

CHEL TENHAMELLESMERE WINS AMATEUR GRAND NATIONAL

Ascot-like weather ushers in Cheltenham's big week. The hat-parade is there to greet the sun, and with the fashions come the fancies for the big race - the National Hunt Steeplechase - dubbed vocally the Amateurs' Grand National and, traditionally, the curtain-raiser for Aintree. All eyes and most of the money are on the favourite, Lord Bicester's Ellesmere, as 26 of Britain's top chasers set out on the testing 4-mile course.

Coming up to the first fence, the field is still tightly packed. Jeremy II leads by a hair's breadth, but ELLESMERE and SIGHT RING are there too.

Jump No. 2 brings casualty No. 1. Ireland's big hope, ROYAL TAN, takes a tumble and is out of the race. With the going good, the rest thunder on into the country, as far-sighted trainers look here for the form that may reveal the winner of next year's Grand National.

Over the water, and the half-way stage. The field sorts itself out as more riders bite the dust at tumble-down corner.

ELLESMERE (No. 3) and LAURENTUM'S PRIDE (No. 13) are out in front, battling for the lead. And now No. 13 draws ahead, with ELLESMERE and the grey "TIBERDON" HARD After it.

Jump 24 and the last. ELLESMERE is first across, closely followed by TIBERDON. The rest are out of it now, straggling way behind the leaders. And it's here, where PRINCE BROWNIE with Lord Mildmay up - ends His Lordship's hope of a place.

In the straight jockey Corbett increases his lead to five lengths to give a runaway victory to Lord Bicester's Irish-bred ELLESMERE - a strongly-backed favourite. The question now is will it be a Bicester Aintree with ROIMOND or will it be, once again, a bookies day?