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Published in 2022 by Pitch Publishing on behalf of Racing Post, A2 Yeoman Gate, Yeoman Way, Worthing, Sussex, BN13 3QZ.

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ISBN: 978-1839501098

Printed by Buxton Press Ltd

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HARRY FRY

Love is in the air with Cheltenham mission

HARRY FRY is likely to target the mares' hurdle at the Cheltenham Festival for his stable star **Love Envoi**, who won the novice mares' equivalent race in March.

That was the last of five successive victories in Britain for the mare, winner of her only Irish point-to-point and subsequently bought for £38,000.

Love Envoi has already won more than three times her auction price,



WINNERS IN LAST FIVE SEASONS 38, 31, 30, 47, 53



Love Envoi: Mares' Hurdle the big target

“ He needs to improve but he’s got the potential to do that and we’ll see if he makes into a Stayers’ Hurdle contender ”

Might I: second to Constitution Hill last season

In charge of Paul Nicholls’ satellite yard at Seaborough in Dorset, Harry Fry was widely credited with preparing Rock On Ruby to win the 2012 Champion Hurdle. The horse was then transferred to Fry as he began his own training career seven months later.

which was modest compared with the six-figure prices many winners from the Irish pointing field have fetched in the last few years.

She was a shrewd purchase for the former jockey Noel Fehily syndicate and did nothing to dent her growing reputation when finishing second to Brandy Love in the mares' novice hurdle championship final at Fairyhouse in April.

Love Envoi's season will be tailored to Cheltenham but becoming head girl will be tough with the likes of reigning British and Irish champion Marie's Rock and the Willie Mullins amazons being prepared for battle.

"She went from strength to strength throughout the season, winning her first five, and lost nothing in defeat in her final outing at Fairyhouse where she was beaten by a better horse on the day," says Fry.

"She'd run every month from December and we knew she might not be at her absolute best in Ireland, but she was good enough to finish second in a Grade 1.

"We're looking to stay over hurdles with her this season and we'll work back from the mares' hurdle in March."

Love Envoi needs cut in the ground, so Fry will wait for a good soaking of rain before deciding where her campaign begins.

"There's a two-mile Listed mares' hurdle at Wetherby on Charlie Hall day, and you've got a Listed mares' hurdle at Kempton at the end of November, but the options this side of Christmas are few and far between.

"So we might go into a handicap or take on the boys, which I'm not keen on. So it's a bit of a head-scratcher at the moment where we're going to start her, but from the turn of the year the races are there.

"She's a lovely tough mare who loves soft ground. She's rated 139 and has to improve again, but who's to say she won't."

Another in the same "exciting second-season hurdler" bracket is **Might I**, who ran with great credit behind Nicky Henderson hotpots Constitution Hill and Jonbon at

Sandown and Haydock after rocketing home in a novice hurdle at Newton Abbot by 11 lengths.

He ended a season packed with promise by chasing home Irish raider Three Stripe Life in the Grade 1 Mersey Novices' Hurdle at Aintree.

"I can't believe we only won one race, to be honest," says Fry. "He tried mission impossible by trying to concede weight to Constitution Hill, then we thought we had the ideal profile horse for the Martin Pipe at Cheltenham. Unfortunately, he wasn't quite right and we couldn't get him there, so we waited for Aintree.

"He's a half-brother to Stattler, who won the National Hunt Chase in March, so there should be more to come once we step him up in trip.

"He needs to improve but he's got the potential to do that and we'll see if he makes into a Stayers' Hurdle contender. I've got a three-mile handicap hurdle at Haydock on Betfair Chase day in mind and we'll see if he can go down that route."

The key to **Metier**, who has a 50 per cent strike-rate having won four from eight since moving from Ireland, is "very testing conditions to put it mildly," says Fry.

"We're in two minds what to do with him: whether we stay over hurdles and possibly step him up in trip, or think about jumping fences. But either way, we'll be looking for his favoured ground, that's for sure.

"We'll be schooling him over fences and see if he takes to them, then making a decision whether we send him novice chasing or stay over the smaller obstacles."

Gin Coco won a novice hurdle nicely at Fontwell on debut for Fry in March and was taken to Punchestown the following month when he finished runner-up in a big-field handicap hurdle.

"I thought we had the race won jumping the last, but unfortunately he got battled out of it.

"He remains a novice until the end of

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November, so we'll try to exploit that. We have in mind a crack at the Greatwood at the Cheltenham November meeting, and there are lots of good handicaps after that he could run in."

Lady Adare won three out of three and was on course for the mares' novice at the Cheltenham Festival until a setback the week before ruled her out.

