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RACING POST



100 WINNERS



JUMPERS TO FOLLOW – 2024-25

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JUMPERS TO FOLLOW 2023-24

(ages as at 2023)

AFADIL (FR) 5 b g

Afadil is a horse with options. Although nine runs over hurdles in the latest season only yielded one win, he ran well in several decent handicaps and there's also enough in his physique and in parts of his pedigree to think he could easily take to fences. His win at Musselburgh in February was his second in succession at the track's valuable Cheltenham trials meeting and he turned in just about a career best when making much of the running behind Absurde in the County Hurdle, the four who finished ahead of him all coming from off the pace. Solid efforts at the Aintree and Ayr Festivals followed and he'd probably had enough for the season when disappointing in the Swinton Hurdle on his final start. A mark of 130 still looks exploitable over hurdles but now could be the time to get this fluent hurdler over fences. His strong-travelling running style will likely stand him in good stead in that discipline and, given he's only five, it would be a bit of a surprise if he couldn't raise his game further. PAUL NICHOLLS

ASIAN MASTER (IRE) 7 b g

Such is Willie Mullins' domination of the National Hunt game that the Closutton handler fielded five of the eleven runners who went to post for the Cheltenham Festival curtain raiser - the Supreme Novices' Hurdle. Although this was one of the few Grade 1 contests at the festival to elude him, his Mystical Power (also featured in these pages) was just caught in the closing stages. Best of his remaining runners was Asian Master, who had created a good impression on his first two starts for the yard, winning at Thurles and at Navan, and he showed up well to finish fourth. A sharper test in Grade 1 company at Punchestown on his only start since didn't see him in his best light and he dropped away in the closing stages, finishing further behind Mystical Power than he had done at Cheltenham. With only four runs behind him over hurdles, he's capable of better in this sphere, whether it be in high-end handicaps or in Listed and minor Graded company. There's plenty of stamina in his pedigree so expect him to be going up in distance at some point and he's also bred to jump a fence. WILLIE MULLINS

BACKTONORMAL (IRE) 6 bb g

A bumper winner for Margaret Mullins in the spring of 2023, this point runner-up then went on to run three times over hurdles for that trainer in early 2024, finishing placed every time and improving in terms of ratings on each occasion. A change of ownership in April of this year also meant a switch of stables to Gavin Cromwell and Backtonormal found further improvement for his new handler when taking a 17-runner event over a trip just shy of 2m4f at the Punchestown Festival in early May. He won that with plenty in hand too and the horses who filled the places boasted some decent form - the runner-up Answer To Kayf is rated 138 and he had finished fourth in the Martin Pipe in March while the fourth-placed Blizzard Of Oz had won two of his previous three races for Willie Mullins. Backtonormal looks like he will stay a bit further and he can progress

again. Fences will likely beckon at some point in the not-too-distant future but there are more races to be won with him over hurdles first, especially as he steps up further in trip.
GAVIN CROMWELL

BALLEE (IRE) 5 bb g

Having run well in a couple of bumpers in early 2023 for Northern Irish trainer Gerald Quinn, Ballee was bought for £35,000 at the Tattersalls Cheltenham sales by Philip Hobbs in April that year and he made an eye-catching hurdling debut for his new handler that November at Wincanton, finishing third of nine having made some good late progress. He built on that to easily win a novice hurdle over 2m at Taunton a few weeks later. That race worked out well, with the runner-up Matterhorn winning four times over fences subsequently while the third, fourth and fifth all won at least once over hurdles in the months that followed. Ballee also upheld the form when he won another novice over the same C&D in mid-December, this time pulverising his rivals by 24l and more. He wasn't seen again after that until April when he was asked to shoulder a 12lb penalty for his two earlier wins, but he only got as far as the second hurdle before jumping to his right and depositing Micheal Nolan onto the Chepstow turf. Less than two weeks later he took part in a Class 2 hurdle for amateur riders at Aintree and he ran tremendously well under Callum Pritchard to finish second of nineteen behind El Jefe, who came from the clouds. He raced keenly, a tendency he showed throughout the season, and was up with a generous pace throughout, for which he deserves extra credit as most of the horses who contested the finish were held up. He was fancied to go well in the Swinton Hurdle at Haydock in mid-May but he got worked up beforehand and then did far too much in the race itself, eventually pulling up before the last. That was not his true running and we can expect him to resume his progress in the autumn. PHILIP HOBBS

