

## Favourites in flat racing – The Facts

This short report focuses on trends/stats for flat favourites from Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 to July 31<sup>st</sup> 2010. The favourites concerned are **CLEAR** favourites; hence joint/co favourite data has been ignored. SR stands for strike rate; ROI stands for return on investment.

Firstly let us look at the trainers that have profitable to follow when saddling the clear favourite. Only trainers who have saddled 50 or more favourites have been analysed:

### All Favourites – top trainers

Trainer	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
B Smart	90	205	43.9	+£43.44	+21.2
R Hannon	346	895	38.7	+£31.75	+3.6
S C Williams	63	181	34.8	+£25.22	+13.9
B R Millman	52	142	36.6	+£24.98	+17.6
M A Jarvis	202	503	40.2	+£24.56	+4.9
S Dow	24	58	41.4	+£20.73	+35.8
P D Evans	110	306	36.0	+£20.33	+6.6
M H Tompkins	55	163	33.7	+£20.26	+12.4
Mrs A Duffield	31	87	35.6	+£17.68	+20.3
M Wigham	50	150	33.3	+£16.43	+11.0
J S Moore	44	122	36.1	+£15.67	+12.8
P W Hiatt	25	72	34.7	+£15.42	+21.4
T G Mills	39	110	35.5	+£15.41	+14.0
M P Tregoning	76	182	41.8	+£14.16	+7.8
D K Ivory	23	73	31.5	+£13.57	+18.6
B Ellison	51	147	34.7	+£12.92	+8.8
J Howard Johnson	29	70	41.4	+£12.41	+17.7
J L Spearing	21	62	33.9	+£11.70	+18.9
E J Alston	29	96	30.2	+£11.27	+11.7
J R Boyle	74	209	35.4	+£9.55	+4.6
J Akehurst	20	62	32.3	+£9.46	+15.3
A Bailey	19	55	34.6	+£8.82	+16.0
R J Hodges	18	55	32.7	+£8.32	+15.1
R J Price	17	63	27.0	+£7.88	+12.5
A B Haynes	31	90	34.4	+£7.30	+8.1
N P Littmoden	33	102	32.4	+£5.54	+5.4
P W D'Arcy	24	67	35.8	+£5.38	+8.0
C E Brittain	50	133	37.6	+£5.15	+3.9
R Charlton	104	274	38.0	+£4.83	+1.8
P T Midgley	23	73	31.5	+£4.72	+6.5
P J Makin	48	148	32.4	+£4.70	+3.2
T P Tate	20	54	37.0	+£4.64	+8.6
W Jarvis	36	106	34.0	+£4.63	+4.4
S A Callaghan	37	96	38.5	+£4.41	+4.6
R M Whitaker	18	64	28.1	+£4.04	+6.3
W J Knight	27	76	35.5	+£3.55	+4.7
George Baker	32	78	41.0	+£3.40	+4.4
M Brittain	18	54	33.3	+£3.19	+5.9

L M Cumani	134	373	35.9	+£2.47	+0.7
B J Meehan	134	339	39.5	+£1.71	+0.5
Mrs R Carr	19	68	27.9	+£1.25	+1.9
T D Barron	102	334	30.5	+£0.69	+0.2
C F Wall	50	165	30.3	+£0.17	+0.1

The above table has been ordered by profit and Bryan Smart heads the list. Smart is a underrated trainer (as many northern handlers are). His favourites have shown a profit in 5 of the 6 years of study which shows consistency. In addition here are four areas where Smarts' favourites have excelled:

- his 2yos have produced 42 wins from 83 (SR 50.6%) for a profit of £23.48 (ROI +28.3%);
- in Auction maidens Smart's record reads 15 wins from 29 (SR 51.7%) for a profit of £11.36 (ROI +39.2%);
- in class 5 or lower he has a very good record with 66 wins from 144 runners (SR 45.8%) for a profit of £38.12 (ROI +26.5%);
- at Scottish tracks he has saddled 24 winners from just 40 favourites (SR 60%) for a profit of £18.42 (ROI +46.1%).

It seems Bryan Smart does require close scrutiny when saddling the favourite.

