

All eyes on Corskeagh Royale today (Thursday)

HORSES FOR COURSES

■ by TOM RED

Irish racing this weekend starts on the level at Dundalk on Friday night and continues at Limerick on Saturday and Sunday. There is also racing at Navan on Sunday. Down Royal and Wexford have meetings on Bank Holiday Monday.

Strokestown's Niall Moran brings 2 horses to Dundalk for the 1m 2f handicap, Nora Chrissie and an ex inmate of Dermot Weld's yard, Ashby. Watch Ashby as Niall can definitely turn them out on the poly track. Nora Chrissie is also entered in a maiden hurdle in Down Royal on Monday.

Bet of the weekend looks to be Green Wellies in Down Royal on Monday. Trained I Mullingar by Dot Love this horse has won 2 point to points and a hunter chase in his 4 runs and is looking for a 4 timer.

CHELTENHAM: A great winning start for the Irish at the Festival as Captain Cee Bee trained by Eddie Harty and ridden by Robert Thornton took the Anglo Irish Bank Supreme Novices' Hurdle. The winner was named after the trainer's grandfather who jumped internationally for Ireland.

The winner battled up the hill in the green and gold hoops of JP McManus, also carried by the second home, Binocular, trained by Nicky Henderson and ridden by Tony McCoy.

Most of the leading fancies were there turning in including Jessica Harrington's Cork All Star. AP McCoy made a brave bid for home on Binocular, before the last, but Thornton never gave up on Eddie Harty's seven-year-old and powered up the hill to win by two lengths, with Snap Tie back in third.

Big disappointment in the Champion Hurdle for the Irish as the favourite Sizing Europe practically pulled up between the last two flights. The 6-Y-O appeared to be traveling well but stopped suddenly and was virtually pulled up on the run-in.

Trainer HENRY DE BROMHEAD believes he has found a reason for Sizing Europe's sudden capitulation in Tuesday's Champion Hurdle. When the racecourse vet examined him and pressed down on a joint in his back he was found to be very sore.

The Champion Sublimity ran a great race for John Carr in fourth on the rain-softened ground which probably cost him his chance of retaining the title. "He ran a really good race, he just doesn't get up the hill on that ground," said Carr.

"He still emerged as the best of the Irish though and as long as the ground suits we'll go to Punchestown." He was put in at 10/1 for next year's race and this looks good value as he is sure to be trained especially for the race again.

The Irish had their second winner on day one of the Cheltenham Festival when Nina Carberry on the Enda Bolger trained Garde Champe- tre slaughtered the field to win the BGC Cross

Country Chase. Enda Bolger proves once more that he is the man to follow over the cross country courses and the well backed 4-1 shot was always going well.

Nina kicked on turning for home and quickly went clear of her rivals. Philip Rothwell's Native Jack, winner in 2006 from Spot The Difference, came out of the field to take second, 10 lengths back ridden by Davy Russell.

Michael Hourigan's A New Story finished third, with another Bolger horse Freneys Well fourth, making it a one-two-three-four for Ireland. The favourite Wonderkid was never able to get in a blow on ground that was too soft nor was last year's winner, another Bolger inmate, Heads On The Ground.



These were the only orses in the Cotswolds on Wednesday!

On Wednesday morning punters woke up to the news that the meeting had been abandoned.

There was no problem on the track but the temporary hospitality stands and marquees could have been a danger to the public in the very high winds. The meeting was abandoned at 8.30 following consultations between the course management, the police and Health & Safety Officials.

Following the abandonment of Wednesday's card Barry Geraghty summed up the feelings from the weighing room.

"It is very windy out here," Geraghty said "That said it is frustrating that racing is off and it is going to be a drawn out day waiting for tomor-

row." The Corskeagh Royale contingent luckily had not left Knock on Wednesday morning before news arrived and they were able to travel out on Thursday morning for a 10 race card which included the bumper. Let's hope they have a winner for Roscommon.

On Friday Denman and Kauto Star go head to head in a field of 15. The two aces of the chasing world take one another on for the first time in a mouthwatering renewal of the Totesport Cheltenham Gold Cup.

Paul Nicholls' stablemates have captured public imagination this winter and their duel has been eagerly awaited all winter.

Kauto Star goes into the race as the reigning champion and brilliant winner of

Collonges and Star De Mohaison.

Supplementary Irish entry Afistfulofdollars, trained by Noel Meade, is the sole Irish representative and will run a big race. Nigel Twiston-Davies declared lively outsider Knowhere and front-runner Ollie Magern, who was seventh in Tuesday's William Hill Trophy Azulejo, Celestial Gold, Contraband, Fustrien Du Paon, Halcon Genelardais, Iron Man and Racing Demon complete the field.

On Friday watch out for Oliver Brady's Maralan who followed up his Grade 2 Navan with the Newlands Grade 2 Chase at Naas and will run in the Grand Annual Chase on Friday. Oliver loves to have one good enough to bring to the festival and this one is also lucky. Watch for this one and if it is placed the crowd will gather around this one in the enclosure to see and hear Oliver with his Up Monaghan verse. A sight to behold for racing and non-racing fans.

An Irish punter, who thought he was winner alright before he started, was arrested in Cheltenham on Tuesday on suspicion of fraud after he was caught in possession of £5,000 worth of counterfeit euro.

