

June 24, 2009

## Great mares head to The Curragh

Championship racing returns to Ireland this Saturday, as some of Europe's finest mares converge on The Curragh for the Group 1 Pretty Polly Stakes.

A race traditionally won by quality gallopers – champions Peeping Fawn (2007) and Alexander Goldrun (2005/06) have won three of the past four runnings – this year's renewal may determine the best mare in Europe.

The race (for fillies and mares) is headed by Jim Bolger's triple Group 1 winner Lush Lashes, who is expected to improve sharply on her unplaced run in the Group 2 Windsor Forest Stakes at Royal Ascot when she became a victim of tactics. With wins at the elite level over 1600m and 2400m, the 2000m of the Pretty Polly appears to suit ideally on a track where she won her first race.

Lush Lashes appears the nominal favourite but she will face stiff opposition from last year's Oaks Stakes winner Look Here and the grand mare Heaven Sent. Lightly raced Look Here will be primed for the Curragh after a first up third to Ask in the Group 1 Coronation Stakes and Heaven Sent comes off a last start courageous second in the Windsor Forest – finishing well ahead of Lush Lashes.

Heaven Sent will be out to rectify the anomaly that such a good mare has never won at Group 1 level – the six-year-old's form in that grade has been excellent for several seasons without the ultimate success. John Oxx's promising mare Katiyra and class stayer Profound Beauty could be serious contenders while Oh Goodness Me appeals as the only three-year-old with the quality to be a factor.

Australian punters will be wise to pay special attention to Profound Beauty's performance, as the mare is one of the early favourites for the Melbourne Cup. A strong performance over the 2000m could see dual Cup winning trainer Dermot Weld confirm her as a starter in this year's great race.

Dar Re Mi looms as the interesting Pretty Polly runner. The John Gosden-trained four-year-old ran grand seconds last year in Group 1 company – to superstar Zarkava in the Qatar Prix Royallieu at Longchamp and behind Lush Lashes in the Yorkshire Oaks – and has plenty of scope for improvement.

Sky Racing will have a live coverage of the Pretty Polly Stakes at 12.45am (Sunday) AEST. NSW and Victoria TAB will wager on the event.