

BLC NOTES – AINTREE RACECOURSE 22 JANUARY 2024

IN ATTENDANCE:

Bookmakers – Paul Dolan, William Colley, Chris Kirk, Richard Johnson, Simon Wallis, Andy Melia.

Aintree – Dickon White, Carl Pastor, Steve Clare, Mark Ryan, Darren Irving.

2023 AINTREE TRADING UPDATE FROM BOOKMAKERS

Generally, bookmakers reported slightly lower levels of business and betting turnover at the non-Grand National race meetings, perhaps due to cost of living pressures.

The new Boxing Day fixture attracted a public attendance of c.6,000 (including 1,000 in hospitality) which was seen as a good start for the first fixture. This year's fixture will benefit from ongoing marketing and promotion. It is hoped that within 5 years public attendance overall will rise to around 12,000.

Bookmakers reported turnover on the Thursday & Saturday of the Grand National meeting as good and to expectations; Friday was adversely affected by continual heavy rain and turnover impacted accordingly. The racecourse was congratulated on how well the demonstrations by Animal Rising on Grand National Day were dealt with and the minimal impact on the event overall.

Bookmakers betting in the proximity of the extended & enhanced West Tip grandstand (4,500 [from 3,000 2022] in attendance on Grand National Day), reported encouraging business levels.

The Embankment enclosure had a disappointing public attendance of c.5,000. Several reasons for this were discussed, but it historically this is the final public enclosure to sell, directly after the Festival Zone. A number of potential reasons were debated.

WiFi and mobile phone connectivity was reported as being excellent on each of the three days.

2024 GRAND NATIONAL PLANNING & UPDATE

The Grand National itself will have a reduced field size of 34 (40 in 2023), likely to be the fourth race - t.b.c. (note – following the meeting, this has been revised to fourth or fifth race) Overall there will be a seven race card on Grand National Day.

Advance ticket sales are encouraging on Thursday & Saturday, but are tracking slightly behind 2023 for the Friday.

Grand National Day public admissions are on track to sell out with the exception of the Embankment where similar admissions to 2023 are predicted.

The West Tip grandstand capacity is the same as 2023 and has already sold out on Saturday. All other Grandstands and restaurants are also selling well.

Public admission tickets remain available on the racecourse website, and will also be on the dedicated bookmaker purchase portal next month.

Overall daily attendances are expected to be similar to 2023 for the Thursday and Saturday and perhaps slightly down on the Friday. DW agreed to update admissions forecasts during March.

Public facilities and temporary structures will be similar to the 2023 event.

There will be 5 ATM (plus an additional one within the Embankment) machines available.

When buying DBBs online (via the link on the RBC website), bookmakers are reminded to pay their Grand National Annual Marketing Fee first to enable DBBs RBC fee & staff tickets to be purchased.

This year there will again be an opportunity for bookmakers to drop off kit on Wednesday 10 April. Anyone wishing to do so must contact Darren Irving in advance. Kit can be dropped off, security checked, and left undercover in the Equestrian Centre between 2.00 p.m. & 4.00 p.m. on Wednesday 10 April at bookmaker's own risk.

As usual, Steeplechase parking will be available for bookmakers with shuttle buses to the centre course opposite grandstands. Car park labels will be available for advance purchase online from the Aintree Racecourse website. The first shuttle bus for bookmakers will depart from the steeplechase car park at 09.00 on Thursday and Friday and 08.30 on Saturday. CP to brief staff regarding allowing Embankment bookmakers easy access across the track.

Bookmaker pedestrian access to the racecourse will as usual be via Drive 3 from 09.00 on Thursday & Friday and 08.30 on Saturday. Bookmakers & staff admission tickets (email copy of DBB will not permit entry) will be scanned and equipment security checked at the entrance. Gates open for the public at 11.00 on Thursday, 10.30 on Friday & 10.00 on Saturday.

Pitching In times, will be 10.00 on Thursday & Friday and 09.45 (10.30 Embankment) on Saturday (Temporary Areas first).

It was confirmed that as per 2023 each of the four Temporary Betting Areas (front of Lord Sefton Stand 4; side of Earl of Derby Stand 2; Parade Ring 6; Inside the Equestrian Centre 5) will be pitched in separately utilising the 1:1 Tatts/Rails mechanism. However, RJ explained that Royal Ascot, where the Temporary Areas were also pitched in separately, utilised a streamlined mechanism which also gave Tatts first pick for each area. It was agreed that SC would investigate and consider for use at Aintree but only on the basis that the principles detailed above were not compromised.

The 5 betting positions by the Silver Birch hospitality (Tattersalls List) are expected to be in a similar location to 2023.

The racecourse will again provide black bags to each bookmaker for general litter.

Bookmakers are asked to keep their joint area clean & tidy and carefully store away kit boxes or extra kit, in order to reduce trip hazards.

All anchor points will be cleaned/power washed pre-event.

BRMs will issue bookmakers lanyards and transfer labels as required.

At the end of each day the usual exits, including opening up of the rear of the Equestrian Centre, will be available to bookmakers.

There is, as yet, no intelligence to suggest that the racecourse would be subject to public demonstrations, but the team remains vigilant with varied ongoing preparations.

OFF MEETINGS

Friday 17 May – Evening Racing;
Sunday 27 October – Old Roan Day;
Saturday 9 November;
Saturday 7 December - Becher Chase Day;
Thursday 26 December - Boxing Day.

AOB

It was reported that the volume of the PA system was often too high in front of the grandstands, but that it was often hard to hear within the equestrian centre. CP to monitor/manage.

Bookmakers asked for whatever support the racecourse could provide with the early determination/announcements of Stewards' Enquiries.

Bookmakers asked for Rule 4 & Stewards' Enquiry messages to be shown on the CCTV as well as announcements made on the PA – CP to review.

Next meeting 2025 TBA.