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Handicap Angles - Glorious Goodwood 2019

**(Races to be run Tuesday 30th July to Saturday 3rd
August)**

Our mission at Glorious Goodwood 2019....

Glorious Goodwood takes place each year over five days in July and August on the Sussex Downs. It is one of the great meetings on the British racing calendar....

There's plenty of pattern-class action. And the G1 races – the *Sussex*, *Nassau Stakes* and *Goodwood Cup* – are the highlight of the meeting for the racing purists....

But for readers of the *Against the Crowd* service, it is the big handicap races run at the meeting which will take centre stage....

Huge fields competing for big prize money produce ultra-competitive races and betting markets right up our street – markets in which live horses capable of running big races are trading at big attractive prices....

Our mission at the 2019 Glorious Goodwood meeting will be to isolate and back those horses – with the overall objective of making a nice profit on the week....

We won't be taking any betting interest in the horses the market backs into favouritism. At *Against the Crowd* we never bet the favourites. Our default view is that betting favourites in big-field handicaps is the way to the poorhouse....

We won't be backing any other short-priced runners either. For the same reason....

Favourites and short-priced horses win their fair share of races, but they do so at prices which make it difficult – if not impossible – to get in front over the long-run. The prices are just too short....

Our focus will be on identifying the right kinds of horses at the wrong price....

At *Against the Crowd* we are interested only in identifying and exploiting what the market gets wrong. We are interested in horses the market is under-estimating – horses the market is incorrectly pricing....

It's not an exact science. It's not an easy assignment. We expect to get more wrong than we get right. That's always the way. But we hope to get enough right frequently enough at the right kind of prices to turn a healthy profit on the week. And this report outlines potential angles that will help us meet this objective....

Nick

Nick Pullen

Against the Crowd

July 2019

Strong track records....

Mark Johnston has won ten handicaps at Glorious Goodwood in the last four years. He's placed with another 23. No other trainer can match that haul....

But Johnston ran 105 handicappers in total to bank those numbers....

The challenge for punters is figuring out which Johnston runners will excel on the day. No easy task. Horses from Johnston's yard frequently defy expectation....

Some of Johnston's winning handicappers at the meeting were fancied. Others not. Plenty others that were fancied got beaten....

Johnston will be well-represented and competitive again this year. But he's harder than others to catch right....

A better way of playing the Glorious Goodwood handicaps might be to concentrate your analysis (and/or betting) on horses from a small group of yards with a strong recent track record in those specific races....

The table below shows performance with handicappers at the last four Glorious Goodwood meetings (2015-2018)....

Trainer	W	P	R	W%	P%
William Haggas	5	5	24	20.8	41.7
Sir Michael Stoute	2	8	23	8.7	43.5
Roger Varian	2	5	16	12.5	43.8

The win strike rates are all over the place, but the important figure is the place strike-rate....

In competitive big-field handicaps at big meetings, a 40%+ place strike-rate represents stand-out performance....

Haggas, Stoute and Varian are adept at producing 'live' handicappers for this meeting....

They've been doing it consistently at the last few Glorious Goodwood meetings....

It is reasonable to expect them to do so again this time around....

At the very least, the handicappers each of these trainers sends to the meeting is worth a second look based on the evidence of the last four years....

Round the bend....

In big-field races at Goodwood you can be sure that trouble in running will play its part in multiple races across the week – especially in the races run around the turns....

Off the final bend, everything wants to be on the far side and things get tight for room....

Horses can find themselves trapped in against the rail or stuck behind a wall of horses and with no room to manoeuvre or proceed....

Interference is commonplace. So too argy-bargy. It can be chaotic. And races might be won or lost on the strength of it....

Luck plays a part of course. You can find yourself in the right place at the right time. Or in the wrong place. But skill surely plays a part too?

That's a reasonable assumption. Horses don't go to post alone. They have riders – whose role it is to assist the horse and to place him to best effect in the race....

Given the nature of big-field races around the Goodwood bend, it is reasonable to expect some riders will deal more effectively with the challenge than others....

Getting horses nicely-positioned, having a plan, knowing where they want to be, understanding how and when trouble might occur, knowing how to stay out of it and all the tricks and tactics that come with experience....

And you'd expect that 'local knowledge' to express itself in the overall performance record....

Ryan Moore shows up well. He always does. His 42 qualifying rides produced 9 winners at 21.4%. But the market is on to him....

Andrea Atzeni is more interesting. His 40 rides produced 9 winners at 22.5% and plenty more placed. That's a standout performance compared to the rest....

Atzeni is a man to have on a horse around the bend at Goodwood. And you can consider him a distinct 'positive' on a handicapper in races around the turn....

Find the Stewards' Cup winner....

If you've got a decent 6f handicapper than the race you want to win with it is surely the *Stewards' Cup*....

It's the most valuable 6f handicap on the British racing calendar – and it is run on the Saturday (Day 5) of the Glorious Goodwood meeting....

It's highly-competitive race – a big pot guarantees that – with a massive field of sprinters going hell for leather along the 6f strip....

Such races are not easy to call. But difficulty is there to be overcome. And there are always 'live' horses to be backed at nice prices....

There will be 26 to 28 runners going to post. That's a lot of horses to consider. You can dive straight in. Or you can get a little context and some clues to work with first....

That's what I do. I get an overview and a base to work from by consulting the historic record. The data points to useful avenues of investigation and can help direct your attention to horses of interest....

I've already done that work. Here are the main points you need to be aware of when looking for good bets in this year's *Stewards' Cup*....