BALLYBURN (IRE) 6 b g

A point winner for Colin McKeever at Loughanmore in October 2022, Ballyburn was snapped up by Ronnie Bartlett and David Manasseh soon afterwards and placed with Willie Mullins. He won a couple of bumpers for his new connections in early 2023, including a good contest at the Punchestown Festival in which he beat subsequent Grade 1 hurdles winners Dancing City and Slade Steel. His own hurdling debut was therefore eagerly anticipated and he was sent off at a shade of odds-on to win that 24-runner maiden event at Fairyhouse in early December, so it was perhaps a bit disappointing that he could only finish second behind Firefox. He ran again at the end of the same month and put up a much improved display, running out a 25l winner from three next-time-out winners over 2m4f at Leopardstown. Willie Mullins commented afterwards: "Ballyburn did what we hoped he might do at Fairyhouse. He jumped well and galloped out to the line. He improved hugely from Fairyhouse and I'm hoping there's plenty more to come." He was dropped back to 2m for the Grade 1 novices' hurdle at the Dublin Racing Festival, where he beat old rival Slade Steel by a comfortable 7l. The runner-up would boost the form in no uncertain terms at Cheltenham the following month by beating Mystical Power and Firefox in the Supreme Novices' Hurdle, while Ballyburn also added a further Grade 1 by winning the the Gallagher Novices' Hurdle over 2m5f the following day by an easy 13l. Mullins said afterwards: "Ballyburn could be anything. That was a Champion Hurdle performance in my book. You'd love to be going chasing with his pedigree and size and scope, but imagine - there you are, with Lossiemouth for the Champion Hurdle next year. I'll have to have a word with Ronnie Bartlett and David Manasseh, who own the horse. We might just get on chasing and try to make a Gold Cup horse out of him, I don't know." One more Grade 1 followed, this time the Champion Novice Hurdle over 2m3f at Punchestown, in which he was a bit more workmanlike but still stretched away in the

closing stages, ultimately winning well. His return to action is eagerly awaited and it is no surprise to see him feature prominently in the markets for both the Champion Hurdle and the Arkle at the time of writing. A decision of what route he takes is still pending but it's a wonderful problem to have. WILLIE MULLINS

BELOW THE RADAR (IRE) 6 b g

Given he's now notched three wins from the same number of starts under Rules, the Paul Nicholls-trained Below The Radar is no longer quite so aptly named. The 6yo joined the former champion trainer after a couple of inauspicious runs in a point bumper and a point but he immediately made an impact for his new team when beating a subsequent winner in a Chepstow bumper last November. Despite a couple of novicey jumps, the son of Getaway followed up on his hurdle debut two months later (again beating a next-time out winner) and he extended the winning run to three on heavy ground at Uttoxeter on Midlands National day in March. Given the stamina in his pedigree and the fact he's owned by the Hemmings family, a race like the Midlands National could conceivably be on his radar and it'll be fascinating to see whether he continues over hurdles or switches to fences this season. Whichever path he goes down, expect him to be winning more races. PAUL NICHOLLS

BILL JOYCE (IRE) 5 b g

There's something different about Jonjo O'Neill's training operation this season. Trainer's son and former assistant AJ is now also on the licence, following the Gosdens, the Coles and the Charltons, who are or who have been involved in father/son joint-training ventures. The combination started well with eleven winners from 53 runners in May and five from 38 in June. They have plenty to look forward to and will no doubt be eager to see what dual bumper winner Bill Joyce can do over hurdles. Picked up for a staggering £225,000 after winning an Irish point on debut, he shaped

pleasingly on yard /Rules debut when justifying market support at Warwick in January. He followed up under a penalty at Exeter on heavy going the following month, despite drifting left in the closing stages. He ran poorly on his final start - even allowing for the fact he was up markedly in grade - in the Champion Bumper at Cheltenham, although that run may have come too soon after Exeter. Whatever the reason behind that below-par run, he's the type who could make up into a decent hurdler, his pedigree suggesting he'll likely stay well. JONJO & A J O'NEILL

