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Freddie Head has fired an ominous warning shot at Goldikova's Queen Anne Stakes rivals by declaring his star mare to be in the form of her life.

Tuesday's Royal Ascot curtain-raiser promises to be the race of the meeting with Goldikova being joined by brilliant Lockinge winner Paco Boy and dual Group One winner Rip Van Winkle, and Head's five-year-old already has eight Group One successes to her credit.

The handler said: "She is in very good form and has arrived at Ascot. She travelled very well and we are looking forward to a very good race. I think she has improved since her first run of the year at Longchamp and she always does improve for her first run."

He added: "The ground is going to be fast I hope and she loves a straight course, so I hope and think we can win. She is very well and I think she is better than ever."

Rip Van Winkle has his first start since finishing down the field in the Breeders' Cup Classic but he had previously won the Sussex Stakes and the QEII as well as finishing just a length behind wonder-horse Sea The Stars in the Coral-Eclipse.

His trainer Aidan O'Brien told At The Races: "He's in good form but this is his first run of the season and we are a little bit worried as a lot of our horses have improved from their first run to their second run and their second run to their third.

"He's as well as we could have him, but obviously it is a big championship race and ideally you would like to be going into it having got a run into him. We are very happy with him and he's done very well since last year.

"He's a stronger horse this year and you're never sure until they run, but he's been showing us all the right signs.

"Paco Boy and Goldikova are two exceptional horses and it's a great race for everybody to look forward to."

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