

Tight pitch is only upside for Down

Sports betting



BY PETER McNAMARA

FOOTBALL

STAN JAMES are of the opinion Cork are near certainties to gain two points from their trip to Newry in the Allianz NFL Division 1 on Sunday installing the Rebels as very firm favourites.

Every single firm expects Cork to win – Conor Counihan's side are generally 1-2 for victory – however, none more so than Stan James who are pitching the Leesiders as a 4-11 chance.

William Hill, however, feel Cork are more vulnerable than all of the others pricing them at 8-15 to overcome Down.

Cork have triumphed against the Mournemen in each of the last five league and championship meetings and should enhance that record to six from six this weekend against the 11-4 (Stan James) shots. The draw is 8-1 with Hill.

Hill's even-money quote on offer for Cork to win by three or more points appeals, too while Down are 10-11 +3 with BetVictor and Power.

However, bettors preparing to support Cork in either the match or handicap betting markets should factor in that the majority of the Leesiders' aforementioned victories over Down have all come at open, expansive venues such as Páirc Uí Chaoimh and Croke Park (three times) – and another at Páirc Uí Rinn – whereas Páirc Esler is a much tighter venue which may not play to Cork's powerful strengths as much. Nevertheless, it is difficult to even contemplate opposing Cork.

The Rebels, just 10-11 with bet365 to be in front at half-time and full-time, have out-scored Down 11-65 to 1-51 in their four most recent clashes and despite having lost their two previous outings in the section should engineer a win on Sunday.



Cork's Stephen McDonnell and Tipperary's Brian O'Meara of Tipperary battle for the ball during last week's NHL game. Picture: INPHO/Cathal Noonan

LAST WEEK

THERE were no weekend punting recommendations made last weekend and so our record of five winners from 11 selections thus far in 2013 remains intact. However, Tipp, advised ante-post to win Allianz NHL Division 1 (3pts 4-1 bet365, William Hill), are currently 11-2 with Stan James but bet365's 8-1 represents the top industry

odds around. Dublin to win Allianz NHL Division 1 (0.5pt 16-1 BetVictor, Stan James, Ladbrokes) and Limerick to win Allianz NHL Division 1 (0.5pt 16-1 Paddy Power, Stan James, Ladbrokes) was also recommended. For up-to-the-minute sports betting news and discussion contact me on Twitter @petermcnemo07

Rebel win sees odds slashed

HURLING

DESPITE recommending Tipp as the most likely winner of the Allianz NHL Division 1 of the main protagonists, Cork had the potential to make Paddy Power's 14-1 in the outright market appear extremely generous.

Few punters would have expected Cork to be that good last Saturday night. By the same token JBM's men's odds have now been slashed to win the competition.

Ladbrokes and William Hill were keen to keep Cork inside in their ante-post markets before the league commenced last weekend – both firms were laying the Rebels at 7-1, the shortest odds in the business – and it is now Stan James and The Magic Sign that have the most respect for Cork offering 5-1. However, though odds of 7-1 were the lowest available pre-tournament they are presently the lengthiest according to bet365 and Power.

Bet365 have made Kilkenny and Galway joint-favourites at 7-4, a price which most firms have the Cats at, though the latter outfit are 3-1 with Hill. Elsewhere, UCD are two-point favourites for their Fitzgibbon Cup semi-final clash with defending champions UCC this afternoon (throw-in 2.30pm).

UCD are 11-10 with Boyles to win by three or more points while UCC can be punted on at 10-11 in receipt of the two-point buffer.

Boyles, Ladbrokes and Hill are laying UCD at 8-13 to win the match – they would be far shorter if Kilkenny's John Tennyson, Cillian Buckley and Walter Walsh were fully fit and guaranteed to start the tie.

As it is, UCD's fierce challenge will be led by the likes of Noel McGrath while Cork's William Egan and Conor Lehane will spearhead UCC's assault on the contest. UCC are available at 13-8 with bet365 and Power and the draw is a 10-1 shot according to Ladbrokes.

