

THE QUEEN AT ASCOT

There's a record crowd at Ascot, despite the experts who've forecast "bring-your-raincoat" weather. In the first race of the day (the Ribblesdale Stakes) the Queen's entry, STREAM OF LIGHT, is well fancied. Accompanied by Princess Margaret, Her Majesty (wearing a black-and-white dress with white ostrich-feather hat) leaves the paddock to watch the race from the grandstand. There's a field of thirteen and STREAM OF LIGHT's got a big chance. Here they come into the final stretch up to the finish. STREAM OF LIGHT is lying third with NICKY NOOK, EQUILLA and TRIANGLE all doing well.

Everyone's hoping for a Royal victory, but French-born EQUILLA's just a bit ahead of the field and looks all set to win. STREAM OF LIGHT's trying hard and so's NICKY NOOK. But EQUILLA's going ahead and she's first past the post a length-and-a-half in front of NICKY NOOK with STREAM OF LIGHT third to give Monsieur Boussac the first French win of the meeting. It'll soon be time for the Royal Hunt Cup and everyone's hoping to cheer themselves up after STREAM OF LIGHT's failure by picking a good 'un.

If you're looking for the winner, he's somewhere here. But don't ask me which one it is - I wish I knew myself - and so does she. It's now or never if you want a flutter. Some pretty big money's gone on bets for this race and everyone's having a bob or two on their particular choice - or are they?

The horses go down to the start near the Golden Gates. Number 10, Charlie Elliott's mount, is FLEETING MOMENT. Here's Billy Rickaby on FASTNET ROCK - and E. Smith on LADY SOPHIA. Freddy Barlow on QUEEN OF SHEBA - and Lester Piggott on ABRAHAM'S STAR both think they're on the winner. We'll soon find out who's right. They're moving up in line to the tapes - and they're off! with well over seven furlongs to go. Almost at once they split into two groups on either side of the course. Down the hill there's not a lot to choose between them, but QUEEN OF SHEBA's going fast on the far side and BRUNETTO's leading the bunch near the stands. FLEETING MOMENT's not doing so well, but ABRAHAM'S STAR and LADY SOPHIA are up near the front. ARISTOPHANES is going gamely just behind QUEEN OF SHEBA over on the rails and BRUNETTO's still leading the second bunch and looks like staying there.

Just over a furlong to go and QUEEN OF SHEBA and BRUNETTO fight it out. But at the post it's QUEEN OF SHEBA with BRUNETTO second and ARISTOPHANES in third places. Atty Perse, who trained QUEEN OF SHEBA, has won this race twice before. The Hunt Cup was run the day after his 83rd birthday - a fine present for the grand old man of British racing.