




Jamie Lynch, Pat Jupp and Adam Brookes, all members of Timeform's editorial team, give you the lowdown on who they'll be backing at Royal Ascot.

	Kingman v Night of Thunder	Banker or Blowout	The Sprints	Juvenile to Follow	Handicap Fancy
<div></div> <div>Jamie Lynch Chief Correspondent</div>	<p>I'm overwhelmingly in the Kingman camp. Don't forget that this isn't the re-match but the re-re-match, because Kingman walked all over Night of Thunder in the Greenham prior to the Guineas. The tactical nuances of the Guineas favoured Night of Thunder on the day—principally that he was played latest in a well-run race—but the Irish version showed Kingman's truer colours, bringing his speed into play. Twice this season—at Newbury and the Curragh—Kingman has looked a superstar miler, and he will prove it once and for all here.</p>	<p>The banker of the meeting has to be Treve in the Prince of Wales's Stakes, and it's a very simple equation as far as she is concerned; she's the best horse in world on Timeform ratings. Her reappearance (defeat) in the Prix Ganay was just a means to an end, plus Cirrus des Aigles is one of the toughest nuts of all to crack, as he's shown twice more since. Blowout has to be Verrazano, who simply looks the wrong price for my money in the Queen Anne. The widespread assumption that he will leap forward from his effort in the Lockinge at Newbury isn't shared by me, especially as he was very much on the brink temperamentally when trained in the US. Plus he's up against a top-notch rival in Toronado.</p>	<p>The sprint scene is ripe for a makeover, and Royal Ascot could well be the catalyst for the new blood to shine. Hot Streak looks one of those three-year-olds with the rare ability to make it to the top of the sprinting division, and the King's Stand looks tailor-made for him, mindful of the speed he showed when landing the Temple Stakes at Haydock. The story is different with Aljamaaheer, a five-year-old only now coming to sprinting having spent most of his career over a mile, but he too looks well capable of taking high rank in the division after a very promising comeback run in the Abernant at Newmarket. The likelihood of fast ground for the Diamond Jubilee is an added bonus and he's top of my shortlist for that race.</p>	<p>The two-year-old I'm most looking forward to seeing over the five days is Likely in the Queen Mary. She absolutely oozed class on her debut when hammering her eight rivals in a five-furlong maiden at Carlisle. Likely achieved a Timeform rating in excess of 100 (with a timefigure to match) that day, which is virtually unheard of for a first-time filly so early in the year, and there will be few if any other fillies taking with them to the Queen Mary a more positive impression and/or bigger debut figure. South Central went from Carlisle maiden to Royal Ascot winner for Howard Johnson back in 2008, and Likely can follow suit.</p>	<p>Mark Johnston has few peers when it comes to progressive three-year-olds, and his unbeaten filly Muteela would hold strong claims in the Sandringham Handicap on Wednesday should connections resist the temptation of the Jersey. Muteela, who is a half-sister to the yard's Group 1-winning juvenile Awzaan, is a typical Johnston sort, an uncomplicated front runner, and her latest success in a mile handicap at Newmarket strikes as strong form, finishing clear with another promising sort in Pretzel, and in a fast time. She's gone up 8 lb for that effort but, given her pedigree, it's likely that her new mark of 95 still underestimates her.</p>
<div></div> <div>Pat Jupp Handicapper</div>	<p>The 2000 Guineas was hard to explain at the time, Night of Thunder having been soundly beaten by Kingman in the trial (the Greenham), and though it can be argued Night of Thunder did well at Newmarket given the course he charted late on, Kingman perhaps made his effort earlier than ideal and has since redeemed himself with an impressive win in the Irish version at the Curragh. This round track should place the emphasis more on speed than at Newmarket, and also significantly lessens the chances of another messy race, so Kingman is a confident selection to gain his revenge.</p>	<p>Toronado proved himself to be the real deal at three years, when his regular battles with Dawn Approach proved one of the highlights of the season, and he became the highest-rated miler of his generation when winning the Sussex Stakes. If you take Frankel out of the equation he already has the form in the book to have won every Queen Anne since the turn of the century, whilst his physique suggests he may rate even higher this year. He's a cut above the likely opposition and showed in last year's Craven that he can go well fresh. Banker.