City's price shortens for Setanta Cup

CORK CITY'S promising early-season form has seen the Leesiders cut into as short as 9-2 with Paddy Power to win the Setanta Cup though Boyles' 7-1 is the top price around in the business.

Shamrock Rovers, 100-30 with Boyles and Power, are the current favourites to lift the trophy with Sligo Rovers are the second most

SOCCER

likely outright victors – the west-erners are 7-2 with Boyles.

Meanwhile, Tommy Dunne's unit are 25-1 generally to win the Airtricity League Premier Division title with the season kicking-off next weekend.

Power, however, expect more of a challenge from City and rate them

as an 18-1 shot.

Boyles are laying City at 20-1 while BLUESQ and 888sport.com are offering punters 22-1.

The other Munster-based side in the section, Limerick, are as low as 12-1 (Stan James) and as high as Power's 22-1.

Shamrock Rovers are no greater than 13-8 favourites to regain the top tier title.

Ted might finally get his chance to wear the big hat

IT SEEMED somewhat fitting that Benedict the 16th stepped down yesterday on the 15th anniversary of Dermot Morgan's death.

The actor portrayed the most famous priest in Irish history and it's amazing to think that Fr Ted left us that long ago. And he is missed a great deal more than Joseph Ratzinger ever will be in this part of the world.

Anyway, some 115 cardinals will enter a closed-door conclave at the Vatican later this month to decide who is the best man at praying in the world.

Paddy Power have actually said betting on who will be elected as the new pope is set to become the largest non-sporting market in its history (something that hardly seems credible,

but anyway). It says it has taken well over €300,000 on Vatican betting.

Peter is the even money favourite to be the next Papal name with Powers, though that would seem unlikely as none of the other 265 Roman Popes took the name of the first leader of the Church and the 10-1 they offer on John (he would be the 24th) might be a better punt. If you did fancy it being Ted, Theodore II is 80-1 with the firm.

Ghana's Peter Turkson is the bookies' joint favourite, putting a non-European in pole position to lead the Roman Catholic Church for the first time in 15 centuries (there were a few African pontiffs back in the Dark Ages apparently – why were the early days of history called the Dark Ages? Because there were so



THE LONGSHOT

many knights... Boom Boom!).

Pete (he'll be expected to change his name) is jostling with Italian Angelo Scola for the honour of wearing the big hat, with both of them around 3-1.

Early favourite Canada's Marc Ouellet is still in the running at 7-1 according to Ladbrokes.

It's 10-1 that a relative youngster emerges after the white smoke, Powers

offering those odds on someone 60 or under to wear the white cape.

What's my favourite Pope-related story? I'm glad you asked.

It's the about the week when *The Pope Must Die* and *In Bed with Madonna* were both playing in the Capitol cinema and the marquee sign outside inadvertently advertised that. Minus the "and".

Get on that "John 24th" price at 10-1.

On Wednesday night we experienced some divine intervention while watching our 25-1 double sink when Dortmund slipped to a 1-0 defeat by Munich.

Over on the other channel, unbeknownst to us, our 2-0 second half win in the Chelsea-Middlesbrough cup game clicked at 20-1.

Bolstered by this we'll look at an accumulator this weekend.

Milford are our bankers to win the senior club camogie title at 2-5. They walloped opponents Killimor in two challenge games last summer and have can crown 15 years of hard graft up in Croker.

Kerry Group are going to create up to 900 jobs at a new plant in Naas, but don't expect their gaelic footballers to be too grateful when Eamon Fitzmaurice brings his rusty and out of form panel to face Kieran McGeeney's Lilywhites (even money) in Newbridge.

Recommendation: Milford and Kildare are racing certainties, but add in Everton to beat Norwich (2-5) and Spurs (13-10) to win the London derby and Powers will give you 9-1.