The 49-year-old was being questioned at Cheltenham Police Station on Tuesday night.

SUED WILLIAM HILL: Punter Graham Calvert sued William Hill after losing not only money but also his wife, health and livelihood.

Calvert, a compulsive gambler, lost more than £2 million betting and lost again to William Hill on Wednesday in his High Court claim for compensation and damages.

A judge ruled that the bookies did not owe Graham Calvert a duty of care even though he asked them to stop taking his money under William Hill's own self-exclusion policy.

The judge held that although William Hill did agree to exclude Mr Calvert from telephone gambling and failed to take reasonable steps to do so, pathological gambling would still probably have led to his financial ruin, but over a longer period of time.

POINT TO POINT: The point to point season, now in full swing, sees 6 meetings this weekend. On Saturday, the North Downs race at Kirkistown starting at 1.00.

There are 3 meetings on Sunday at Cloyne in Cork, Ballyragett in Kilkenny starting at 1.30 and at Belclare outside Tuam in Galway off half an hour later at 2.00.

This is the meeting where Best Mate won his first race as a 4-Y-O in 1999.

And on Monday there are meetings at Punchestown, inside the track, with an early 12.30 start and at Oldcastle in Co. Meath at 1.30.

Derek O'Connor with 3 winners last weekend moved on to the 53 mark. Jamie Codd cut his lead by 4 and is on 40 with M.J. O'Connor in 3rd on 29.

horses.forcourses@yahoo.com

Handball

More success for Marianna and Leona

All Ireland Ladies Senior doubles quarter-finals at Clooney: Roscommon played in two quarter-finals in the Ladies Senior doubles at Clooney, Co. Clare on Saturday. Marianna Rushe and Leona Doolin were successful beating the Kerry duo of Sharon Daly and Catriona Casey 21-4, 21-7. In the other quarterfinal Emer Coyle and Deirdre Donohoe lost to Ashley Prendiville and Marie Daly of Kerry 21-5, 21-5.

Connacht Junior doubles semi-final at Comans: Niall McGrath and Neil McDermott booked their place in the Connacht final with a clear cut win over Christopher Doolin and Aengus Cunningham.

County Juvenile 40 X 20 'A' Cham-

Championship: the boys Juvenile 'A' County Championship was played at Glinsk on Saturday and the results are: U-12 singles - P. Connelly (Glinsk) defeated Fairymount 2-0; U-13S Conor Egan (Comans) defeated Gordon Nolan (Clooncan) 2-1; U-13D Colm Walshe/Gary Kelly (Comans) bye; U-14S T. Connelly (Glinsk) defeated Liam Costello 2-1; U-14 D: Glinsk defeated Alex McDermott/Cathal Shanagher (Comans) in straight games; U-16S: Mark Nally (Comans - his match to be played later. U-16D: Cian Connolly/Darren Beatty (Comans) bye. Thanks to Aengus Cunningham (Comans Coach) for details.

Girls Juvenile County 'A' Finals: The participation in the Girls 'A' Coun-

ty Championship was poor. Only two Clubs took part, Comans and Clooncan. Results U-12D C. Shanagher/Fiona Tully; U-13D Tania Ferguson/Sarah Keenan; U-14S: Lauren O'Riordan; U-14D Shauna Lynch/Lydia Clayton; U-15S: Aoife McDonagh (Clooncan); U-15D: Catherine Hanlon/Rochelle Mullaney (Comans). The UI-16 and U-17 grades will be filled later. Roscommon play Mayo on Wednesday 19th March at 7 pm in Lisacul and the boys play in Ballaghaderreen on the same night and all the finals are fixed for Ballinrobe on Easter Monday starting at 11am.

Junior 'B' singles Connacht semi-final: The much postponed - not Roscommon's doing - Junior 'B'

singles semi-final between Mayo's Shane Heraty and Roscommon's Oisín Naughton goes on at Claremorris on Easter Thursday and the final is on Easter Monday at 3p.m. in Curraghboy where Sligo's David Mulryan awaits the winner of Shane and Oisín.

Connacht Finals at Comans: At Comans on Saturday last there were three fine games. In 'A' singles Kevin Geraghty of Mayo beat Martin Connelly of Galway. Martin's brother Eamonn beat Gerard Walshe of Curraghboy 21-14, 21-7. This was a high power game with Gerard Walshe giving the former Senior No. 3 player Eamonn Connelly a testing time.

In Masters 'B' singles Tom King of Galway beat Joe Dowling of Mayo 21-

15, 21-12.

Senior Doubles: A tight win for Des- sie Keegan/Joe McCann of Ballaghaderreen beating Wicklow's John Willoughboy/Michael Gregan in a marathon two hour fifteen minute thriller 17-21, 21-17, 21-18 in Senior doubles.

Envirogreen Resource Irish Nationals on Saturday 15th March at St. Mary's Carlow Men's 'B' - Alan O'Dwyer (Cork) Vs. Denis Creaton (Lisacul) at noon. The finals will take place on Sunday 16th. The Awards Banquet takes place on Saturday night 16th March at the Newpark Hotel. Tickets for the Banquet €30 direct from Croke Park (Irish Handball Council).