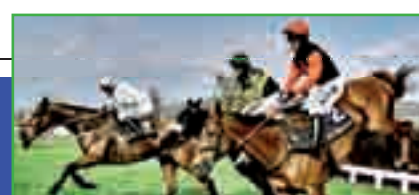


cheltenham 2009 preview



Ruby Walsh and Nina Carberry pictured at the Cheltenham Preview Night in the Abbey Hotel, Roscommon last night (Wednesday). Pic: Michael McCormack.



Larry Brennan and Albert Looby pictured at the Cheltenham Preview Night in the Abbey Hotel, Roscommon last night (Wednesday). Pic: Michael McCormack.



Mike Earley and John Kilmartin pictured at the Cheltenham Preview Night in the Abbey Hotel, Roscommon last night (Wednesday). Pic: Michael McCormack.



Peggy Sims and Tess Kearney pictured at the Cheltenham Preview Night in the Abbey Hotel, Roscommon last night (Wednesday). Pic: Michael McCormack.

Expert views aired at 2009 Cheltenham Preview

Seamus Duke

Maybe the cure for our economic woes might be found right here in Roscommon town!! Brian Cowen should consider appointing local auctioneer John Earley as the new Minister for Finance. "There is no recession – only a session. It's a bump in the road and that's all it is" he told the huge crowd who thronged the Abbey Hotel last night (Wednesday) for a very successful Roscommon Lions Club Cheltenham Preview Night in aid of the Roscommon Youth Centre and associated projects.

Over 400 people packed into the hotel eager to listen out for that vital sliver of information that might make the difference between bundles of ready cash and more economic depression when the festival starts on Tuesday.

A heavyweight (in terms of racing knowledge) panel of Ted Walsh, Nina Carberry, Ruby Walsh, Ken Whelan and Tony Mullins all lined up alongside local racing expert Dermot Cox – the chairman for the night – to preview the 2009 Cheltenham Racing Festival. It was a hugely successful night – however despite the optimistic tone set by John Earley the night was a little subdued due to the horrendous economic circumstances we are experiencing.

So what did the ordinary punter learn on the night? There's no doubt that there are three horses that WILL win in Cheltenham, according to the experts. Cousin Vinny, trained by Willie Mullins, was described as "a machine" by two or three

of the panellists. He runs in the second race on Tuesday.

Master Minded was described by Tony Mullins as "the best horse that I have ever seen in 40 years (of) looking at horses" which is a fairly serious compliment. Master Minded is ridden by Ruby Walsh and he runs in the Champion Chase on Wednesday. "Anything can happen in a race where you have to jump 12 fences, but I am expecting to win" said a cautious Ruby.

There was a lively debate about the Champion Bumper race on Wednesday. Some of the panellists reckoned that Willie Mullins would not win that race despite the fact that he has at least six runners and that he has won it on six of the last eight occasions. Dermot Weld's Right of Passage was the horse chosen by Ken Whelan and Nina Carberry to upset the Mullins appellation.

The crowd even heard from young Patrick Mullins who was in the audience and who had ridden a winner earlier in the day (and needless to say in the bumper) at Fairyhouse. Patrick rides the hotly-fancied Sicilian Secret in the aforementioned bumper. The mild-mannered Mullins said quietly that he was "looking forward" to riding Sicilian Secret which should be enough for a lot of people who might be deciding where they should put their money on this race.

The third 'banker' of the meeting according to the panel was Voy Pur Estedes, who runs in the Ryanair Chase on Thursday. Ted Walsh said that this horse was simply "a class act". Who are we to argue?

The banter continued

throughout the night and there was an auction too. Manchester United tickets, tickets for Ireland v Wales in the rugby in Cardiff (€700), days out at the Punchestown Races, boxing tickets and two tickets for the All-Ireland Football Final in September were sold for hugely inflated prices by John Earley. All going to a

good cause of course.

It was a great night for those interested in the sport of kings and it was also another very successful night for the Roscommon Lions Club. It all finished up at about 11 o'clock. The panel all disappeared quickly. Ruby was on a flight to the UK the following day at cock crow. He was riding

at Wincanton. His father Ted said that he hoped that Ruby would win the Gold Cup on Kauto Star. All will be revealed next week. The punters left the function with plenty to ponder. It was certainly a chance for people to forget about the recession for a couple of hours – and it was all for a good cause as well!



Gerry Keenan, Scobie Connaughton, Pdraig Beirne and Darren McSharry, Knockcroghery. Picture: Michael McCormack.



Back (l to r): Ken Whelan, Dermot Cox, Nina Carberry, Tony Mullins, Ciaran Mullooly. Front, left to right: Frank Nally, John Earley, Ruby Walsh, Paul Beisty, Ted Walsh. Pic Mick McCormack.

'You have no chance – it's Cheltenham, not Lourdes'

Quotes of the night

"You have no chance. It's Cheltenham, not Lourdes" – Ted Walsh to Ken Whelan, who was making a case for a horse he was riding in one of Tuesday's races

"I'll sit and watch it. At 1/3 you would want to be hard up to back him and you would want to be hard up to back against him as well" – Ted Walsh, talking about superstar horse Master Minded

"I'll bare me backside on the bridge in Athlone if this horse is beaten" – jockey Ken Whelan, talking about Master Minded

"Dermot Weld has a worse record in Cheltenham than you – and that's saying something" – Ruby Walsh to trainer Tony Mullins, talking about the Champion Bumper

"The Gold Cup will be delayed if Ebadiyan wins the Triumph Hurdle, because Oliver Brady will hold court in the parade ring for an hour – and I am looking forward to seeing that" – Tony Mullins, talking about the Triumph Hurdle on Thursday

"I'd love to beat Tom Scudamore (English jockey) on the run-in. I saw the carry-on he was at recently and I'd love to stick it up to him" – Ruby Walsh, talking about the Gold Cup

"I'd know more about putting a ring on a sow" – a straight answer from Tony Mullins when compere Dermot Cox asked him what he thought about the Foxhunters Chase