

EVAN WILLIAMS

WINNERS IN LAST FOUR SEASONS 44, 49, 53, 52

Silver and Secret lead the way for Welsh wizard

IN A two-week spell either side of new year Evan Williams must have felt he'd reached the state of racing nirvana after hitting two of his major targets.

Silver Streak finally earned the first Grade 1 prize he'd been promising to do, the Christmas Hurdle at Kempton on Boxing Day, then Secret Reprieve won a delayed Welsh Grand National at Chepstow a

fortnight later, the one race above all others Williams has yearned to win.

He is almost certain to let **Secret Reprieve** have a go at landing successive Welsh National victories, a feat achieved only once since the war when Peter Scudamore steered Bonanza Boy to triumph in 1988 and 1989.

The Martin Pipe-trained gelding carried only 10st 11lb in his first win when he was a seven-year-old, the same weight and age as Secret Reprieve, but a year later he humped 11st 11lb around Chepstow's undulations and 3m6½f.

The comparisons are there, but what weight will Secret Reprieve be allotted and will it deter Williams?

The answer is an emphatic no. "We'll try to get back there for a repeat in the same type of form as last season," he says.

"He handles Chepstow very well, but I don't know where we'll start him. There are plenty of options. He won the Welsh National trial last year in December but whether we'd wait that long to start him, I don't know.

"He can still run in a graduation chase,



Top-level strike: Silver Streak wins the Christmas Hurdle at Kempton for Evan Williams (left)