

D'ACTION WAITS TO HIT THE JACKPOT

FRIDAY EVENING'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson *

The Jersey Race Club is hopeful of a big crowd when it stages the second of its two evening meetings of the season this Friday at Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen. First race at 6.30pm.

Traditionally Friday evening meetings here attract a good crowd fresh out of the offices of St Helier at the end of the working week (the Members' Marquee will reportedly be a sellout on the night but there will be plenty of room elsewhere) and there is also the added attraction of a Pick 4 Jackpot carryover for first time this season.

In the Pick 4 Jackpot bet racegoers have to select the winners of the four flat races on the card (races 2 to 5) but with winners priced at 10/1 and 12/1 in the sequence at the last meeting no one was able to hit the Jackpot. The carryover pool starts at £600 and could reach a really sizable figure given the expected the crowd.

One of the races Pick 4 Jackpot hopefuls will be trying to solve is the featured Quilter Cheviot Handicap over 7 furlongs (1,400 metres), due off at 7.40, for which a competitive field of seven are due to go to post. They say "the best things come to those who wait" and connections of **PAS D'ACTION** will certainly be hoping that the old adage comes true.

PAS D'ACTION won this race in 2013 (one of his eight course & distance successes) but wasn't qualified to run in it last year and he has had to miss the last couple of meetings due to a set back when appearing to be about to contest races he might very well have won. If trainer Aly Malzard is happy to let him take his chance this time he must be respected in his bid to land a tenth career success. However this could be one of the most competitive handicaps of the season so far and dangers include the Christa Gilbert-trained duo **PURLEY QUEEN** (arguably better at a shorter distance) and **LUCIFERS SHADOW** (twice a winner over further already this year) while English-trained bottom-weight **WICKED TARA** reserves her best form for the Channel Islands.

Last year's Jersey Derby winner **ROSSETTI** made a sparkling start to his jumping career when winning on his hurdles debut by 18 lengths last month but blotted his copy book when falling at halfway at the last meeting in the race subsequently won by English-trained raider **AGAPANTHUS**. The pair clash again in the opening 2m1f Handicap Hurdle (6.30) - the final "trial" for the Channel Islands Champion Hurdle at the next meeting on 12th July - and given a clear round this time **ROSSETTI** may be able to resume his winning ways.

Unfortunately just three sprinters go to post for the La Vallette Handicap over 5½f (7.05) and **COUNTRY BLUE**, winner of a much more

completive race at the last meeting over course & distance, should be the banker bet of the night in the first leg of the Pick 4 Jackpot.

England-based trainer, but regularly successful Jersey visitor, George Baker saddles the top-weight in both the fourth (**ANCIENT GREECE**) and fifth (**I'M HARRY**) races and it is hard to image that at least one of the popular pair won't win.

In the penultimate 1m1f Handicap (8.15) Baker is represented by veteran **ANCIENT GREECE** whose ten career successes include three wins on the frozen lake at St Moritz in early 2013 and two wins here at Les Landes in the Spring of last year. **CARRERA**, who has finished second in both his starts since moving to Jersey, looks the main danger while **HERBALIST** should ensure a strong early pace.

I'M HARRY faces seven rivals in the concluding Ravenscroft Handicap over 1½ miles (8.50) but on his best form he should be able to concede weight to all his rivals. He recorded a ninth career victory when scoring at ling field by 8 lengths last month on his penultimate start and he has already won four-times here at Les Landes in the past including twice over this distance. **AUSSIE LYRICS**, who won over this course & distance earlier in the year but didn't stay 1¾m last time out, and long standing English-trained maiden **LIONS CHARGE**, are dangers.

At exactly the halfway point of the Channel Islands racing season (25 races run - 25 more to go) the battle for this year's Trainers Championship continues to be the most open in living memory. Three trainers now have four winners apiece: Aly Malzard (Jersey - who also has had seven runners-up during the season so is on top of the table on placed count-back), Tony Carroll (England) and Christa Gilbert (Jersey). That trio are just ahead of England-based George Baker on three winners.

Reigning C.I. Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor is well clear in the riders' standings with ten winners with nearest rivals Mark Quinlan and Jemma Marshall on three winners apiece.

* There will be a change in the commentary box for this meeting as my RacingUK colleague Alex Steedman will be calling the action. Alex is over in Jersey to also commentate on the opening ceremony of the Islands Games.

Selections:

6.30	#2	ROSSETTI
7.05	#1	COUNTRY BLUE
7.40	#4	PAS D'ACTION
8.15	#1	ANCIENT GREECE
8.50	#1	I'M HARRY