

QUEEN CAN SPRINT TO MORE SUCCESS

SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By MARK JOHNSON

The 2016 Channel Islands' Horse Racing Season belatedly gets underway at Jersey's Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen on Sunday following the abandonment of the traditional Easter Monday fixture due to false ground created by the exceptionally wet winter and early spring.

Officials report no problems this weekend with the first race at 2.30pm (gates open at noon), and the competitive five-race card has attracted a healthy 38 runners including 5 trained in England.

The Channel Islands' season was due to again consist of ten meetings – with nine held at Jersey's Les Landes Racecourse and the other (the next fixture on the calendar) staged at L'Ancrese Common on Guernsey on Monday 2nd May. Feature races at Les Landes during the year will include the Champion Hurdle (Friday 1st July), the Jersey Derby (Sunday 24th July) and the Clarendon Handicap (Monday 29th August). The ever popular Ladies Day fixture will be held on Sunday 14th August.

The extra good news for racing fans is that Jersey Race Club officials are confident that they will be able to make up for the lost Easter meeting at the end of the season. It is the intention of JRC to hold another Meeting in September. The JRC experimented holding a September meeting in 2014 which was well received and extremely successful both runners and crowd wise.

An intriguing sub-plot to racing all last season in the Channel Islands was the terrific battle to be Champion Trainer fought out between leading local handlers - Aly Malzard and Christa Gilbert. At the end of the season Malzard (who is based next to the racecourse in St Ouen) landed her twelfth Trainers Championship beating Gilbert (based at Holly Farm, St Helier) by 12 wins to 10.

Both ladies plan to hit the ground running this season with Malzard sending out 9 runners and Gilbert sending out 6 at this long awaited opening fixture.

Christa Gilbert, who has yet to land a training title, has an excellent record at this corresponding meeting having sent out a treble on this card last year and a double in 2014. One mare who has won for her at this meeting for the last two years is **PURLEY QUEEN** who bids for her own hat-trick of wins in the Jersey Bookmakers Handicap (3.05) over 5½ furlongs. Arguably she is the fastest horse currently in the Channel Islands and for the last two years she has beaten her old adversary COUNTRY BLUE into second. It could be a case of déjà-vu all over again for the third year running with English raider VALMINA the other danger.

AUSSIE LYRICS, also trained by Gilbert, was the main equine star of the 2015 season winning both the Jersey Derby and the Clarendon Handicap. He also

took the Liberation Brewery Handicap (4.15) on this corresponding card last year and he can do so again despite conceding lumps of weight to his 6 rivals.

The season opens with the George & Leonora Sullivan Perpetual Handicap Hurdle (2.30) over 2 miles which features the reappearance of one of the Channel Island's top horses of the last couple of years – ROSSETTI. Having won the Jersey Derby in 2014 the Aly Malzard-trained grey last year turned his hand to jumping and won the Channel Islands Champion Hurdle.

ROSSETTI now boats a record of 3 wins from 4 starts over hurdles, and he is likely to be a major player in the top races again this year, but at the start of what could be a long campaign for him it might be worth taking a chance on the Karl Kukk-trained **DALMO** who looks dangerously well handicapped if able to replicate the form of his 2½ mile hurdles win here in August. The six-times winner over hurdles had issues with stomach ulcers much of last year but could enjoy a fruitful 2016 if those health issue are now behind him.

The most valuable race on the card is the Dallas Burston Group 2016 Jersey Guineas (3.40) over the extended mile. This doesn't appear to be the strongest of renewals of this feature race and so may well be a perfect opportunity for perennial bridesmaid **SPRING DIXIE** to finally get off the mark at the sixteenth career attempt. This is her Channel Islands debut, having moved to the Aly Malzard yard earlier this year, following a frustrating time in England which saw her finish runner-up on 6 occasions and third a further 3 times. She will have the assistance of three-time, and reigning, Channel Islands Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor in the saddle. Main dangers may be fellow Jersey debutant **ENGAGING SMILE** and last year's runner up **PAS D'ACTION**.

The concluding Bloodstock Advisory Services Handicap over 1m1f (4.50) looks a really tricky affair in which Aly Malzard saddles 3 of the 9 runners. Her team includes the progressive filly **LARCH** but she may struggle to confirm last August's form with last year's winner of this race **LUCIFERS SHADOW** at the revised weights. Therefore it may be best to go with a horse proven to run well fresh at early season meetings here at Les Landes – **GREY PANEL**. Trained by Tony Le Brocq the 10 time course winner has recorded all his victories with England-based apprentice Tim Clark aboard and he will ride again.

SELECTIONS

2.30	#5	DALMO
3.05	#1	PURLEY QUEEN
3.40	#7	SPRING DIXIE
4.15	#1	AUSSIE LYRICS
4.50	#6	GREY PANEL