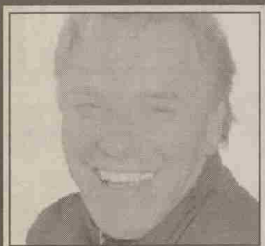


GRAND NATIONAL

STARR



LIGHT

By TED MACAULEY

COMIC Freddie Starr will, for once, be dodging the spotlight on Saturday.

And even if his 12-year-old gelding Minnehoma romps to a second successive Grand National victory you won't see the Starr-turn in the Aintree winner's enclosure.

The madcap Merseysider, who pocketed more than £500,000 in bets and prize money from last year's Minnie win, is so superstitious that he is staying well clear of Liverpool.

He explains: "Minnehoma won

My Fancy

JOHN WARK (Ipswich Town)

I've a feeling there's going to be lots of laughter in the winner's enclosure - Freddie Starr's Minnehoma is going to romp home again.

the National when I wasn't there last year - so I have decided not to go again this year."

Freddie has owned Minnie since he bought him at the Doncaster sales as a four year old for £25,000.

"I love him. He has so much heart," says Starr. "And he's got the guts to win the National again."

Starr, who reckons to have fleeced the bookies with a 33-1 ante-post bet last year, is going each-way today.

"Minnehoma is carrying ten pounds more weight this time but he is such a fantastic jumper that he should go the distance."

How much is the millionaire comedian putting on? That's his secret.

But Starr admits he will have his eyes glued to the telly this afternoon.

"I was nearly inside the box last year," he said. "I have never known a feeling like it."

NORMAN WISDOM

By CHARLES FAWCUS

● **STORMIN'** Norman Williamson rides in the hottest seat of all in today's Martell Grand National and he just can't wait.

● Norm is out to add Aintree glory to Cheltenham gold on Master Oats, the half asleep horse who has to forget the nightmare of his 13th fence fall last year.

● Master Oats bids to become the first horse since Golden Miller in 1934 to win the Gold Cup and the National in the same year, but Norman is getting an expert at defying the history books.

● "They said it was impossible for the same trainer and jockey to win the Gold Cup and the Champion Hurdle, but we managed that with Master Oats and Alderbrook so why not the magic treble," smiles the Irishman.

● "Sure the National fences are a worry and we all know what happened last year, but he made a couple of mistakes at Cheltenham - and won by 15 lengths!"

● "If anything he's better than before he went to Cheltenham and we have given him a few practice jumps over Aintree type fences. He took them all in his stride."

● This morning trainer Kim Bailey will make the final decision whether to let Master Oats try for that magic double.

● "If the ground isn't firm he'll be there and he couldn't be in better shape," said Bailey.



LUKE Harvey steps out of the Aintree shadows today with Grand National glory beckoning on Country Member.

'Leg Lock' will never be a Richard Dunwoody and his two previous rides on the course this week both started at 100-1, but the big name riders don't win all the Grand Nationals.

Harvey's riding technique doesn't come out of the Dunwoody text book either - hence the nickname - but he and Country Member are an old pals act.

"I seem to have been riding him for years and I owe him a lot. We won four races a couple of years ago and he's back to his old self after a season off with leg trouble," says the jockey.

Fantastic

"I got round the National course for the first time on Thursday and it's fantastic to be on a horse that's got a great chance if he completes. My only other National ride was a 500-1 novice - I was just hoping to pull up!"

"I went back home from Aintree on Thursday night especially to ride Country Member in his last spin. He breezed along for six furlongs and he couldn't be better."

"He's beaten Young Hustler and Dubacilla this season and they are among the favourites. I'm really looking forward to this - it makes a bit of a change not to be riding at Hereford on National day!"

Trainer Andy Turnell ha

DESPERATE FOR HER TO GO ALL THE WAY?

CONSULT A SPECIALIST.

If your fuel economy has taken a dive, a change of plugs could improve things no end. Fit NGK spark plugs every year and you'll

give your engine a new lease of life with better economy, improved performance and lower emissions. So, the next time you want your engine to go all the way, don't delay, insist on NGK today.

THE ONLY  SPECIALISTS IN THE WORLD

