

JERSEY RACE CLUB

Preview Sunday 10 August – LADIES DAY – fixture
By Bobsbest

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a woman in possession of a good hat, must be in want of a race meeting. Well, I think that's what Jane Austin wrote and, as she was writing during the reign of George III it's possible, if one stretches credulity to its limits, she may have known that horseracing was just beginning in Jersey with the first meeting recorded as having taken place in St Aubin's Bay in 1789.

More than 200 year on racing thrives and on Sunday, all ladies in possession of a hat should make their way to Les Landes, where the whole fixture will take place in honour of the fair sex – on Ladies' Day. This has become one of the most popular meetings in the local calendar; tables in the members' marquee sold out weeks ago. There will be competitions, with generous prizes for the best dressed lady and for the one sporting the most interesting hat. Oh! And there will be horse racing.

With Karl Kukk having recorded his first winner as a trainer at the last meeting, thanks to First Cat, Sunday will see another new local trainer, James Moon, saddle his first runners. The Race Club will also welcome Hampshire-based Peter Hedger, who bids to win some Jersey prize money for the first time, and a new commentator. Calling the horses for the first time at Les Landes will be Darren Owen. Welsh by birth, Darren is based at Middleham, the heart of Northern racing, and he has been a racecourse commentator for 15 years. Darren is also a race reader for the Racing Post and has commented on the world's greatest steeplechase, The Grand National.

The main event is the Coutts & Co Channel Islands Handicap. The eponymous sponsor is a well-established and much appreciated supporter of local racing and their race, a mile and a quarter handicap, is framed to allow some lesser lights to shine as it is for horses rated up to 45. Peter Hedger provides the top weight and likely favourite in Lisahane Bog, a winner of 6 of his 58 races, but although placed three times this year, he hasn't won since 2011 and does not look invincible. Appropriately on this day the rest of the field is made up of fillies and mares. Athania has shown better form this season for Angie Carson and similarly Lady Petrus has been running well for her new trainer Karl Kukk. Jackpot has ability, but more often than not does not show it on the track while Rebel Woman has not recaptured her best

form this term. In a race of ifs and buts it may be worth giving one last chance to the disappointing Rocquaine who has twice run well this season with Sunday's pilot Jemma Marshall on board.

The whole of the rest of the programme is funded by another long term sponsor, Ladbrokes, beginning with the Ladbrokes Odds On Card Hurdle. This is a novice event for horses that have not won more than one hurdle race. Reach Out finally managed to win on his twelfth attempt at Les Landes, but it was a poor race and he might not have won had not Athania tipped up three out. Up In Flames left Neil Mulholland for Alyson Malzard, and will win races, but he's an unknown quantity over our brush hurdles. Pomander is James Moon's first runner as a trainer, but the owner, David Moon is a former Race Club President and his runners were no strangers to the winner's enclosure in the past. Pomander won a decent handicap at Plumpton in 2011, but she's been off the course for some time and is best watched. The most likely winner is Mr Opulence, who hasn't run a bad race all year.

The Ladbrokes That's Life Handicap over the minimum distance sees the return of Novabridge, who bolted up over this trip a month ago and has gone up just 5lb, which looks fair; it's hard to see any of those that finished behind him that day turning the tables. That said, Chester's little gem is improving with every run and with Philip Prince on board looks a sound each way prospect. Sister Guru from the Hedger yard won on Lingfield's sand last year, but shown little since and Hawaiian Freeze, a winner over Bath's 10 furlongs, probably needs further than this.

The Ladbrokes Ladies' Day Handicap run over the extended mile is an intriguing affair, bringing together the bang in form First Cat and Pas D'Action. The former went up 3lb for his narrow win while the latter went up only 4lb for a much easier victory, both at the Derby meeting. Fast Freddie and Grey Panel are both winners this term and if Grey Panel is forgiven an off day last time, he's not badly treated on his easy win at the first July meeting. Lively Little Lady will struggle from a couple of pounds outside the handicap.

The Ladbroke Clarity Machine, a mile and a half handicap, closes the programme. Having previously commended Gavin Colley, the handicapper, on his assessments, it has to be said he seems to have made an error regarding Rossetti, who has gone up just 4lb for running away with the Jersey Derby by 7 lengths, no less. Of course it is up to the handicapper to exercise his judgement and presumably he took the view the form of the Derby was unreliable as Rossetti was given an easy lead and dictated throughout. That said, the rise looks incredibly lenient and it will come as no

surprise if Rossetti adds The Clarendon to his haul at the Bank Holiday fixture. On this occasion King Kenny, 12 lengths behind Rossetti in the Derby and now receiving 34lb may get his revenge. Herbalist, 1 from 19, was a Bath winner in June and ran well behind First Cat last time; he'll appreciate the step up in trip. Midnight Sequel is making his fourth visit having a win and two seconds from his previous forays. Sweet Liberta continues to disappoint.

Looking ahead briefly to the next August meeting, we'll see the first appearance in Jersey of Serena Brotherton, the leading lady amateur jockey. Serena, a solicitor in real life, rides out regularly for the doyen of Yorkshire trainers, Mick Easterby. So far this season Miss Brotherton has ridden 10 winners from only 35 rides, an amazing strike rate of 29%.

Selections:

Mr Opulence
Novabridge
Rocquaine
Pas D'Action
King Kenny