

totesport Cheltenham Gold Cup

In-Running Guide

3.20pm, Friday 19th March

Finding the winner?

The Stats

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

Winners Age	9, 8, 7, 8, 9, 7, 7, 7, 8, 9
Winners SP	16/1, 9/2, 7/1, 13/8f, 8/11f, 4/1f, 15/2, 5/4f, 9/4, 7/4f
Fate of Favourite	3 rd , 4 th , PU, 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 11 th , 1 st , 2 nd , 1st
Winning Distance	1, 5, 1 3/4, 10, 1/2, 5, 2 1/2, 2 1/2, 7, 13
Previous run	3 rd , 1 st , 2 nd , 1 st , 1 st , 1 st , 2 nd , 1 st , 1 st , 1st

Previous Winners

<i>Year</i>	<i>Winner</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Trainer</i>	<i>Odds</i>
2009	Kauto Star	9	P F Nicholls	7/4F
2008	Denman	8	P F Nicholls	9/4
2007	Kauto Star	7	P F Nicholls	5/4F
2006	War Of Attrition	7	M Morris	15/2
2005	Kicking King	7	T Taaffe	4/1F
2004	Best Mate	9	Miss H Knight	8/11F
2003	Best Mate	8	Miss H Knight	13/8F
2002	Best Mate	7	Miss H Knight	7/1
2000	Looks Like Trouble	8	N Chance	9/2
1999	See More Business	9	P Nicholls	16/1

The Trends

- **10 of the last 12 winners had been placed at the Festival before.**

(Last year's 1-2 are hotly fancied to fill the first three places again).

- **15 of the last 16 winners were aged between 7 and 9.**

*(Not a great stat for supporters of **Kauto Star**, but he has re-written the history books plenty of times before).*

- Paul Nicholls is attempting to become the first trainer to win four straight Gold Cups since Basil Briscoe in 1935.

In-Running Trading Advice

Just like the Big Four dominate the Premiership year after year, similarly the superstars of steeplechasing have monopolised the most coveted crown in recent seasons. The modern philosophy for jockeys is to 'stay handy and avoid the trouble' as there has been a bigger field than usual, 14 hopefuls having the audacity to take on those Paul Nicholls' titans, Kauto Star and Denman, 12 months ago. However, whereas in 2008 Denman forced the pace from a long way out and ground his rivals into submission, his subsequent heart problem had left doubts in the minds of his connections as to whether he was still the potent force of old, so he was ridden with uncharacteristic restraint and, consequently, the race was run at a much more even tempo. This resulted in the rare sight of all but one (Halcon Genelardais had been pulled up) being still in contention as they passed the stands with a circuit to race, a pace which allowed Kauto Star to get into a rhythm in his attempt to reclaim his crown, having been bullied out of it by the aggressive tactics of his stablemate the previous year. Plenty were still in with a chance at the top of the hill, six from home, but two fences later the Nicholls trio – Neptune Collonges, Kauto Star and Denman – had shaken off the chasing pack. Kauto was always going to have too much speed for Denman on the prevailing ground, and after three out he changed up a gear and gradually pulled away, with Exotic Dancer rewarding his place supporters by running on to deprive Nicholls of another clean sweep by passing Neptune Collonges for third. It would seem that Denman's only chance of beating Kauto Star again is to put it up to him early on in the final circuit – a slow-run Gold Cup in 2007 had played into the hands of Kauto – and, while Denman's fall in the Aon Chase at Newbury, has cast doubts, his camp need to be positive.

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

Kauto Star

Potential - Back to Lay

Probably the best chaser since Arkle and a third Gold Cup would be just rewards for an unbelievable horse. His preparation for the defence of his crown has been pretty much faultless and his master trainer has protected him to ensure he is as fresh as a daisy. The long-term weather forecast looks kind for Kauto supporters as it seems unlikely the ground will be soft on the final day. Connections have said that soft ground wouldn't be a major worry, but there is little doubt that good ground suits this fellow better than the majority of the others. It could be argued that a 'back in-running' strategy would be sensible for Kauto, as if Denman takes it up with a circuit to go, people will remember two years ago. However, I'm of the opinion that Denman won't be able to pour it on like he did that day and it's unlikely that the champion will trade much bigger than his SP. He is up against some relatively unexposed types in Imperial Commander and Cooldine this year, though, so it wouldn't be a bad idea to lock in a profit approaching the third last.

Denman

Potential - Back in-running

Paul Nicholls has said time and time again that Denman would come on massively for his run at Newbury and it would, of course, be dangerous to write off the former Gold Cup winner. It may be that his extraordinary Hennessy win took a lot out of him and his best chance of beating his next door neighbour is surely if the heaven's open. Denman is a bruiser and it should be fairly obvious if he is back to his best when the field set out for the final circuit. If a number of them already look stretched, that would be the time to back AP McCoy's mount. There is no better front runner in jump racing than this monster of a horse and he has a habit of breaking hearts. Whether he will be able to do that on a sound surface is debatable, but he is all guts and Kauto will have to be on top form if he is to get past him.

Imperial Commander

Potential - Back to Lay

He has won four of five over the larger obstacles at Cheltenham and last year's Ryanair Chase winner goes into his first Gold Cup with a big chance. The trip would have to be a slight concern, but he is a classy type and goes on all types of ground. He normally runs up with the pace and is a strong traveller so expect his price to contract rather than extend over the first 2 ½ miles of the race. As is the case with all of the leading fancies, it will be interesting to see how Paddy Brennan reacts when Ruby and Kauto mount their challenge. He was just touched off at Haydock at the start of the season, but that race wouldn't have suited Kauto one bit and he will do well to get as close to him here. 'The Commander' looks like a fantastic bet to be placed and may even look like winning at one stage, but a guaranteed profit should be taken before the home bend.

Cooldine

Potential - Back to Lay

He was undoubtedly one of the most impressive winners of the RSA Chase in recent memory 12 months ago and he will be trying to 'do a Denman' by winning the Gold Cup the very next year. Willie Mullins warned everyone before the Irish Hennessy that he would come on a great deal for the run and the way he travelled last year suggests he will be a major player on Friday 19th March. Ruby Walsh, unsurprisingly, has to desert him on this occasion, but Paul Townend gets on with him well and he looks to be Ireland's best chance of lifting this coveted prize since War Of Attrition in 2006. Cooldine nearly made all last time out, but I'm sure Townend won't want to go head-to-head with Denman in a battle upfront, so he will position him just behind The Tank. Similarly to Imperial Commander, he should travel really well during the race, but may just get run out of it towards the end so it looks like a place at best.

Tricky Trickster

Potential - Back for a place in-running

Another who would prefer the heavens to open and the Grand National looks more like his race. However, he showed his liking for this track with a commanding performance in last year's National Hunt Novices' Chase when trained by Nigel Twiston-Davies. Ruby Walsh was at his brilliant best in the Aon Chase, just getting Tricky Trickster up to beat Niche Market on the winning line after Denman had blundered away his chance. This fellow stayed on strongly for a surprise victory and if he can keep in touch down the back straight, he could have a great chance of plugging on for third. There's every chance he could trade at a massive price to be placed and it wouldn't be the biggest shock in the world if Nicholls trained another Gold Cup 1-2-3.