</p>	<p>Sole Power and Shea Shea finished first and second in last year's King's Stand and have shown they're as good as ever this time around. Neither has ever created the same impression as the younger Hot Streak did when winning the Temple at Haydock, though, and with the promise of more to come he should be a clear favourite. The Diamond Jubilee contains a few interesting runners, but none more so than Aljamaaheer. He's long since appealed as the type to make a top sprinter, and it was only an ill-judged ride that prevented him from proving the point in the Abernant on his reappearance. With conditions set to be ideal he's sure to give a bold show.</p>	<p>The Great War looks the best juvenile we've seen out so far, but that is reflected in his price for the Coventry, so fellow Irish raider Anthem Alexander makes more appeal. Trouble in running meant she didn't get a chance to show what she could do on her debut but she made amends with a hugely impressive win at Tipperary recently, and though she may not have beaten a great deal the time she recorded certainly catches the eye, marking her out as a Group-class filly in waiting. She'll be a live contender for the Queen Mary if connections go down that route.</p>	<p>I'll be winning no prizes for originality here but Abseil in the Royal Hunt Cup sticks out like a sore thumb. It's a race made up of mainly exposed handicappers nowadays so a progressive profile goes a long way and Abseil certainly fits that bill, having improved in each of his four runs to date. He left the firm impression there's more in the locker when scoring at Epsom on Oaks day and should get a run having picked up a 5-lb penalty for that success. He heads the shortlist at this stage and odds of around 6/1 are worth taking.</p>
<div></div> <div>Adam Brookes Deputy Print Editor</div>	<p>The facts are that the 2000 Guineas was a very strong race (as it looked at the time) and Night of Thunder beat all his thirteen opponents by at least half a length, despite hanging markedly left from around half a furlong out (Kingman still marginally in front at the time). I'm not saying Night of Thunder is comfortably better than Kingman—or third-placed Australia for that matter—as he almost certainly isn't, both those horses now rated higher than him in fact after their subsequent classic wins, but I am still willing to give Night of Thunder an opportunity to confirm that form with the runner-up at the current prices (11/10 Kingman, 9/4 Night of Thunder).</p>	<p>I respect Verrazano in the Queen Anne, especially as Ballydoyle won the race with another a horse that used the Lockinge as a stepping stone last year in Declaration of War, but he'll need to improve around 7 lb or more to beat an on-song Toronado. The Hannon team could have run either Olympic Glory or Sky Lantern in the race and still had strong claims of winning, so that they appear set to rely on Toronado must mean he's been showing all his old sparkle at home, and he's my Group 1 banker of the meeting. The rest of the current favourites for the Group 1 races look pretty solid, though Leading Light probably shouldn't be as short as 7/4 for the Gold Cup.</p>	<p>It was impossible to not be very impressed by the way in which Hot Streak dealt with some smart and established sprinters in the Temple at Haydock and odds of 4/1 for the King's Stand look very fair. As for the Diamond Jubilee, Aljamaaheer brings something different to the table having spent most of his career at seven furlongs and a mile, and he's my fancy for that race on the back of a promising comeback in the Abernant. Slade Power should also be in the mix, whilst Ballydoyle's three-year-old Due Diligence (formerly trained in the States) offers a bit of each-way value at 20/1 (he has plenty of speed and is improving quickly).</p>	<p>David Elsworth looks to have some pretty good two-year-olds this year, and Merdon Castle can prove the point by winning the Windsor Castle Stakes. Bred by his owner Jeff Smith, by Acclamation and out the useful sprinter Siren's Gift, Merdon Castle had a subsequent winner back in third when he made a winning debut at Kempton in early-May, and time has proven that he was facing quite a stiff task when attempting to give 3 lb to subsequent Irish listed race winner Kool Kompany in a minor event at Windsor last time. Merdon Castle has already shown a good cruising speed, an impressive turn of foot and pleasing battling qualities, all of which will stand him in good stead at Ascot, and he will be worth backing.</p>	<p>Ninjago was unlucky not to pick up another race in 2013 after his listed win over six furlongs at Ascot on his return—he very much caught the eye when fifth in the Stewards' Cup, for example—and he can finally gain his reward in the Wokingham. Ninjago again looked a Group sprinter in waiting when he finished a three-quarter-length third of twenty-one to Goldream at Newmarket on his reappearance in May, where he was held up in the smaller group but edged towards the bigger group while quickening through, and he looks massively overpriced for the big handicap on the Saturday at 20/1—with so much going for him he could be among the favourites on the day.</p>