

*for immediate release, Monday, December 18, 2006*

## **MAN LEADING FERDY MURPHY'S WETHERBY CHRISTMAS TEAM**

Ferdy Murphy has enjoyed plenty of success at Wetherby over the years and the Leyburn handler is hoping for more cheer at the Sky Bet Christmas Meeting, when he saddles Leading Man in the £50,000 Grade Three skybet.com Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase on Boxing Day, Tuesday, December 26.

A winner of the One Man Novices' Chase over the same three mile and one furlong trip at Wetherby last year, Leading Man has not troubled the judge since that victory, but he showed signs of coming back to form when a decent seventh behind Neptune Collonges in the Rehearsal Chase at Newcastle on November 25.

Murphy said this morning: "Leading Man has improved plenty for his last run and he is in really good order at the moment.

"We were pleased with him at Newcastle - when Keith (Mercer) realised he wasn't going to be in the first four, he wasn't hard on him.

"It looks like he's back to himself and I have been happy with him at home - in fact he's absolutely bouncing! He loves testing ground and the trip is no problem, as he stays all day and wants a big, galloping track like Wetherby."

The skybet.com Rowland Meyrick Handicap Chase, race 21 in the British Horseracing Board's Order of Merit series, fell to the Murphy stable in 2004 with Truckers Tavern, and the trainer believes he has a good chance of adding to that victory with Leading Man.

"Everything looks right for him going into the skybet.com Rowland Meyrick Chase. He worked brilliantly with Another Promise recently, who was very impressive when scoring by nine lengths at Newcastle at the weekend, so I'm very hopeful."

Murphy also had news on stable stalwart Carlys Quest, a Grade One winner in Ireland in 2005, who will head for the £10,000 skybet.com Handicap Hurdle over two miles and seven furlongs on Boxing Day.

The evergreen 12-year-old finally seems to be enjoying some respite from the handicapper, and ran respectably last time out when a staying-on seventh of 16 behind Material World in the three-mile Pertemps Handicap Hurdle at Cheltenham on December 8.

"When Carlys Quest won the Grade One Stayers Hurdle at Punchestown in April of 2005 he got absolutely slaughtered for it," explained Murphy.

"However, the handicapper is starting to relent now, which is a big help, and he's another who enjoys testing ground - he keeps going when others have cried enough.

"He really flew up the hill last time and we were delighted with that run. Carlys Quest retains plenty of ability, and I could see him running a big race if the ground comes up very soft."

Another possible runner at Wetherby for Murphy is Show Me The River, in the £30,000 skybet.com Castleford Handicap Chase over two miles on Wednesday, December 27.

Despite being pulled up over two and a half miles at Ludlow on his latest start, when he broke a blood vessel, he has finished second on both runs at Wetherby over the minimum trip, chasing home the useful Calatagan on soft ground in October.

The trainer commented: "Show Me The River loves Wetherby and the skybet.com Castleford Handicap Chase looks right up his street.

"He's recovered from his setback last time and is really flying now. I'm very happy with him, and I just hope we get into the race."

The gates open at 10am on Boxing Day, skybet.com Rowland Meyrick Chase Day, for a six-race card, with the first race off at 12.50pm. Free mince pies and mulled wine will be available for early arrivals on a first come, first served basis.

The course gets very busy around midday, so racegoers are advised to arrive at the track before then.

Live music will come from the Endeavour Ceilidh Band on both days. The 'LA Jazz' will also perform on Boxing Day, and the Baron von Rhinestein Bavarian Band on Wednesday, December 27.

Entertainment for young racegoers comes in the shape of 'Pat's Puppets' in the Family Marquee, while 'Musical Ruth and her Magical Piano' will be delighting the crowds on Boxing Day. There is also a new 'parenting facility' in the Paddock Enclosure.

Advance bookings for the 2006 Sky Bet Christmas Meeting are advised at [www.wetherbyracing.co.uk](http://www.wetherbyracing.co.uk), especially as Premier Enclosure tickets on Boxing Day have nearly sold out, though there remains plenty of availability for both the Paddock and Course Enclosures on that day.

Admission Prices (December 26 & 27): Premier Enclosure £26, Paddock Enclosure £15, Pick of the Paddock £19 (includes admission to the Paddock

Enclosure, £3 Refreshment Voucher, £2 Tote Betting Voucher and Racecard), Course Enclosure £5. Accompanied children under 16 are admitted free to all enclosures.

*For further details, please contact James Sanderson, Chief Executive & Clerk of the Course, on 01937 582 035, or go to [www.wetherbyracing.co.uk](http://www.wetherbyracing.co.uk)*