Not many trainers have positive records in 2yo maidens when saddling the favourite. Only 7 trainers have made the "cut" with my focus on those who have saddled at least 30 favs:

#### **Favourites in 2yo maidens – top trainers**

Trainer	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
T D Easterby	23	50	46.0	+£12.07	+24.2
J H M Gosden	41	91	45.1	+£11.60	+12.8
B Smart	22	44	50.0	+£10.19	+23.2
R Hannon	124	306	40.5	+£9.80	+3.2
M A Jarvis	34	69	49.3	+£8.95	+13.0
H R A Cecil	20	48	41.7	+£4.85	+10.1
J A Osborne	13	30	43.3	+£4.50	+15.0

There is a slightly higher number of trainers that have made profits in older maiden races as the following table shows:

**Favourites in 3yo/3yo+/3-4yo maidens – top trainers**

Trainer	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
M A Jarvis	69	132	52.3	+£19.59	+14.8
M P Tregoning	33	57	57.9	+£18.55	+32.5
R M Beckett	20	38	52.6	+£10.32	+27.2
B W Hills	63	130	48.5	+£9.72	+7.5
W J Haggas	41	81	50.6	+£5.01	+6.2
Sir Michael Stoute	103	213	48.4	+£3.91	+1.8
E A L Dunlop	32	73	43.8	+£3.51	+4.8
P W Chapple-Hyam	28	55	50.9	+£2.77	+5.0
B J Meehan	22	44	50.0	+£2.60	+5.9
H Candy	13	30	43.3	+£2.54	+8.5
Mrs A J Perrett	14	32	43.8	+£2.05	+6.4
M L W Bell	24	47	51.1	+£1.86	+4.0
R Charlton	28	58	48.3	+£0.90	+1.6

Marcus Tregoning has a very impressive looking record in these races. Indeed focusing on races of 1m2f or more his record reads a mightily impressive 12 wins from just 16 favourites! He also has done well at Lingfield with 13 wins from 20 (SR 65%) for a profit of £8.94 (ROI +44.7%). Michael Jarvis too seems to be a trainer to note when saddling runners in these maidens. His record at Kempton to date during this period has been unblemished with 8 wins from 8 favourites! It should also be noted that Jarvis has a much better record with males than females. His male favourites have produced 46 wins from 82 (SR 56.1%) for a profit of £18.96 (ROI +23.1%).

## Favourites by trainer when beaten favourite LTO

The final trainer area I am going to explore is when their horse is a beaten favourite last time out but is favourite again on its next start. I have used a minimum of 25 runs as the data is more limited.

Trainer	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
R Hannon	68	147	46.3	+£32.47	+22.1
S C Williams	16	41	39.0	+£14.69	+35.8
G A Swinbank	23	55	41.8	+£13.24	+24.1
L M Cumani	33	84	39.3	+£13.11	+15.6
B Smart	16	31	51.6	+£12.05	+38.9
D Nicholls	21	54	38.9	+£11.88	+22.0
T D Easterby	22	58	37.9	+£10.75	+18.5
J S Goldie	13	33	39.4	+£10.50	+31.8
J M Bradley	10	29	34.5	+£9.50	+32.8
S A Callaghan	13	29	44.8	+£7.47	+25.8
M P Tregoning	14	29	48.3	+£7.02	+24.2
J Nosedá	37	80	46.3	+£6.38	+8.0
T D Barron	21	64	32.8	+£6.36	+9.9
H R A Cecil	24	49	49.0	+£6.28	+12.8
A M Balding	16	46	34.8	+£5.60	+12.2
M Wigham	12	37	32.4	+£5.58	+15.1
W J Haggas	35	95	36.8	+£5.16	+5.4
W M Brisbourne	9	29	31.0	+£3.31	+11.4
H Candy	10	25	40.0	+£2.76	+11.0
J R Fanshawe	22	62	35.5	+£2.65	+4.3
P F I Cole	12	30	40.0	+£2.62	+8.7
G L Moore	26	73	35.6	+£1.69	+2.3
B J Meehan	24	55	43.6	+£1.61	+2.9
J H M Gosden	42	94	44.7	+£0.95	+1.0
P J Makin	10	28	35.7	+£0.91	+3.2

Richard Hannon's record with beaten favourites that go on to be favourite again next time is very solid indeed. I do think there are certain trainers that are especially keen to recoup losses of fancied runners that had failed to deliver last time, and Hannon is clearly one of them. Indeed, any Hannon favourite beaten in handicap last time out, who goes on to become favourite next time, also in a handicap, require very close scrutiny. His record with such runners reads a remarkable 16 wins from 31 runners (SR 51.6%) for a profit of £24.56 (ROI +79.2%).

## All Favourites by month

Monthly trends for favourites do occur as the table below shows:

Month	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
January	543	1598	34.0	-£64.54	-4.0
February	491	1464	33.5	-£88.75	-6.1
March	419	1359	30.8	-£179.76	-13.2
April	785	2436	32.2	-£139.92	-5.7
May	1243	3715	33.5	-£176.93	-4.8
June	1262	3986	31.7	-£317.94	-8.0
July	1352	4143	32.6	-£297.06	-7.2
August	1091	3358	32.5	-£133.75	-4.0
September	869	2723	31.9	-£96.00	-3.5
October	657	2266	29.0	-£181.09	-8.0
November	379	1295	29.3	-£168.60	-13.0
December	444	1305	34.0	-£61.26	-4.7

As you can see, two months are highlighted in red – March and November. It is no coincidence I am sure that these months see the start and the end of the turf flat season in this country. Hence for these two months of the year, favourite performance is less consistent.

