came from off the pace. You get the odd exception, like Sea Pigeon, Istabraq and Sublimity, but such is the ferocity of the gallop that jockeys are playing with fire when they adopt the waiting game as one jumping mistake can wreck their chances. Three out is where the race is won and lost. Celestial Halo and Punjabi both reeled in Osana there last year, while 12 months earlier Katchit did likewise with David Pipe's trailblazer before scooting clear, and, though Brave Inca (2006) got an early wake-up call from McCoy, he was playing the stalking role from the top of the hill. The only one to emerge from the pack for a late challenge for honours in recent years was the enigmatic Harchibald, who came there cruising at the second last and was still hard on the bridle half-way up the hill, only to flatly refuse to go past Hardy Eustace.

**Here's a look at some of the leading contenders and some trading advice if you are looking to get involved in-running....**

### **Go Native**

Potential – Back to Lay

*He could potentially become one of the richest hurdlers ever if he wins this and lands the £1million bonus for connections. Noel Meade doesn't have a great record at the Festival, but has kept this fellow fresh and he should arrive at Prestbury Park in top form. The world and his wife seem to know that Go Native is going to cruise through the pack rounding the home bend, but the key question is will he do what his stablemate Harchibald couldn't and put his nose in front on the line. In-running punters are well aware of his running style, so he may not trade as short as some think, but history shows that it's difficult to win the race with a hold-up horse and the safest option is to trade out approaching the final flight.*

### **Solwhit**

Potential – Lay to Back

*Charles Byrnes' stable star lacks the speed of some of these, but he is a gutsy streetfighter and will be staying on up the hill when others have cried enough. Any softening of the ground would boost his chances, as it will blunt the speed of horses like Go Native, but he stays this trip really well and will definitely finish strongly. He's won six of his last seven races and his only defeat was a tactical affair at Newcastle which wouldn't have suited. A strong pace is a must and it will be no surprise if Davy Russell is scrubbing along rounding the home turn, but that will be the time to step in as some of the more flashy runners may not have his guts.*

### **Zaynar**

Potential – Back to be placed in-running

*Last year's Triumph winner has it all to do on the stats, as Katchit is the only five-year-old to have won this race since 1986. He ran a disappointing trial at Kelso, but that was on unsuitably heavy ground and it's probably best to put a line through that. However, his trainer has always said that he's a stayer and this old course is much speedier than the new one he won the Triumph on 12 months ago. The cheekpieces will be back on, but he is unlikely to have the tactical speed to live with the quickest in this race, so he's another who will be doing all of his best work at the finish.*

### **Medermitt**

Potential – Back in-running

*Many pundits believe he would have won the Supreme Novices' last season if he hadn't met with interference up the home straight, but it's also true that Go Native was in front much sooner than he'd have wanted to be. Alan King's grey defeated the current champion Punjabi on soft ground at Haydock last time, but he hasn't been able to live with Khyber Kim twice at Cheltenham this season. To be fair to the horse, the yard weren't firing at that time, but he has always found one too good here. He is another who could get done for speed approaching the second last, but he will be staying on at the death which will see his price contract.*

### **Khyber Kim**

Potential – Back in-running

*He is definitely an enigma, but extremely talented on his day and a change in tactics has seen him take two big prizes at Cheltenham already this season. Nigel Twiston-Davies believes he's found the key to him and he will arrive at Prestbury Park a fresh horse which has always been*

*crucial. He has been found wanting at Grade 1 level in the past, but Paddy Brennan will settle him out the back and if he is still to make his move before the second last that would be the time to back him.*

### **Punjabi**

Potential – Back to Lay

*Last year's Champion Hurdle winner has never received the plaudits he deserves and although he beat nothing at Kempton recently, he travelled and jumped well. He takes his racing very well, is as genuine as they come and is probably a spring time horse nowadays. Some argue that last year's Champion was a poor race and we will know soon enough if that was the case, but he has travelled like the best horse in every race since and punters have no doubt that he can last up the hill. He is also only a seven-year-old so there is still plenty of scope for improvement.*

### **Celestial Halo**

Potential – Back in running

*Last year's runner-up has had an up and down season, but he does come alive at this time of year and he wouldn't have appreciated the soft ground in his last two runs. He does love Cheltenham, having never finished out of the first two in three runs here, and he is certain to run up with the pace, which has generally been a positive in recent years. Ruby Walsh was slightly annoyed with himself last year for chasing Osana's breakneck pace, so he may not be quite as keen to go off as fast this time around. However, he is a true stayer and when Ruby starts shovelling on the coal after the second last that will be the time to get with him. He won't be travelling the best rounding the final bend, but he will keep on finding and it's yet to be seen whether the late finishers will get past him.*

### **Sublimity**

Potential - Back to Lay

*The 2007 winner has looked as good as ever this season, but has just found the likes of Solwhit and Go Native too strong. However, Cheltenham is his track and good-to-soft conditions would be ideal. He looked to have Solwhit in trouble last time and there is little doubt that he will trade much shorter than his starting price approaching the last few flights.*