- **90s horses are finding it harder....**

The prize money for this race more than doubled in 2015. Bigger prizes attract better horses and the 4 winners since then have all been rated 102+....

Go back further and you find 7 of the last 8 winners of the race had a 3-figure rating....

Horses rated in the 90s are finding it harder. There were plenty such horses in last season's edition. But 5 of the first 7 home were 100+ horses. That was from a total representation of just nine (from 26 runners)....

- **Age related....**

We had back to back 3yo winners in 15/16. That group can't be discounted....

But overall superiority over 17-years (as far back as my records go) was banked by the 4- and 5-yos. They bagged 12 of 17 renewals....

The percentage play is to mark-up young over older. The 6yo+ horses banked just 3 wins. You need a good reason to back one of those in this race....

- **Off a lay-off....**

Just one horse in 17-years has managed to win this race having not been seen on the track during the last 8-weeks....

I can see how that would be. This is the hottest 6f handicap of the year. The best handicappers show up. For some this has been the race their season has been prepared around. Plenty show up in hot form. It's high-standard. And competitive. It might be just that bit tough on a horse lacking match-sharpness and in need of a race.

Some day a horse will buck the trend. But, generally, a prep race is a plus....

- **Big guns....**

William Haggas is a trainer who must be respected with anything in this race....

His record from 2008 reads 2 winners and 2 placers from 8 runners....

Robert Cowell is another handler with a knack for producing the right kind of horse for this race....

He's produced a winner and gone close with two more from just 8 runners in total since 2009....

- **Other useful pointers to note....**

All the last 10 winners had already won at class 2 or better....

All had already won at least one handicap race on the turf flat....

All had won at least twice over the 6f trip....

All the last 16 winners had appeared once at the track or not at all....

4 of the last 8 winners carried a penalty for a win scored subsequent to the entries for the race closing....

10 of the last 16 winners had appeared in the *Wokingham* at Royal Ascot....

Quick on the draw....

At Goodwood the 5f and 6f sprint handicaps are run up the straight....

At trips beyond 6f, races are run around one more of Goodwood's right-handed bends....

Of course, where there is a bend – with some horses running wider than others – the draw can play a big part in the race outcome....

Horses drawn in inside stalls can be advantaged. They get to go the shortest way around....

Whilst horses running out wider on the track – covering more ground from start to finish than those drawn low – face an element of extra adversity that they must overcome....

Many simply can't overcome that adversity. In a field of closely-matched horses, the negative represented by starting the race in an outside stall is simply too big to scale and get beyond....

It is worth noting that races run around the Goodwood bends conform to this inside/outside bias. And horses drawn wide around a bend do find it difficult....

That is NOT to say that horses drawn wide in races of 10+ runners around the Goodwood bends CAN'T win.

Because they can – and some of them do....

But the horses drawn on the **inside** are very much at an advantage. One that is reflected in the results at the meeting....

Over the last four Glorious Goodwood meetings there have been 50 handicap races run around the Goodwood turns with at least 10 horses going to post. 35 of the winners were in the bottom 75% of the draw.

And 36 of the 48 horses to finish 2nd in those races were drawn in the bottom 75% of the draw.

The figures drop off as you travel further down the finishing places, but I'm not concerned about that.

Edges taper out. The effects of an edge are finite. Horses have run well from high stalls. But the low stall horses have found it just that bit easier to win and place 2nd around the bends in these competitive Glorious Goodwood handicaps....

And that's something worth knowing. It isn't knowledge that will lead directly to winners. But it should focus your kind on the fact that you need to have a strong reason to back a horse drawn out wide in such races....

Up the straight it is a slightly different issue....

At the last four Glorious Goodwood meetings there were 17 handicaps run over the 5f or 6f trips in which 12 or more runners went to post....

And you should note that 13 of the winners of those races were drawn in stall 9 or lower....

Horse drawn high have done well. They can win. And they can place. A high stall is not a completely insurmountable impediment to a horse....

But over the last four years at Glorious Goodwood it is the horse drawn in single-figure stalls that have done best in the sprint handicaps run at the meeting....

Of course, what happened in the past is no guarantee of what will unfold in the future....

Stats are just stats. They don't run races. Horses do. And it all boils down to the individual horses that will run....

But it does no harm to be aware of how the various variables play out at specific meetings and in specific races....

It's information you're better-informed with than without. And being just that little bit better-informed is your edge in the market....

After all, when you bet the races, it is NOT the bookmaker you are betting against. It is the other punters....

The bookie is simply the intermediary. He is the market maker who builds an over-round percentage into the book – which acts as his profit/commission for making the market in the first place....

It is other punters that put the money down and move prices. It is those other punters that you bet against. And knowing a bit more than they do can only be a good thing across the long term.

Don't miss my DAILY Glorious Goodwood advice....

My full, members-only *Against the Crowd* service runs all through the week, all year round.

And for Glorious Goodwood and the other big meetings on the calendar, we go daily....

Against the Crowd is an exclusive club that grants access to all my race advice and analysis. Including dedicated coverage of the full Glorious Goodwood week, day by day. And my picks for each day's target races at the Festival....

You are welcome to step inside and take a look around, with a Free Trial....

Find out more about *Against the Crowd* - and help yourself to a 14-day Free Trial - on the link below.

Join me at Glorious Goodwood....

<https://shop.oxonpress.co.uk/ATCEXTRA>

Best wishes,

Nick

Nick Pullen

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