

## PUNCESTOWN FESTIVAL



PUNCESTOWN  
2024  
Festival



*As with tradition, the Punchestown Festival kicks off on the final Tuesday of April, which this year means a true spring festival from Tuesday April 30 - Saturday May 4.*



*Fastorslow winner of the 2023 Irish Gold Cup, Punchestown Festival.*

## You Spoke...They listened... Change for Punchestown 2024

**T**HE Punchestown team commit to progress each season but this year have introduced some dynamic changes to the five-day sport, corporate and social highlight. The four-step plan has evolved from customer feedback, business analysis, market research and consultation.

### EARLIER START TIMES

The first two days of the 2024 Punchestown Festival will revert to a more traditional 2.30pm start, which means the final race will go to post at 6.30pm. Thursday and Friday remain at a 3.40pm start time with Saturday staying with 2.30pm start.

### REDUCED TICKET PRICES

No deals, no promos, no gimmicks, just great value pre-booked tickets from just €30 - €40 for top-class racing action and entertainment. It will cost more to pay on the day. The new €35 Choice Ticket allows entry on either Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday. Group discounts available on pre-booked tickets, and seniors and students concessions are available on the day. As always, children under 14 years can attend the races for free.

### REFRESHED LAYOUT

There will be an improved customer experience as the entire Punchestown site will be optimised. There will be no separate traditional 'reserved enclosure', however, the same great bars, shops, music venues and viewing lawns, outside the hospitality areas, will be available to all.

### ENHANCED AND IMPROVED RACE DAY EXPERIENCE

This point is neither new nor dynamic as the pursuit of excellent customer experience is an ongoing process with Punchestown. The enhancement of the race day visit will go hand-in-hand with the new layout. The Punchestown demographic is a diverse one, with varied tastes and requirements for a memorable customer experience. Alongside catering and service partners, Punchestown aims to deliver a selection of great quality food and beverage options with efficient, friendly service in comfortable surroundings.

Conor O'Neill, CEO, Punchestown, explains the theory behind the proposed plan: "If we're not improving, we're going backwards - it's as simple as that - and in the current climate that is not something any business can afford to do. Each year we commit to making two or three improvements to either service, facilities or both. Customer feedback, good and bad, is what shapes policy and strategy and we look forward to our customers supporting and embracing what we've done."

### BOODLES ADDS SPARKLE TO FESTIVAL FRIDAY

A major new addition to the festival sponsorship line-up is the introduction of luxury jeweller Boodles as sponsor of festival Friday feature race the Champion Hurdle. This three-year deal takes in the €300,000 Grade 1 Boodles Champion Hurdle and celebrates 20 years of business in the Boodles Grafton Street Store. Along with the race, the

Boodles Bar on the private suite level will showcase some of the award-winning collection including the recently launched horse racing themed Lucky Collection. Whilst Boodles is currently involved with Cheltenham, Chester and York race courses in the UK, its Punchestown agreement is its exclusive Irish activation.

### HOMECOMING OF CHAMPIONS AND UK RECRUITMENT DRIVE

Fresh from the Cotswolds, the Irish raiders return from Cheltenham with an impressive bounty of 18 wins - half of which were landed by the record-breaking Willie Mullins. This result feeds nicely into Irish racing's grand finale at Punchestown as the homecoming of champions, which will feature many of the stars from throughout the season all vying for a piece of the €3.4m prize fund.

In a refreshed bid to attract more UK-based runners, the Punchestown team launched The Full Circle Series with five UK and five Irish qualifiers in recent months. Aimed at mid-level hurdlers, the Full Circle Final is worth travelling for, with €60,000 on offer on the opening day of the festival.

### IT'S A SELL OUT!

The hospitality team are operating a waiting list for festival hospitality packages. It is an ever-changing landscape, so please make sure to register your interest by email on [hospitality@punchestown.com](mailto:hospitality@punchestown.com) or call +353 45 897704.

[www.punchestown.com](http://www.punchestown.com)

Cheltenham Gold Cup winner *Galopin Des Champs*

## A Feast of Jump Racing

### Tuesday April 30 - Saturday May 4

Once again, the Cheltenham Festival last week rubber-stamped Ireland's prowess in training the finest racehorses – tremendous news for Punchestown Racecourse, where vigorous preparations are under way for the upcoming five-day festival to conclude the season.



*Captain Guinness* was among the most popular winners all week at Cheltenham, finally earning a Grade 1 triumph at the 14th attempt in the most prestigious two-mile chase of them all, the Queen Mother Champion Chase.