BLUEKING D'OROUX (FR) 5 b g

A hurdles winner as a 3yo in his native France in early 2022, it took Blueking D'Oroux a while to acclimatise to his new surroundings at the end of that year but a wind operation at the start of 2023 brought about significant improvement as he ran out the 50/1 winner of a decent juvenile hurdle at Ascot over a trip just short of 2m in April, a race which worked out supremely well. He followed that with a good second of 20 behind Punctuation in a competitive handicap hurdle for conditional jockeys and amateur riders at that season's Aintree Festival which also produced plenty of subsequent winners. He maintained his progress by winning on his return to action at Cheltenham in October and he quickly followed up in a Grade 2 at Ascot one month later where he beat none other than future Liverpool Hurdle winner Strong Leader in the Grade 2 Ascot Hurdle over 2m3f. He was upped in grade and trip next time as he contested the Grade 1 Long Walk Hurdle over 3m at the end of December and he ran creditably in that, finishing fifth behind Crambo, beaten just over 10l by the winner, having raced a shade keenly in the early stages. Given a break after that, he reappeared in the Grade 2 Select Hurdle at Sandown on the final day of the season, where he took on the 160-rated Impaire Et Passe off level weights. Again, he ran a sound race in the circumstances, finishing fourth, beaten 9l by the winner despite a blunder at the sixth. That run was

a career best on ratings and he now reportedly turns his attention to fences. Based on his hurdles form, he rates an exciting prospect. PAUL NICHOLLS

BLUES SINGER 4 b g

By his own high standards, Alan King has had a fairly quiet time of things on the jumping front of late. Last season's haul of 36 winners was his lowest tally since his 30 wins in the 2001-02 jumps season. Nevertheless, it's hard to keep a good man down for long and he's already made a healthy start to the current campaign, with eight wins on the board in June and July. One who could do well over hurdles in the coming months is Blues Singer, who won his sole start in a Kempton bumper in the spring. He did the job in fine style too, coming from off the pace to win with a good deal in hand. King said: "Blues Singer is a nice horse, a homebred whom we've had a few months. I love this race because it's just four-year-olds and they don't have to take on older horses. I think we'll put him away and if he did run again this season it wouldn't be at Aintree. That's not because he's not good enough, but because he's only four." While the form didn't exactly work out well it's hard to crab the manner of the performance and he's the type to do well in novice company. ALAN KING

BOLD ENDEAVOUR 8 b g

Nicky Henderson endured a nightmare time during the latest Cheltenham Festival, with a large number of his squad declared non-runners at a late stage due to health concerns, including leading Champion Hurdle contender Constitution Hill, Gold Cup hopeful Shishkin and ante-post Triumph Hurdle favourite Sir Gino. Several of those who were allowed to participate ran deplorably but Bold Endeavour makes the cut for these pages as he was one of the few who ran well at the meeting. Although he's not won since January 2023 - when recording his second chase win - he turned in his best performance over hurdles when fourth in the Pertemps

Final, an effort that can be marked up further as he raced wide throughout. He disappointed on both his subsequent starts but that Cheltenham race could have taken more out of him than seemed likely at the time and he will be one to look out for in decent handicap company, either over hurdles or when returned to fences. He's proven on most ground bar heavy and he may be worth a try over further than 3m at some point. NICKY HENDERSON