"She's done well over the summer and at the moment she'll stay over hurdles and possibly go for the mares' hurdle at Wetherby on Charlie Hall Chase day," says Fry.

"Alternatively, we might go to Wincanton a week later for a mares' handicap hurdle over two miles five run in memory of Richard Barber [Fry's mentor in his early days], which is a race we like to win.

"She's on an upward curve and you never know, she might progress into a mares' hurdle candidate herself.

"She needs to improve further, but who's to say she won't. We'll take it one step at a time and see how we get on this side of Christmas and then make plans from there."

Ask Me Early had the "perfect prep" in the run-up to the Welsh National last year, winning two small hurdle races and being backed into 5-1, then a schooling fall put him out of contention.

"He made a similar mistake at Wincanton next time out and unseated Sean Bowen," says Fry. "He'll stay over fences and we'll see if we can get his confidence back. He jumps well, which makes the fall at home all the more frustrating. He's always been foot-perfect, but even the best can make mistakes.

"He needs cut in the ground, so we'll be waiting for the rain and getting him back on an even keel for those staying handicap chases."

Revels Hill could develop into a fine staying chaser having won his last two starts



■ Fry has a fine record on Kempton's all-weather surface – six winners from 11 runners (+£66.25)

Revels Hill: staying handicap chases will be on his agenda

“

He's a second-season chaser we're really looking forward to in the better staying handicaps

”



at Taunton over two miles seven furlongs, then over five and a half furlongs further.

“He’s a second-season chaser we’re really looking forward to in the better staying handicaps, although he wouldn’t want the ground too testing.”

Boothill went hurdling and chasing last season and left his trainer frustrated that he didn’t manage to get a win out of him in the last 12 months.

“We’re set to go back over fences with him in early October and hopefully he can make a good novice chaser over two and a half miles,” says Fry.

Ree Okka won twice over hurdles last season but is now poised to go novice chasing.

“He won over three miles at Kempton but I think we’ll step back in trip over fences. I’m sure he can prove to be progressive over the bigger obstacles.”

Dubrovnik Harry has a similar profile to Ree Okka, having won by 25 lengths over hurdles at Exeter and also being placed over hurdles, including a “very pleasing” third in a competitive Grade 3 at Sandown in March.

“That’s a race which has produced good chase winners in the past and hopefully he can be another. He’ll start over two and a half miles but I’m sure he’ll stay further. He wants soft ground.”

Deeper Blue, like Gin Coco, is a novice until the end of November, and could be aimed at the Persian War Novices’ Hurdle at Chepstow’s October meeting.

“He was second behind Stage Star at Chepstow last season [he went on to win the Grade 1 Challow Hurdle], so we have course form. We’ll decide after that whether to stay over hurdles or go novice chasing.”

Fairy Gem got her career off to a flying start when landing a mares’ bumper at Plumpton on her debut and was then placed in Listed mares’ bumpers at Cheltenham and Sandown and looks a very promising recruit to the hurdling ranks.

“She’ll start out over hurdles in maiden

novice company and hopefully she can win her share of mares’ races and be contesting black-type races come the spring,” says Fry.

Hymac was twice runner-up in Irish point-to-points and made an impressive winning debut for Fry in a Newton Abbot bumper in late March.

“He’ll go straight over hurdles, probably two and a half miles to begin with, and he’ll get further in time. It’ll be a bonus what he does over hurdles because he’ll be chasing in 12 months’ time.”

Hot Rod Lincoln is a winning Irish point-to-pointer by Westerner whom Fry hoped to run in the spring, but failed to get the ground he needed.

“He’s a typical Westerner who wants cut in the ground, and it dried up on us, so he didn’t get to run.

“He’ll go novice hurdling and be starting out over two and a half. He looks an out-and-out galloper, certainly when he won his point-to-point.

“He just galloped and jumped, and the runner-up that day went on to win a Leopardstown maiden hurdle back in the spring. So we’re hopeful that he can be a good novice hurdler for this season.”

High Fibre was bought out of Ralph Beckett’s yard after winning once on the Flat as a two-year-old last October and was then pipped on the post over 1m2f at Newmarket this spring.

“We’re hoping he can make into a high-class juvenile hurdler this winter,” says Fry. “Hopefully, if he takes to hurdling, he’ll be contesting some of the better juvenile hurdle races come the spring.”

Altobelli was hot favourite to win his bumper on his debut at Exeter in February and did so in the manner of a class horse.

Connections will no doubt hope he can score as regularly as his namesake, Alessandro Altobelli, the 1982 World Cup winner with Italy for whom he was a prolific goalscorer.

“We’ll probably stick to bumpers initially, maybe even look at a better bumper, such as