

Cultural Daily

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Will Tiger Roll's connections rue their decision to pull the horse from the Grand National?

Our Friends · Thursday, April 1st, 2021

Tiger Roll leads them all the way around to win the Glenfarclas Chase

That's his fifth win at the Cheltenham Festival

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— ITV Racing (@itvracing) March 17, 2021

We're sure punters up and down the nation were jumping around their living rooms with joy as *Tiger Roll* took the final jump of the Cross Country Chase with ease and streaked clear of favourite and defending champion *Easysland* up the home straight and over the line in first place.

It was a triumphant fifth victory for the Festival veteran as he added an impressive third victory in the marathon race to his CV alongside further successes in the National Hunt Challenge Cup Amateur Riders' Novices' Chase and the Grade 1 World Hurdle (now known as the Paddy Power Stayers' Hurdle).

"It's unbelievable. If it wasn't for this horse I wouldn't be riding. Never underestimate the Tiger," said jockey Keith Donoghue after yet another winning ride in the horse's saddle.

"We know the horse he is. He loved it and that's the Tiger we see at home. He is just a legend."

However, when the dust settled after the jubilant scenes at Prestbury for all those involved with the fan favourite, including Donoghue and stand-in trainer Denise Foster, who is covering for Gordon Elliott whilst he serves his ban, we were quickly reminded that we won't be seeing *Tiger Roll* competing in the Grand National at Aintree next month.

The *Tiger* was around 17/1 on the [page for the Grand National betting](#) but, earlier this month, he was pulled from the race with his owner Michael O'Leary citing an 'unfair' handicap as the reason

behind the decision. Of course, that means that we won't, and at this stage probably never will, see the 11-year-old attempt to land an historic third victory in the race.

You could argue that the decision from the Ryanair chief was made a bit prematurely and that perhaps the controversy surrounding shamed trainer Elliott played its part as well, as it seemed no decision would be made until after the Cross Country Chase at this year's Cheltenham Festival.

On the other hand, whilst we were still disappointed when the news broke, *Tiger Roll's* form over his last few outings left a lot to be desired and his Grand National odds were only drifting further afield. In the 12 months between February 2020 and February 2021, he was well beaten three times and twice at Cheltenham, including in last year's Cross Country, when *Easysland* romped home 17 lengths clear.

There were no signs of remorse from the Gigginstown Stud racing syndicate after the race, however, with manager Eddie O'Leary claiming he had 'no regrets.'

"Aintree is off the agenda and we've no regrets about that," O'Leary said. "He is rated the equal of our Gold Cup horse, Delta Work, and we know he's not as good."

Tiger Roll's form hasn't been the best, but the Cheltenham Festival was proof that he still has gas in the tank and can never be written off. It was also an indication that the 11-year-old can still thrive at a course he knows well, and that includes Aintree.

It seems that we will be left wondering for some time on what could have been for *Tiger Roll* in next month's Grand National. It's a great shame that the punters, who have grown to love *Tiger Roll* as they did with the likes of *Red Rum* and so on, won't get to see him in the showpiece. However, at the end of the day, the horse's best interests must be at heart, and if he sails off into the sunset now, then so be it. What a career he has had!

Photo by Jeff Griffith on Unsplash

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