

THE GRAND NATIONAL

Once again the crowds gather at Aintree for the greatest steeplechase in the world - the Grand National. And, as usual, the old firm are here just in case you want a flutter before the tapes go up.

There are thirty-one runners to pick from - so what's your fancy? How about Mr. Rimmell's ORINANCE - or the favourite LITTLE YID from the same stable that won with FREEBOOTER three years ago.

Time now for the little men to take their seats - their big moment's not far off, and the field makes its way out to the start. Most of the tipsters forecast another win for Ireland, but it's half the thrill of the National that even the best horse in the race is likely to come a cropper at one of the thirty fences they have to face.

The runners get into line - it's the smallest field since 1940, so there shouldn't be much trouble for the starter. Up go the tapes - they're off with nearly four-and-a-half miles to go! ORINANCE, QUITE NATURALLY and LITTLE YID are among the leaders as they head towards the first fence.

There's usually a hefty crop of tumbles on fence number one. QUITE NATURALLY is the first to go! There goes GRAND TRUCE! But they are the only two casualties as the field races on. Here's that first jump again as seen by the slow motion camera.

ORINANCE, EARLY MIST, LITTLE YID, and MONT TREMBLANT are all going well up in front at the third jump. Outsider LAND FORT misjumps and he's down!

Up into fence number four. PARASOL II has joined the leading bunch. Down go a couple more - the field's beginning to thin out already.

ORINANCE is well in the lead at Becher's Brook. The slow motion camera records his jump. Still in good positions are PARASOL II and LITTLE YID, and MONT TREMBLANT carrying the top weight isn't far behind.

Still in front, ORDNANCE takes jump number seven. He's over safely. PARASOL II and LITTLE YID lead the rest of the field. They've all got a long way to go to catch the leader.

ORDNANCE takes the Canal Turn in his stride. PARASOL II is next - but he's down! Another victim is HIKKBA, one of the two greys in the race. The rest of the field gets over safely and races for Valentine's Brook.

ORDNANCE stumbles but only for a moment. LITTLE YID clears well and so does MONT TREMBLANT.

ORDNANCE is over jump eleven, and still well in the lead. ARMoured KNIGHT has moved up with LITTLE YID. PUNCHSTOWN STAR collides with LARRY FINN and jockey Thompson takes a hefty tumble that puts him out of the race. The rest of the field gets over well, but watch CREAM OF THE BORDER. He just can't make it.

Michael Scudamore keeps ORDNANCE well out in front as they come round the bend and head towards the stands.

Jump number thirteen and STORMHEAD joins LITTLE YID behind ORDNANCE.

The open ditch, six feet wide with a jump of five feet is next, but ORDNANCE is over. LITTLE YID, STORMHEAD, MONT TREMBLANT, EARLY MIST and ARMoured KNIGHT are all going well. Here they go into the Water jump, still in the same order. This is the last jump before they set out again for the second time round.

Leaving the stands behind, ORDNANCE keeps up a cracking pace as he heads towards the seventeenth jump. He's still holding a slight lead over the rest of the field. Only about a dozen horses are left of the original thirty-one as they race for the first fence of the second lap.

ORDNANCE is still on his feet at the nineteenth jump. EARLY MIST and MONT TREMBLANT have started to move up, and as they go into the fence before Becher's EARLY MIST has drawn level with ORDNANCE - now ORDNANCE is down! He's out of the race and EARLY MIST moves into the lead. MONT TREMBLANT and LITTLE YID are still there as they come into Becher's.

There goes one more! Becher's is living up to its reputation and taking its toll of the stragglers.

EARLY MIST and MONT TREMBLANT fight it out in front as they take the twenty-third jump. But EARLY MIST, with Bryan Marshall in the saddle, is in the lead as they race towards the Canal Turn.

Riderless horses still keep going, but they're right off the course and won't hamper the leaders. The order's still EARLY MIST, MONT TREMBLANT and LITTLE YID - with the rest way out behind.

Into Valentine's for the second time, and EARLY MIST still has MONT TREMBLANT hot on his heels. LITTLE YID stumbles, but he doesn't go down.

Four more fences before they're home, and EARLY MIST and MONT TREMBLANT seem to be keeping the fast pace they've set for most of the second circuit. LITTLE YID is still in third place. But he refuses the jump - the favourite is out of the running! Now comes another surprise: that gallant chaser CLONCARRIG goes down.

EARLY MIST is going beautifully in the lead. Bryan Marshall (considered one of the greatest steeplechase riders of our time) looks like finishing a great Irish season with a Grand National victory. Here he goes into jump 29 with MONT TREMBLANT in second place.

There's no doubt about the result as EARLY MIST comes up the straight from the last fence. Far behind, IRISH LIZARD tries to catch MONT TREMBLANT. There are only five horses left on their feet as EARLY MIST races up to the post, twenty lengths in front, to chalk up a brilliant Grand National win. Victory in the roughest, toughest, most tiring steeplechase of them all goes to Ireland once again, thanks to a magnificent combination of horse and rider.

EARLY MIST was once owned by Mr. J.V. Rank who never succeeded in winning the National during a lifetime of racing. What a reception every Irishman at Aintree gives the winner as he makes his way to the unsaddling enclosure.

EARLY MIST brings his Irish trainer, Mr. Vincent O'Brien, his first Grand National victory, and wins for his proud owner, Mr. J. Griffin, more than £9,000 in prize money.