

## Russell ready for Cheltenham



No Secrets and Bryan Cooper winning the “The Newgrange Veterans Handicap Chase” at Navan on Sunday from Letter Of Credit (Philip Enright) | Photo: Alain Barr

Davy Russell is eagerly looking forward to next week’s Cheltenham festival, which isn’t at all surprising as he of course partnered Lord Windermere to victory in last year’s Cheltenham Gold cup. The Youghal ace continues to fire in the winners and he combined with Robbie Hennessy to land the featured Thurles Racecourse Rated Chase at Thurles on Thursday of last week with Rubi Light.

A one-time near top-class two-mile chaser, the French-bred Rubi Light led until he was headed before the second last. Rubi Light is however nothing but tough and he gamely re-asserted from the final fence to thwart main market-rival Arnaud by three parts of a length. The 10-year-old Rubi Light, who was recording his initial success since 2012, may now contest the Aintree Grand National.

Conna-based handler Jimmy Mangan, who of course sent out Monty’s Pass to win the 2003 Aintree Grand National, was earlier on the mark with Perfect Promise in the Irish Stallion Farms EBF Mares’ Beginners Chase.



Last year's Gold Cup winning jockey Davy Russell continued his good form ahead of next week's Cheltenham Festival at Thurles last Thursday when he won the featured Thurles Racecourse Rated Chase on Rubi Light

The seven-year-old Perfect Promise made smooth progress to lead before the second last and she was clearly containing The Conker Club when Billy Harney's charge fell at the final fence. Perfect Promise was then left clear in the hands of Adrian Heskin to beat Carrigeen Kigelia by 21 lengths. The likelihood is that Perfect Promise will be kept going until the summer and handler Mangan expects that she will continue to progress up through the ranks.

At Leopardstown on Saturday, Henry de Bromhead received the ideal pre-Cheltenham festival boost when Sizing Granite easily won the Irish Stallion Farms European Breeders Fund Novice chase in the hands of owners' Ann & Alan Potts Partnership's retained jockey Johnny Burke.

Despite erring at the final fence, Sizing Granite still beat Dysios by an unchallenged six lengths and the indications are that the son of Milan will now travel to Aintree next month.

Carrigtwohill-based handler Terence O'Brien struck with She's Got Grit in the €50, 000 Mercury Engineering Handicap Chase over two miles five furlongs. The 10-year-old She's Got Grit, who only won her maiden point-to-point at Bandon in February 2013, dug deep for Adrian Heskin to beat Fever Pitch by one and quarter lengths. She's Got Grit, who was recording her fifth track success, will now more than likely be in action at the Fairyhouse and Punchestown festivals.

At Navan on Sunday, John Kiely's The Parishioner sprung a mild surprise in the Dunsany Handicap Chase. The Parishioner, sporting the same JP McManus silks as Kiely's Cheltenham Gold Cup hopeful Carlingford Lough, stylishly made his way to the front with talented three lb claimer Jody McGarvey at the final fence and the six-year-old then stayed on dourly to eclipse Rolling Rocket by one and a quarter lengths.

Slieverue-based handler Eoin Griffin meanwhile struck with Azorian, homebred by his father Sean, in the Follow Navan On Facebook Beginners Chase.

The Gigginstown House Stud-owned Azorian made all the running with Bryan Cooper and he eased clear on the run-in to slam Big Kern by eight lengths. Griffin indicated that Azorian, a son of Westerner, will be kept on the until the ground for the immediate future and the seven-year-old should definitely be worth supporting again over the coming months.

Neil O'Donnell