

GRAND NATIONAL PROSPECTS:

The Grand National's only a matter of days away - so let's have a look at some of the possibles. Last year's winner, E.S.B. - and what a lucky winner he was! - is naturally well up among the favourites for this year's race. Irish races give a pointer - here's Sam Brownthorn, favourite at Leopardstown, but unplaced. At Gowran Park is Virgins, trained by Vincent O'Brien. But Virgins loses here to a mare, Sandy Jane the Second, a glutton for long distances. O'Brien isn't perturbed; he has other irons in the fire, including Royal Tan.

At the Crump stables in Middleham, the string is led by Much Obliged and Gooseander - both in the favourite half-dozen.

Another favoured horse is Glorious Twelfth, training at the Renton stables near Ripon.

Back to Leopardstown for a look at the finish of the £1,000 "Chase" - with Tette, another Irish-trained National candidate, winning easily. Can he do the same at Aintree? That's anybody's guess - for the most thrilling race in the world is as open as ever!