BOLDOG (FR) 6 gr g

A steady improver in bumpers for Stuart Crawford in late 2022 and early 2023 culminating in an impressive win over 2m at Hexham in April (a race which worked out well), Boldog was switched to Joseph O'Brien the following October. He made his debut for his new trainer at Tramore on New Year's Day, where he won a 14-runner maiden hurdle over 2m in convincing fashion from the Henry De Bromhead-trained Gorgeous Tom, with a further 12l back to the third. The runner-up would go on to frank the form by winning his next two starts, including a decent race at the Punchestown Festival in early May. Plenty was expected of Boldog as he was stepped up to Listed level at the Dublin Racing Festival in February, but he finished a well-beaten fifth behind Tullyhill over a trip just shy of 2m, simply failing to reproduce the spark that was evident at Tramore. He wasn't seen again so he has a slight question mark hanging over him on his return to action but, if we ignore, that latest run, he's essentially a progressive sort and he can resume the winning thread as he starts to tackle fences over slightly longer trips this coming season, with his rider at Tramore on New Year's Day, JJ Slevin, describing him as "a staying horse." JOSEPH O'BRIEN

BRAVEMANSGAME (FR) 9 b g

Three second places, a respectable fifth in the Cheltenham Gold Cup and a below-par sixth in the Grade 1 Aintree Bowl at Aintree is perhaps not the season many of

Bravemansgame's supporters would have hoped for but, despite that lack of 1s in his form figures there is a still cause for optimism for the season ahead. Let's look at last season's races in more detail - first of all he was narrowly beaten by a race-fit Gentlemansgame on his return to action in the Charlie Hall Chase in November and he then ran another sound race behind course specialist Royal Pagaille in the Grade 1 Betfair Chase later the same month on ground that was much softer than ideal for him. He ran his best race of the season in the King George on Boxing Day, where he wore down Allaho after being hampered by the fall of Shishkin, only to be mugged by Hewick in the run to the line. His Gold Cup run was another good effort on ground that was again too soft and it may have been one run too many for him when tried in cheekpieces at Aintree, plus he made a respiratory noise during the race and, once again, the ground was much softer than he cares for. He had a wind operation in the summer of 2022 and he may well have another and perhaps his campaign will also be mapped out slightly differently this time around. The King George, which he won so impressively in 2022, will no doubt remain the early-season target but he's unlikely to become a realistic Gold Cup contender next March at the age of ten, so Nicholls may instead look at the Ryanair Chase over just shy of 2m5f, a race which should suit him well. Very soft ground will no doubt be avoided throughout the season too so don't expect him to participate in another slogfest at Haydock in late November. He's certainly not one to give up on yet. PAUL NICHOLLS

BUILT BY BALLYMORE (IRE) 6 b g

Although Built By Ballymore proved disappointing at both the Cheltenham Festival in March and at the Fairyhouse meeting over Easter, he's the type who could raise his game again this season. A son of Flemensfirth, he stepped up considerably on his reappearance form when upped to 2m5f on heavy ground at Limerick in December, drawing

right away in the closing stages and shaping like a stayer to keep onside. He more than confirmed that impression when following up in similar fashion at Punchestown, again on heavy, a month and a half later. It was no surprise then that he started as the 4-1 favourite for the Coral Cup on his handicap debut at Cheltenham, although perhaps more of a surprise was the fact that he wore first-time cheekpieces. Having crept into contention, he dropped away in the straight but, given his previous promise, he looked well worth another chance. His next and final run came at Fairyhouse on Easter Saturday when he was upped again in trip to 3m but he didn't have a proper cut at his hurdles and dropped right away, eventually pulling up before two out, with the racecourse vet reporting that he was suffering from delayed recovery. That was it for the season but he's still lightly raced and is definitely worth persevering with. He should stay well and is bred to jump a fence. MARTIN BRASSIL

