

THE GRAND NATIONAL

Liverpool's Aintree course smashed all records with the first Grand National after a six year break. By car, train, air and foot the biggest-ever crowd of half a million flowed in. Most of the bookies in England and a couple from Scotland seemed to be there, and with favourite Prince Regent backed to win Five Million or so, more than one gentleman of the turf did a few quick calculations and then started to look worried. 34 of Britain's finest chasers were listed to contest the race, some ridden by jockeys, others by amateurs anxious to trade thrills against the chance of a broken neck. Inside the ring it's a last minute look around to size up form and maybe get in a shilling or two on a last minute choice. The weather pulled one out of the bag too, (following a stormy night) with one of the grandest racing days in the history of the world's most famous steeplechase. Only a few minutes to go before the start and still more people were coming to join the crush, though many of them had a pretty poor chance of seeing much of the race.

And now they're ready to go, they're lining up, and.....they're off. A clean start for the biggest test racing offers to horse and rider.

Thirty four starters went away and as they come up to the first jump, it's Gyppe over first. Here's the scene picked up by Pathe's slow motion camera in superb action shots.

And now here they come up to Jump 3. Gyppe still leading with Prince Regent well up and No. 20 Vain Knight close by. The jumps are bowling 'em over now, but the field's away ahead now and the big hazards are still out front. At the Fourth Jump, Gyppe, Prince Regent, Lough Conn and Vain Knight are going well. The field clears the brushwood nicely and plenty of backers have still got hopes.

And now Beechers Brook - slow motion shots of the toughest leap of all, and it's tragedy as Synbele, number 2 breaks his neck in a death somersault. Jockey Redmond falls safely, and still they come over, taking it as only thoroughbreds can, but Beechers takes it out of 'em. From here on only the fighters are left.

Watch it again, another down, it's number 38, Alacrity but he's not hurt and his jockey takes it skilfully to get off with a shaking. It's still Beechers and they're still coming and they're still going down.

Now into the Canal Turn, another horse and jockey tester. A sharp left swerve as they jump, and a fall means a breadside crash but they're all over this time with riderless horses still up among the leaders, (somebody should tell 'em there's no future in it). And with number ten jump to take, it's "Lough Conn", (a game little horse from Ireland in the lead) with "Vain

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Knight" second and "Prince Regent" third. It's "Lough Conn" still and "Prince Regent" is tucked away in seventh place and the bookies are smiling again 'cause maybe the Prince isn't going to take that five million after all.

They're stringing out now and battling it out in front but they're still falling and the slow motion camera picks them up again at the water jump. Lough Conn still out in front, Prince Regent up again in second place and Limestone Edward well set at third. This time they're all over but these 3/4 starters have certainly thinned out more than somewhat. No rider, but he's all set to make a splash hit.

Starting the second time round, and from now on only the likely winners figure in the picture. Now they're up for the 17th, and what a battering the fence takes as the smart horses follow through the easy way.

Lough Conn's still going well at the 19th and now watch him come down - a fall at top speed and other good looking placer goes out. The pace is getting 'em now and there's still that second hurdling of Beechers Brook to be made. The place looks like a battlefield.

Here it comes now, coming up to Beechers the second time round. Way out front it's Prince Regent, number 1 and "Limestone Edward" and it looks as if it's their race. MacEffat fell way back around here and the two leaders fight it out with no challengers. It's a four and a half mile course and Prince Regent's big-boned body looks good for a popular favourite's win, and a Black Friday for the bookies. It's the Prince now, and with half a million voices behind him jockey Tim Hyde looks to be sitting pretty.

But watch this for a finish. There's only the last fence to go and it's Prince Regent way in front, ten lengths ahead of Limestone Edward and there's Housewamer and Suzerain-the-Second tagging on.

Yes, the Grand National spirit was out again and the last straight brought a big kick in surprises. Watch the horse in the centre lane, he's coming through and it's "Lovely Cottage" and he's going ahead. Behind him there, (nearest the camera) "Jack Finlay" follows and the Prince falls back on the rails at third. Prince Regent is tiring, and it's Lovely Cottage with amateur rider Captain Petre up and he's a sure winner with "Jack Finlay" second and "Prince Regent" third. What a race, the crowd forget that five million pounds the bookies were laughing over and gave 25 to 1 "Lovely Cottage" and his jockey the rousing welcome they well and truly earned.

For the horse, a kiss from his rider, the end of a Grand Grand National.