Cheltenham Festival 2013: Champion Day Results

Wednesday 13 March, 2013

Ruby Walsh and Willie Mullins secured a memorable hat trick on the opening day of the Cheltenham Festival 2013, as Champion Day provided plenty of drama.

Champion Hurdle

Hurricane Fly (13/8f) became the first horse to win the Champion Hurdle in non-consecutive years since Comedy Of Errors in 1975, as the day's feature race lived up to the hype.

The 2011 winner was imperious as he approached home, seeing off a spirited fight from last year's champion Rock On Ruby (11/2), trained by 25-year-old Harry Fry. 7/2 second favourite Zarkandar ended a disappointing fourth, as Hurricane Fly provided one of the biggest cheers of the day.

This victory was the highlight on what was a perfect day for trainer Willie Mullins and jockey Ruby Walsh, as they took three wins.

Supreme Novices' Hurdle

The first race of the day lived up to the hype. Walsh and Champagne Fever (5/1) pipped favourite My Tent Or Yours (15/8) by half a length, as the Cheltenham Roar continued to follow the pair right to the line in a thrilling opener.

Arkle Chase

In one of the most eagerly anticipated races of the day, bookmakers suggested Simonsig (8/15f) and Overturn (7/2) might enjoy a good battle in the Arkle Chase. Simonsig did indeed win, but it was not with the authority many had predicted, and Overturn finished back in fourth.

Simonsig was pushed all the way by Baily Green (33/1), but in the end mistakes at hurdles early and late in the race went unpunished as he edged home by a couple of lengths.

JLT Handicap Chase

The day's first big shock came at the JLT Handicap Chase, as Golden Chieftain came from nowhere at 28/1 to take a remarkable 10-length win. Favourite Our Mick (13/2) looked to have done enough as he overhauled early pacesetter Pete The Feat (20/1), but it was youngster Brendan Powell Jr. who was celebrating at the end as he steered the Colin Tizzard-trained eight-year-old to victory.

Mares' Hurdle

Quevega provided one of the big headlines of the day, as she became the first horse since Golden Miller to take five consecutive victories at the Cheltenham Festival. Her win also completed a Champion Day hat trick for Walsh and Mullins, but she made hard work of it in the Mares' Hurdle.

A clear 8/11 favourite going off, Quevega looked for a moment as though she had left herself too big a task to reach the front coming into the last bend. However, the final hill proved too much for French runner up Sirene D'ainay, leaving the legendary mare to seal her place in history.

Novices' Handicap Chase

Sam Waley-Cohen rode 16/1 shot Rajdhani Express home to give Nicky Henderson his second winner, seeing off a spirited challenge from outsider Ackertac (66/1) to seal victory in the day's final race. Waley-Cohen was already celebrating after becoming a father at the weekend, and will be hoping Long Run can make it an even better week for him in the Cheltenham Gold Cup on Friday.

With the Cross Country racing held over until Thursday after the track failed an afternoon inspection, the frost covers were soon back on to protect the track for Ladies Day, where all eyes will be on Sprinter Sacre as he attempts to win the Queen Mother Champion Chase.

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