BUTCH 7 b g

Olly Murphy trained more than 100 winners and earned more than £1m in prize money for the first time in his career last season and he's already been seen to good effect with his summer jumpers so far this season too. One who could go onto better things - either over hurdles or fences - is the progressive Butch. A steadily progressive sort over hurdles in the 2022-23 season, he took his form to a higher level last season, with the step up to 3m no doubt an important factor in his improvement. Novice wins at Southwell and Wetherby preceded his best effort at Cheltenham in handicap company on New Year's Day, where he showed a fine attitude to fend off My Bobby Dazzler in the closing stages. On the back of that effort he started favourite for the Grade 2 Rendlesham Hurdle at Haydock in February and, although he had a bit to find strictly at the weights, it's a sign of how far he'd come that he proved a little disappointing when finishing second, 9l behind the useful Botox Has. He wasn't seen again

afterwards and, although he may well do better over hurdles, he has plenty of chase blood in his pedigree and he'll be of more interest once he goes over fences. **OLLY MURPHY**

CALIFET EN VOL (IRE) 5 br g

A £145,000 purchase for the McNeill family after finishing second in a soft-ground Irish point in December 2023, this Irish-bred gelding (despite his French-sounding name) looks to have a bright future based on his one run in public at Ayr in April. He finished third behind the Gordon Elliott-trained Jazz De Cotte in a 2m bumper, with Thistle Be The One, the winner of a Kempton bumper in February, splitting the pair. Califet En Vol lacked the pace to mount a serious challenge but he stayed on with distinct promise. He's related to a few winners including the smart staying hurdler Pike's Peak and he should make his mark over hurdles over further this season. **NICKY HENDERSON**

CAPTAIN TEAGUE (IRE) 6 ch g

Captain Teague looked a smart prospect for hurdles when finishing third of 21 to A Dream To Share and Fact To File in the 2023 Champion Bumper at the Cheltenham Festival on just his second career start. Although the winner proved disappointing last season, Fact To File did his bit for the form, winning Grade 1 chases at the Dublin and Cheltenham Festivals. And, after winning a Grade 2 on his hurdles debut, The Paul Nicholls-trained Captain Teague also weighed in with a Grade 1 win of his own when taking the Challow Hurdle at Newbury in December, a race the trainer was winning for the fourth time in a row. That put him firmly in the mix for one of the novice events at Cheltenham but, although he started single-figure odds, he ultimately proved disappointing in the Albert Bartlett Novices' Hurdle upped to 3m for the first time, dropping away quickly in the testing ground in the closing stages in what turned out to be his final race of the season. Given his pedigree he'll be worth another try at 3m and it will be fascinating to see whether

he stays over hurdles this season or goes chasing. An Irish point winner, he is open to plenty of improvement and, it may be that he doesn't want extremes of ground like he encountered at Cheltenham. PAUL NICHOLLS

CASA NO MENTO 6 b m

The winner of two bumpers in 2022 and 2023 (one between the flags), Casa No Mento won five of her six starts over hurdles last season, posting an improved Racing Post Rating on each occasion. Her first win came in a mares' maiden hurdle at Market Rasen at the end of September, where she outclassed her five rivals to win by 6l. Two months later she followed up under a penalty at Hereford, putting 15l and more between herself and her ten rivals. She then had to settle for second for the only time on her next assignment, a Listed mares' novices' hurdle at Taunton over 2m, but she lost little in defeat as her conqueror was the highly-touted Queens Gamble (also in the hundred) and the front pair pulled 8l clear. She skipped the Grade 2 Mares' Novices Hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival on account of soft ground but she regained the winning thread on her return to action at Chepstow in April, where she won another mares' novice in fine style. She was then asked to take on some quality mares at Punchestown in early May and she passed that test with flying colours, coming out on top in that 16-runner contest after outbattling the Willie Mullins-trained Got Glory. Willie Twiston-Davies, who is now assistant trainer at his father's yard, said afterwards: "Casa No Mento is exceptional. She was dropped 2lb after she was beaten at Taunton when she was not herself. She is one of the paciest mares we have had. She will be better on quicker ground and in better company." She is one to look forward to but it is clear connections will continue to swerve deep ground. NIGEL TWISTON-DAVIES

CHASING FIRE 7 b g

Chasing Fire started last season with a win over 2m and he ended it with a win over 3m. Along the way he threw in a