

JERSEY RACE CLUB

Preview Bank Holiday 27 May fixture

By Bobsbest

An ocean liner, a bridge, a ballpoint pen and a Turkish charger all feature on the race card for next Monday's Bank Holiday fixture at Les Landes. You may feel that is sufficiently cryptic to take us into pub quiz territory, but fear not, all will be revealed in due course.

Traditionally, this fixture features the Warwick Vase, one of the longest established local races and appropriately, along with the prize money, the winning owner will collect His Majesty's Perpetual Trophy, a handsome piece of silverware first presented in 1933 by King George V. This year's renewal is sponsored by Nigel Harris & Partners and their generosity has been rewarded with a highly competitive event, run over a mile and a quarter. Although it's a handicap this race is invariably won by a good horse; last year Major Maximus was victorious and in the preceding three seasons Catcando, King Kenny and Sissi Guihen took the prize. So, three of the last four winners will contest it this time with Major Maximus, last year's biggest improver and already a winner in 2013, carrying top weight. King Kenny gets 3lb and Sissi Guihen 8lb from Max; the former is becoming expensive to follow and, although it may be too soon to say he is permanently regressive, he is running out of excuses. Sissi Guihen has had her problems, which may explain why she has not had the gun put to her head in recent races; she goes well for a female rider (Kylie Manser was on board when she won this in 2011) and Jemma Marshall now takes the ride. Becks Bolero has hardly put a foot wrong this year, most recently running a good second at L'Ancrese, and this is his optimum trip; we've yet to see the best of Country Blue or Cryptic Choice. Neuilly was declared for a listed race at Ascot recently, but wasn't able to keep the engagement; one suspects that speaks more of her owners' intention to make a broodmare of her in due course rather than an accurate measure of her ability. Still, she's in good form and not harshly treated. Anfield Road makes a belated reappearance while Moose Moran has not shown much for some time. It's cracking contest in prospect.

The main supporting event is the Geoffrey Edwards Memorial Handicap, sponsored by Race Club President Peter Edwards' family in memory of his father who was also a great enthusiast for local racing. It features the local debut of Frankie M who carries automatic top weight of 10st 12lb, a welter burden for a 3 year old. Pas D'Action will attempt to follow up last year's success and is

presently in great form having picked up a mile handicap at L'Ancrese earlier this month; under the same jockey he must have a sound chance over this slightly shorter trip. First Freddie took this in 2011 when it was so foggy spectators saw only the last furlong; when they emerged Freddie was well clear and won easily. He didn't run badly in Guernsey when Kersivay was behind. One-eyed First Cat is yet to recapture his form, but Lucifer's Shadow ran a race full of promise on his debut at Easter and would not have to improve much to be in the shake up. Spanish Bounty is a stone better than all of them according to the handicapper.

Those pub quiz questions start with the opening race, the Queen Mary Maiden Hurdle. Why would a race be named after a pre-war ocean liner? Well, Cunard's majestic Queen Mary sailed on her maiden voyage on 27 May 1936, 77 years ago to the day. Sadly the race does not match its illustrious namesake, featuring just three modest performers, none with the potential of Landolino, last year's winner. Copper Falls has ability, she won a sprint here last August when trained by Brendan Powell, but subsequently developed serious wayward tendencies, refusing to race on more than one occasion. She's almost certainly good enough to win this if she consents to race, but it's a big if. National Monument has had problems and very little racing while we haven't seen Bollin Fergus this season. It's a race to watch rather than bet on.

The Golden Gate Handicap over an extended mile reflects on the fact that the world's most celebrated bridge joining San Francisco to Marin County in California was opened on 27 May 1937 when, it is said, 200,000 pedestrians crossed it. Unlike the bridge this is a low level affair for horses rated up to 50 and seems an opportunity for Athania to pick up the winning thread. Go back a couple of seasons and she was giving weight to much better than these and while she cut no ice in the Jersey Guineas last time she didn't run that badly and this is a much lower league. She has to give weight to Grey Panel (last year's winner) who is still well treated while Toggle continues to defy advancing years. Red Lago, stablemate of Athania, was a fair third to Grey Panel in a similar race last month, but a 7lb pull in the weights does not look quite enough. Vamos, second in that event, has two ways of running while Rebel Woman is capable of taking a little race when things drop right for her.

The ballpoint pen, patented by Lazslo Biro on 27 May 1943, is commemorated in the last race on the card, the Biro Anniversary Handicap run over a mile and three quarters. This race is on the card to give an opportunity to hurdlers not qualified to run in the opener. Landolino, the champion hurdler, has looked backward on both his runs although his most recent effort was an improvement

on his debut and if fit after those two outings should be much too good for his rivals with the possible exception of Sweet Liberta. This close season acquisition out of Andrew Balding's yard easily beat Becks Bolero over 12 furlongs in April and should have no trouble getting the extra two furlongs and is the type to keep on winning. Fine The World and Nordic Affair are old rivals and while both have won on the flat it's a long time since either has done so. Deepika has shown nothing in two runs and stablemate Rocquaine, though not a hopeless case, needs help from the handicapper.

All of which brings us back to that pub quiz and the last puzzle, the Turkish charger. Well, the awards for best-turned-out are sponsored by Byerley Limited. Still struggling? In 1684 a Turkish cavalry horse was unloaded at Deptford and was eventually acquired by Robert Byerley and, thereafter known as the Byerley Turk, became the first of three foundation stallions of what was to become the Thoroughbred. The other two were the Godolphin Barb and the Darley Arab and all the horses racing at Les Landes on Monday can trace their ancestry back to one of these three.

Selections:

Copper Falls
Spanish Bounty
Sissi Guihen
Grey Panel
Sweet Liberta