

Yorkshire is the focus of the horseracing world this week with the return of the Ebor Festival meeting to York's famous racecourse on the Knavesmire on Wednesday. The global nature of the competition is reflected by the fact that the week's three Group Ones are all part of the Breeders' Cup Challenge Series and the winners of the Juddmonte International and Darley Yorkshire Oaks will be offered huge bonuses to go and tackle the Japan Cup.

### Wednesday



York can rightfully claim that the action kicks off with Britain's best race of the whole season. For the last three years, no British contest has been rated more highly by the international handicappers than the Group One Juddmonte International. This year it also becomes the richest race ever run at York, with a guaranteed £1,000,000 on offer to the horses seeking to follow such superstars as Frankel (left) or Sea the Stars into the winner's enclosure on the opening day of the meeting.

A mouthwatering contest is in prospect with a host of top-drawer names in line for a tilt at the prize, including the winner of the English and Irish 2,000 Guineas (Churchill), St James's Palace Stakes hero (Barney Roy), the recent Coral-Eclipse Stakes winner and King George runner-up (Ulysses). Also set to take part is high-class filly Shutter Speed, a late withdrawal from an alternative possible appearance at Deauville at the weekend.

Wednesday's supporting action includes the return to action of Cracksman in the Betway Great Voltigeur Stakes. Third in the Investec Derby at Epsom and second in the Irish equivalent, he drops to Group Two level here. Aidan O'Brien also looks particularly well represented among the entries, including talented stablemates Douglas Macarthur and Venice Beach.

**Top Tip: 16.15 – Magic Circle** Although it's more than a year since Ralph Beckett's runner last got his head in front, he drops back to 3200m here and must surely go well having shaped with promise from a wide draw in the Chester Cup previously.

### Thursday

The superstar filly of the European season so far, Enable, heads the rollcall for the Darley Yorkshire Oaks. Already the winner of the Investec Oaks at Epsom and its Irish equivalent, she shrugged off the new question being asked of her when she took on older and male rivals for the first time in the King George VI And Queen Elizabeth Stakes at Ascot (right).



"Enable is happy and well. This was part of the original plan and hopefully we'll be there," reported trainer John Gosden, who has won the Yorkshire Oaks twice before with Dar Re Mi and The Fugue. He has also confirmed Journey and Coronet.

Sir Michael Stoute has saddled a record nine previous winners of the prestigious York contest and hopes to run both Abingdon and Queen's Trust. Breeders' Cup Filly & Mare Turf winner Queen's Trust, who will be running over a mile and a half for the first time this year, has run better this season than a glance at her bare form may suggest, while Abingdon has shown up particularly well when competing on fast ground, notably when winning a Listed race at Pontefract by ten lengths in June.

Elsewhere on the card, Newbury Listed winner Madeline and US contender Happy Like A Fool are among the leading contenders for the Sky Bet Lowther Stakes over 1200m.

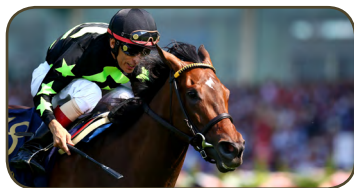
The latter, runner-up in the Queen Mary Stakes at Royal Ascot, was supplemented into the line-up for the Group Two last week at a cost of £15,000.

Fellow Irish trainer Ken Condon plans to saddle Mamba Noire, who finished third to Clemmie in Newmarket's Duchess of Cambridge Stakes last month. Condon said: "She put two good runs together behind Clemmie and that Duchess of Cambridge form looks good. A strongly-run six furlongs at York could bring the best out of her."

**Top Tip: 4.15 – Mori** Immaculately-bred filly by Frankel out of Midday who was only cut down close home in the Ribblesdale last time and must be hard to beat in this easier-looking contest.

**Friday**

The sprinting clash of the season so far takes place on the Knavesmire when thrilling American speedster Lady Aurelia takes on the exciting Battaash in a battle for the 1000m Coolmore Nunthorpe Stakes.



Wesley Ward's Lady Aurelia, who has been based at the racecourse for several days now, looked freakishly good when winning the King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot on her latest start. Frankie Dettori certainly appeared suitably impressed after putting Lady Aurelia through her paces at York last Friday morning.

However, in the Charlie Hills-trained Battaash, Lady Aurelia meets a rival who has booked his place in the line-up with thoroughly impressive victories in the Scurry Stakes and the Coral Charge, both at Sandown, and most recently in the King George Stakes at Goodwood.



Profitable and Marsha, who filled the places behind Lady Aurelia at Royal Ascot, look set to be in opposition once more, while Profitable's trainer Clive Cox also has Priceless in contention.

Two other Group races head up the rest of the action on Day Three of the meeting, with the Weatherbys Hamilton Lonsdale Cup attracting some start stayers, among them The Queen's Dartmouth, who struck at the course earlier this season in the Yorkshire Cup. Royal Ascot winner Thomas Hobson is also under consideration for the same race.

There's also a high-quality field for the Group Three Sky Bet City Of York Stakes over 1400m, with evergreen nine-year-old Gordon Lord Byron asked to give weight away all round on account of a Group Two success at The Curragh in May.

**Top Tip: 3.35 - Battaash** Was impressive at Goodwood last time, especially so as he was asked new questions about ground and tactics in a very good renewal of that race. But he'll be doing well to get within a sniff of Lady Aurelia, who looked nothing short of brilliant in the King's Stand Stakes at Royal Ascot.

**Saturday**

Saturday's highlight is the Betfred Ebor, Europe's richest Flat handicap, carrying a purse of £285,000. York's oldest and most famous race is set to be as fiercely contested as ever with the winner often booking their flight to the Emirates Melbourne Cup in November.

Sir Mark Prescott is banking on recent unsettled weather continuing for his leading Ebor fancy Flymetothestars, who will only line up at York if the ground is soft enough. Flymetothestars was beaten less than a length when third in the Northumberland Plate at Newcastle last month, having won three of his four starts before that outing.

However, all five starts have been on an all-weather surface and Prescott, who landed the 1994 Ebor with Hasten To Add, wants soft to feature in the official going on the Knavesmire.

The other principal attraction on the final day of the fixture is the Al Basti Equiworld Gimcrack Stakes over 1200m, a Group Two for juvenile colts and geldings.

Among those earmarked for the contest is the James Tate-trained Invincible Army, a game second to Havana Grey in the Molecomb Stakes at Goodwood on his latest start (**below, left**).



"I was relatively pleased with him, but disappointed not to win all the same. He was on the wrong side of the track and had nothing to race with, so I think we'll go back up to six furlongs on nice ground hopefully."

**Top Tip: 4.00 - Battersea** Was fourth in this race last year, having had to come from a long way back after being handed an unfavourably wide draw. His trainer has another tilt at this valuable contest in mind ever since.