Declan Landy's willing nine-year-old has been an ultra-consistent operator under the tutelage of Knockeen maestro Henry de Bromhead and, with Rachael Blackmore doing the steering, capitalised on the shuddering error that ended the chances of odds-on shot *El Fabiolo* to run out a definitive winner.

In the process, Blackmore joined an elite group of riders to have won the four most illustrious races in jumps racing: the Gold Cup, the Grand National, the Champion Hurdle and the Champion Chase.

A winner of his beginners' chase at Punchestown, *Captain Guinness* was well beaten when last appearing in the William Hill Champion Chase two years ago and skipped a reunion with *Energumene* last season but, as the kingpin this time around, he might be given the opportunity to add this prestigious prize to his CV.

*El Fabiolo* may be given the opportunity to redeem himself after fluffing his lines, but his participation remains in doubt as he was very sore after his sprawling mistake.

Those are the senior standouts, but the talent pool is deep and the mouth waters at the prospect of some of the novice hurdlers and chasers, as well as bumper horses that could have Punchestown on their agenda.

*Fact Or File*, *Gaelic Warrior*, *Ballyburn*, *Majborough* and *Jasmin De Vaux* – the Champion Bumper winner that brought up the century of Cheltenham successes for Mullins – are just some of the young guns the Closutton marvel is likely to have on the lorry to Kildare, while de Bromhead's *Slade Steel* is certain to hold high rank next year and should be attempting a Cheltenham-Punchestown double before gorging on summer grass.

But first, we have a feast of racing to look forward to.

CHAMPION trainer Willie Mullins led the charge at Prestbury Park with nine winners and has spoken frequently of late about not being afraid to run his horses regularly in the interest of providing the public with a chance to see the stars of the jumps game perform.

That means that *Galopin Des Champs*, who earned comparisons with the great *Kauto Star* after making it back-to-back triumphs in the Cheltenham Gold Cup, and *State Man*, the Champion Hurdle victor, will both conclude their busy campaigns at the Punchestown jamboree.

Twelve months ago, the Cheltenham 1-2, *Galopin Des Champs* and *Bravemansgame*, renewed rivalries in the Ladbrokes Gold Cup but had their colours lowered by *Fastorslow*.

*Fastorslow* proved the result was no fluke back at Punchestown in November, when landing the John Durkan Memorial, but the Sean and Bernardine Mulryan-owned eight-year-old, trained on the Curragh by Martin Brassil, had to give best when they crossed swords in the Irish Gold Cup at Leopardstown's Dublin Racing Festival in February.

Unfortunately, *Fastorslow* unseated JJ Slevin too far out at Cheltenham for us to know if he had another trick up his sleeve but Brassil has confirmed the Ladbrokes Gold Cup as a target once more.

Eventual runner-up *Gerri Colombe* put in a career-best performance in chasing *Galopin Des Champs* home and trainer Gordon Elliott has suggested that this will be the destination if his charge is to run again this term.

And fairytale horse *Hewick*, purchased for just €850, is another likely contender,

with trainer 'Shark' Hanlon having confirmed the Ladbrokes Gold Cup as an intended destination after the King George winner takes in a trip to Aintree.

*State Man* has only been beaten once in 12 completed outings since arriving at Closutton from France and that was to *Constitution Hill* in the 2023 Cheltenham Champion Hurdle. Marie and Joe Donnelly's winning machine is jockey Paul Townend's favourite horse and it is easy to see why as the seven-year-old eschews drama and just gets the job done.

With *Constitution Hill* falling foul of illness for a second time in a couple of months, the son of *Doctor Dino* cantered to a far more comfortable victory over *Irish Point* than the one-and-a-half-length margin might suggest.

He is five from five at Punchestown, bagging Grade 1s at the last two festivals and will be the one they all have to beat as he bids to repeat last year's success in the Boodles Champion Hurdle.

*Irish Point* justified the decision of trainer Gordon Elliott and owner Robcour to redirect their talented six-year-old to the two-mile test, having initially favoured a tilt at the Cheltenham Stayers' Hurdle, and he may well have another go at the champ, along with *Zarak The Brave* and *Colonel Mustard*.

That call was made easier by the Elliott/Robcour tandem having *Teahupoo* as favourite for the three-mile examination and he duly delivered as expected. That sets him up for a stab at the Ladbrokes Champion Stayers' Hurdle, in which he finished a three-length fourth behind *Klassical Dream* last term.