

ROYAL ASCOT:

Half the fun at Royal Ascot is spotting winners - but even if it's raining, the other half is spotting celebrities - Earl Dalkwith, for example, or Mrs. Gerald Lascelles. And if we're allowed three halves, the other half is looking at the surprising things people wear and (if you're a woman) wishing you'd thought of it first. The Queen, walking to the paddock with the Queen Mother, is of course the centre of attention; you won't see Prince Philip, because he's inspecting the Tote - from the inside, but you will see Sir Winston Churchill, who never misses Ascot if he can help it, and, naturally, Norman Hartnell, who never misses Ascot - period.

Rain or no rain, it's still one of the year's major fashion events; the moment the rain lets up, you fold your umbrellas, and spread your wings. Five minutes later it will be vice versa.

This is a race meeting - remember? so let's go to the paddock and see the field for the Gold Vase. Here's Lord Sefton's Owen Glendower.

And Red Dragon, owned by the Princess Royal. What's all this, a new Welsh challenge to the French and Irish? Well, we'll soon see - for they're coming up to the start - and they're off!

There's no Queen's entry for the Gold Vase; the only Royal horse is the Princess Royal's Red Dragon. I can see Compromise doing well, and Supreme Courage.

Coming round the bend into the final straight - and it's the favourite Even Money leading, with Owen Glendower second and Compromise third. Even Money's running well, and it looks as though the only real fight's going to be for a place.

He may be called Even Money, but if your two bob was on him you've won at 9 to 4! One of the easiest Gold Vase winners ever - and yes he's Irish.

It's starting to rain in earnest as the field assembles for the Ascot Stakes, longest race of the day. There's Garibaldi...Riger, Beyond the Moss, Lucky White Heather, Fur Bonnet.

And they're off, with two and a half miles ahead of them.

Passing the stands for the first time, it's Niccolo, closely followed by Celestial Sucker and Fearless Cavalier.

Into the final straight - and now it's Seleucus in the lead, but he's being strongly challenged by Garibaldi - but now Sandiacre's coming through! He's left Garibaldi behind and he's passing Seleucus!

5-805801

Yes, it's Sandiacre, that Northern six-year-old - Seleucus second - Caribaldi's challenge has failed, and he's struck at third as they pass the post! Sandiacre lay fifth until the last two furlongs, so that was no easy win - just a remarkable effort by a real stayer. You get 100 to 7 for your money - or did you!