

Beau wants it heavy

BRAD WATERS

JOCKEY Beau Mertens won't need to bother praying for rain for his mount No Effort in Saturday's Cranbourne Cup.

The Bureau Of Meteorology has forecast up to 40mm of rain for the greater Melbourne area on Friday and Saturday, which almost guarantees a wet track for the Cranbourne Cup meeting.

But Mertens couldn't care less if the ground deteriorates into the heavy range during the day.

No Effort is unbeaten in two runs on heavy tracks and drops

Rain suits Cranbourne Cup shot

in class after chasing Probabeel and Zaaki in the Group 1 Might And Power at her previous run.

So it's little wonder Mertens likes his chances in the \$500,000 Cranbourne Cup. Not even drawing awkwardly in barrier 16 has dented his confidence in the Gavin Bedgood-trained No Effort.

Mertens already knows his race tactics with No Effort racing best when settling on the pace, but the long Cranbourne track straight will suit the mare.

"She's usually pretty quick out of the gates and doesn't usually take much time to muster speed," Mertens said.

"It's a pretty long straight down the back there at Cranbourne so you've got plenty of time to figure it out. She comes into this race a lot better off and if it rains, she'll be a leading contender in the race."

No Effort was a winner at Listed level in the Heatherlie Handicap three runs back before producing a sound effort

when beaten four lengths in the Group 3 Naturalism Stakes in September.

Mertens said a similar effort would ensure No Effort would be hard to beat.

"She didn't get beaten far either in the Naturalism and ran well against Group 1 horses there," Mertens said.

"She's honest and if she's going as well as she was then, she'll be right in the race."

Bedgood and Mertens will again combine with noted wet-

tracker Sir Kalahad in the Apache Cat Classic (1000m).

Sir Kalahad finished three lengths from winner The Inferno in the Group 2 McEwen Stakes at The Valley two runs back but was outgunned in a small field at Sale last time out.

Mertens said heavy ground would produce a marked improvement from Sir Kalahad.

"If we're racing on a heavy track, he's going to be very well suited," Mertens said.

No Effort is a \$19 chance in Cranbourne Cup betting while Sir Kalahad is a \$15 chance to land the Apache Cat Classic.

brad.waters@news.com.au

ON THE PUNT



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THE VALLEY

BEST BET
HOLSTER
(R5 No.1, \$6.50)

Led throughout to score easily at Kyneton last time out and should measure up to this harder assignment here. Should again give them something to chase.

NEXT BEST
CRIMOSA
(R4 No.7, \$5)

Showed good ability when racing on the speed and scoring at his first two runs last time in. Has more time to mature, and drawn to get every chance again.

CONFRONTATIONAL
(R6 No.2, \$6.50)

Finished powerfully to score easily at Mornington third-up and will only be fitter for this. He loves this trip and soft ground won't worry him.

NABBED
(R8 No.11, \$5)

The beautifully-bred filly won her only start on a synthetic track last time in, but has had more time to mature. She can post first-up win in the last he

VALUE BET
ARROANCE
(R7 No.2, \$15)

Consistent mare who ran on the speed and fought score at Mornington last time. She'll be fitter again for that and handles wet or dry tracks.

THE JOCKEY
JOHN ALLEN

Allen rides at The Valley the first time since his Plate triumph and has bookings here tonight. **WILSONS PROM** (R3 No.2, \$3.20), **SEAC** (R3 No.12, \$3.60), **L SOLL** (R4 No.1, \$4), **ROCK THE BOWLER** (No.8, \$16), **VARDAN** (No.10, \$34) and **DAN ST DARCI** (R8 No. \$9.50).

TAB FIXED ODDS

Sweet to deal with extra load

RAY THOMAS

SWEET Deal will carry more than her 54kg impost when she contests her final race, the \$1m The Hunter (1300m) at Newcastle on Saturday.

Trainer John Thompson's talented mare also happens to be in-foal to Widden Stud's champion sire Zoustar.

It is rare but not unusual for mares to continue racing during the early part of their pregnancy. Expert veterinary opinion stipulates a mare confirmed in-foal can continue to race for 120 days.

"I had a few mares who continued to race while pregnant when I was training for Patinack as they were breeders," Thompson said.

"It all depends on the mare. Sweet Deal, for example, has absolutely thrived since she was served (by Zoustar)."

Sweet Deal won the second renewal of The Hunter last year when shouldering 56kg and drops 2kg for Saturday's big race despite her good form earlier this year which included her win in the Group 3 Hawkesbury Crown.



FALLS RUSHES TO FINISH LINE

Progressive gelding **LAL LAL FALLS** relished a return to his home track when breaking his maiden at Pakenham on Thursday. The Phillip Stokes-trained four-year-old finished fourth at Moe first-up, before proving far too good for his rivals on the bigger Pakenham track with jockey Daniel Stackhouse in the saddle.

Picture: Racing Photos

Record betting spend on Cox Plate Carnival

BRAD WATERS

THE two-meeting Cox Plate Carnival was the latest Spring Carnival event to report record betting figures.

Cox Plate Carnival betting figures followed the same upward trend as the Melbourne Cup Carnival after the Victoria Racing Club reported a hefty wagering turnover increase earlier in the week.

Punters bet \$183m in the 24-hour racing bonanza, which started with the Manikato Stakes meeting on the Friday night and continued with another 10 races on the Saturday.

Cox Plate Day betting reached \$133.7m, a rise of 9.3 per cent on last year with the day's field sizes up by the same amount on 2020 levels.

The Cox Plate itself was a dramatic affair with import Gold Trip and the well-backed favourite Zaaki both scratched in the lead-up to the weight-for-age championship.

Irish trainer Joseph O'Brien added a Cox Plate to his two Melbourne Cup wins when State Of Rest narrowly defeated Anamoe in a controversial finish to the event, which was settled in the stewards' room.

The Manikato Stakes turnover figures provided a highlight for the Moonee Valley Racing Club.

The Manikato Stakes itself was a victim of Racing NSW's assault on the Melbourne Spring Carnival being positioned a week after The Everest, which many said produced a below-par field.

However, punters bet a night racing record of \$49.6m on the eight races on Manikato Stakes night, eclipsing the record of \$48.2m set a month earlier on Moir Stakes night.

MVRC chief executive Michael Browell said the record

betting figures showed The Valley's two-meeting Cox Plate Carnival format was a success.

Browell said the turnover figures were especially pleasing as the financial impact of having no Cox Plate crowds stretched into a second year.

"In a year where the club has taken a significant financial hit with no crowds attending our marquee two-day Ladbrokes Cox Plate Carnival, we are delighted to see a record result for wagering which continues the current trend across the industry," Browell said.

"To announce a record wa-

gering result for night racing on Ladbrokes Manikato Stakes Night illustrates that the two-day carnival is now well entrenched in Melbourne's Spring Racing Carnival.

"Through a lot of hard work from all in the racing industry for a second year in a row, we have been able to complete our carnival with great success and to see these results come through makes all the hard work worth it."

While the Cox Plate Carnival attracted record betting levels, the MVRC will review all aspects of the two meetings alongside Racing Victoria.

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