



**NEWS RELEASE – Monday April 8<sup>th</sup> 2024**

**PUNCHESTOWN CROSS COUNTRY ADDED TO 2023-24 CRYSTAL CUP SCHEDULE**

Following the cancellation of the Glenfarclas Cross Country Chase at the Cheltenham Festival due to a waterlogged track, the Crystal Cup committee has taken steps to ensure the unique pan-European competition maintains its 11 legs.

Punchestown's ***Mongey Communications La Touche Cross Country Steeplechase***, with a prize fund of €30,000, will be added to the series, with points afforded just as in the other legs. The 5yo+ Weight for Age Conditions chase is run over 4m 2f (6,800m), a distance only capped by the final race at Lion d'Angers on May 9<sup>th</sup>. Entries close on April 25<sup>th</sup> at noon (11am for foreign entries).

Conor O'Neill, CEO of Punchestown, commented, "We're delighted to have been offered the chance to join this prestigious and unique series in the exceptional circumstances of this wet winter. A cordial Irish welcome awaits British and Continental runners over the unique banks course at Punchestown."

Ian Renton, Managing Director of Cheltenham, added, "We were naturally very disappointed not to be able to stage our leg of the Crystal Cup Series during the Festival due to the loss of the Glenfarclas Cross Country Chase. However, we are truly delighted that this has provided an opportunity for Punchestown to participate in the Series. Cheltenham is very proud of its cross-country course, the only one of its kind in England and we are wholly committed to the promotion of cross country racing and the Crystal Cup. We know that our racing fans very much enjoy the unique spectacle cross country brings, with many people travelling across Europe to witness other legs of this popular Series. The inclusion of an Irish leg in the Crystal Cup Series will be welcomed by many."

Alain Peltier, Chairman of the Crystal Cup committee, concluded, "This season's series has seen a flurry of Irish runners, not just at Cheltenham, where they are expected, but in other races of the series, notably when Roi Mage won at Compiègne in November. The Series has evolved to become a valid route to the Grand National, as well as producing some fabulous races in its own right. Punchestown is a natural addition and we're thrilled to be there again after a long absence."

Despite Irish enthusiasm for the Series' races, this season has been dominated by the Czechs for the first time. In pursuit of the €20,000 bonus prize and the Crystal Cup, Scuderia Aichner SRL and trainer Josef Vana Jnr are in a commanding position requiring any other contender to win both remaining legs to deny them a first success in the challenge.

**ENDS**

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