



TAIPAN SET FOR MASTER TEST AT THE OPEN

Meeting: *The Open*

Dates: *Friday, Saturday & Sunday - November 13, 14 & 15*

Gates Open: *10.00am Friday & Saturday, 11.00am Sunday*

First Race: *1.15pm Friday, 12.50pm Saturday, 1.10pm Sunday*

Admission prices from £9. Go to www.cheltenham.co.uk for further information

Master Minded is set to make his seasonal debut in a fascinating first running of the Connaught Chase (1.45pm) at The Open on Sunday, November 15. The champion chaser is among a top-class entry for the two-mile contest that also includes the Tom Mullins-trained **Made In Taipan**, as well as old rivals **Well Chief** and **Newmill**.

The Open is staged over three days (Friday, November 13 - Sunday, November 15) and Sunday's feature race is the £100,000 Grade Three Greatwood Hurdle (2.20pm). The highlight of The Open is the £150,000 Grade Three Paddy Power Gold Cup (2.35pm), which takes place on Saturday.

A total of nine horses have been entered for the £50,000 Connaught Chase and **Made In Taipan** heads to Cheltenham having finished half a length behind the impressive **Big Zeb** in the Grade Two Fortria Chase at Navan on November 8. **Big Zeb** had previously gone down by a battling head to **Master Minded** in the Grade One Kerrygold Champion Chase at Punchestown in April.

Made In Taipan's only previous visit to Cheltenham saw him finish fourth to **Forpadydeplasterer** in the Grade One Irish Independent Arkle Challenge Trophy Chase at The Festival in March.

Mullins revealed today: "At the moment, **Made In Taipan** would be about 60/40 to go to Cheltenham. He ran a very good race at Navan last time, I was very happy with that and he is well in himself. Davy Russell was very happy with the horse, we were just a little bit taken aback by how easily **Big Zeb** beat us. That was the only disappointing thing about it but maybe **Big Zeb** is going to be the top horse over two miles this year. "Although it was soft the other day, he will probably want it heavier and may even want more of a trip to see him at his best. We will definitely step him up to two and a half miles as soon as we can. After The Open, there is the Durkan Brothers' race at Punchestown in December and, while it wouldn't be ideal going right-handed there, we will be sticking him in there and seeing how he operates.

“He ran well enough in the Arkle at Cheltenham last year so the course will not be a problem and if the rain comes, he would have a squeak.”

As well as two-time Seasons Holidays Queen Mother Champion Chase victor Master Minded (2008 & 2009), the race has attracted Newmill, who held the speed chasers’ crown when winning the 2006 renewal of that Grade One contest. The 11-year-old was fourth to his younger rival in this year’s contest at The Festival in March and again at Punchestown in April.

Another top-class veteran among the five-day acceptors is the David Pipe-trained Well Chief. The 2004 Grade One Irish Independent Arkle Chase winner was runner-up to the great Moscow Flyer in the 2005 Seasons Holidays Queen Mother Champion Chase and filled the same berth behind Master Minded in this year’s renewal. That effort came on his first start in almost two years.

The Paul Nicholls-trained **Free World** could join stablemate Master Minded, while **Striking Article** from the Howard Johnson yard, the Nigel Twiston-Davies-trained **Mahogany Blaze**, **William Butler** from the Evan Williams stable and the Tony Carroll-trained **Kinkeel** could also line up.

LATEST CHELTENHAM GOING

After 5mm of rain overnight, the going at Cheltenham is **Good, Good to Soft in places** on the chase and hurdles courses and **Good, Good to Firm in places** on the Cross Country course. Light rain is forecast over the next couple of days with wetter conditions expected on Friday and Saturday.