Looking in more detail at November, here are three types of favourites to AVOID:

- favourites off the track for more than 4 weeks - SR 27.6%; ROI -21.6%;
- favourites aged 5 or older – SR 20.3%; ROI -31%;
- favourites racing on all weather having finished in first four LTO racing on turf – SR 29.4%; ROI -24.8%.

Looking at March now. Here are favourites to avoid in this month:

- favourites who are female (eg fillies/mares) – SR 26.8%; ROI -28.9%;
- favourites that are making their career debuts – SR 22%; ROI -40.6%;
- favourites that ran in NH race LTO – SR 9.5%; ROI -54.8%.

In terms of positive months, September has performed the best in terms of the least losses (only -3.5%). In fact September favourites made a blind profit in 2005, 2006 and 2009.

## All Favourites by jockey

Let us now look at jockeys when riding the favourite. Whether this data is particularly relevant I'm not sure but here goes:

Jockey	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
D Tudhope	54	167	32.3	+£29.78	+17.8
Greg Fairley	125	321	38.9	+£21.85	+6.8
P Cosgrave	97	256	37.9	+£19.56	+7.6
R Fitzpatrick	23	61	37.7	+£18.94	+31.1
S De Sousa	42	122	34.4	+£18.39	+15.1
M Stainton	20	52	38.5	+£17.95	+34.5
Saleem Golam	38	121	31.4	+£16.26	+13.4
A Munro	86	225	38.2	+£15.79	+7.0
D Allan	94	280	33.6	+£14.74	+5.3
N Mackay	71	193	36.8	+£11.26	+5.8
J F Egan	92	283	32.5	+£8.83	+3.1
Mr S Walker	19	62	30.7	+£8.83	+14.2
B McHugh	21	64	32.8	+£8.70	+13.6
B Doyle	20	55	36.4	+£7.99	+14.5
Liam Jones	64	178	36.0	+£7.64	+4.3
L Dettori	315	802	39.3	+£7.27	+0.9
M Fenton	54	171	31.6	+£6.46	+3.8
P Doe	31	88	35.2	+£5.72	+6.5
P Robinson	149	407	36.6	+£5.59	+1.4
A Mullen	23	83	27.7	+£4.95	+6.0
L P Keniry	67	212	31.6	+£3.57	+1.7
Andrea Atzeni	27	88	30.7	+£3.33	+3.8
W A Carson	36	109	33.0	+£3.31	+3.0
T Dean	22	66	33.3	+£2.87	+4.4
P Dobbs	55	148	37.2	+£2.14	+1.5
A Elliott	41	121	33.9	+£1.95	+1.6
F Lynch	38	119	31.9	+£0.82	+0.7
S Drowne	175	516	33.9	+£0.60	+0.1

The most interesting finding for me is to see Frankie Dettori actually in profit, albeit by less than 1%. I had expected Dettori favourites to be over-bet purely due to the "Dettori factor". Dettori is 10 wins from 18 favourites for Sir Michael Stoute which is worth noting, while he also has performed well when riding for Brian Meehan. It should be noted that several top jockeys have made an above average loss when riding favourites – Jamie Spencer, Jimmy Quinn and Darryl Holland all have losses of over 12 pence in the £.

## Favourites by Race type

It is always worth breaking down favourite performance into race types and the table below makes interesting reading:

Race type	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
Amateur races	82	341	24.1	-£38.32	-11.2
Apprentice races	268	953	28.1	-£13.02	-1.4
Claimers	571	1488	38.4	-£10.28	-0.7
Classified races	111	411	27.0	-£71.59	-17.4
Conditions races	246	607	40.5	-£67.75	-11.2
Group 1	67	168	39.9	+£6.95	+4.1
Group 2	72	221	32.6	-£18.64	-8.4
Group 3	117	330	35.5	-£11.38	-3.5
Handicaps	4576	16759	27.3	-£1,247.56	-7.4
Listed	241	769	31.3	-£125.49	-16.3
Maidens	2785	6803	40.9	-£367.11	-5.4
Novice races	157	326	48.2	-£11.65	-3.6
Sellers	459	1229	37.3	+£79.96	+6.5

The lowest grade of races (sellers and claimers) tend to be good for favourites. This is probably due to the lack of quality in the races in question. Listed races on the other hand have been poor for favourites – this may be due to the fact that Listed races often involve a mixture of improving horses and older handicappers making it difficult to equate the form lines.

## Favourites by Race Going

Going	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
Firm / Hard	348	974	35.7	-£37.53	-3.9
Good To Firm	2734	8042	34.0	-£252.62	-3.1
Good	1590	5272	30.2	-£450.96	-8.6
Good To Soft	782	2558	30.6	-£191.95	-7.5
Soft	506	1630	31.0	-£79.52	-4.9
Heavy	127	426	29.8	-£68.46	-16.1
All weather	3448	10746	32.1	-£824.56	-7.7

Favourites seem to perform best on going that is good to firm or firmer. Heavy ground favourites look the ones to avoid.

## Favourites by Class

Class	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
1	504	1525	33.1	-£160.93	-10.6
2	422	1598	26.4	-£167.81	-10.5
3	606	1977	30.7	-£181.92	-9.2
4	1747	5592	31.2	-£503.61	-9.0
5	3705	10686	34.7	-£487.38	-4.6
6	2333	7453	31.3	-£321.50	-4.3
7	218	814	26.8	-£79.46	-9.8

In terms of class, favourites have a better record in class 5 and 6 contests. There is more limited data for class 7 races but essentially it seems the lower grades of racing are best for favourites.

### Favourites by Course

Course	Wins	Favourites	SR%	Profit	ROI%
Ascot	119	433	27.5	-£68.07	-15.7
Ayr	154	539	28.6	-£81.11	-15.1
Bath	219	633	34.6	+£8.32	+1.3
Beverley	232	662	35.1	+£3.95	+0.6
Brighton	212	656	32.3	-£32.18	-4.9
Carlisle	90	296	30.4	-£34.57	-11.7
Catterick	199	626	31.8	-£49.84	-8.0
Chepstow	114	398	28.6	-£63.94	-16.1
Chester	144	420	34.3	+£1.09	+0.3
Doncaster	163	554	29.4	-£60.13	-10.9
Epsom	85	277	30.7	-£16.99	-6.1
Ffos Las	16	47	34.0	-£2.69	-5.7
Folkestone	180	492	36.6	+£11.48	+2.3
Goodwood	225	751	30.0	-£33.44	-4.5
Great Leighs	92	280	32.9	-£21.72	-7.8
Hamilton	204	583	35.0	-£53.02	-9.1
Haydock	234	677	34.6	+£20.94	+3.1
Kempton	631	2093	30.2	-£227.36	-10.9
Leicester	248	665	37.3	+£19.53	+2.9
Lingfield	1095	3248	33.7	-£95.64	-2.9
Musselburgh	204	591	34.5	-£23.53	-4.0
Newbury	201	669	30.0	-£54.40	-8.1
Newcastle	168	532	31.6	-£17.66	-3.3
Newmarket	412	1378	29.9	-£131.59	-9.6
Nottingham	224	701	32.0	-£58.00	-8.3
Pontefract	172	529	32.5	-£8.21	-1.6
Redcar	196	624	31.4	-£40.02	-6.4
Ripon	149	478	31.2	-£52.98	-11.1
Salisbury	171	518	33.0	-£31.18	-6.0
Sandown	194	605	32.1	-£35.55	-5.9
Southwell	721	2140	33.7	-£82.85	-3.9
Thirsk	161	499	32.3	-£26.44	-5.3
Warwick	144	474	30.4	-£59.05	-12.5
Windsor	253	798	31.7	-£63.93	-8.0
Wolverhampton	1098	3492	31.4	-£359.04	-10.3
Yarmouth	264	765	34.5	-£43.80	-5.7
York	147	523	28.1	-£40.01	-7.7

Course data I find is useful for draw and pace research, but I am not sure how relevant it is in terms of the betting market, or in this case favourites. Having said that, the poorish returns for favourites at Ascot is probably due to the fact that Ascot races tend

to be as competitive as you get in flat racing. Hence that particular course data is worth noting.

### **Additional favourite facts**

Favourites aged 7 or older that were beaten favourites last time out have actually made a profit – 106 wins from 294 runners (SR 36.1%) for a profit of £33.48 (ROI +11.4%);

Favourites at Southwell that are American bred have provided 109 winners from 256 runners (SR 42.6%) for a profit of £33.28 (ROI +13%);

Favourites in Chester maidens have won a remarkable 58% of the races, and this rises to over 62% for 3yos that are favourites in maidens;

Favourites that last time out were priced a massive 40/1 or bigger have actually made a profit – 190 wins from 526 runners (SR 36.1%) for a profit of £30.97 (ROI +5.9%).