

EMOTIONS RUN HIGH ON LADIES DAY
LADIES DAY RACING REPORT
by Mark Johnson

UK-based trainers totally dominated the card at Les Landes on Sunday by taking all five races at the Jersey Race Club's popular annual Ladies Day - held in perfect weather conditions and in front of a large crowd.

However, despite all the races going "back to the mainland" it was well-known set of local racing silks which landed an emotional first-and-last race double.

Opening Handicap Hurdle winner JAZZY LADY and concluding 1m4f Handicap winner RIVER DU NORD, both trained by Sue Gardner in Devon, carried the "white, black triple diamond, red sleeves, white armlets & red cap" colours of Jane Edgar who for many years enjoyed success at Les Landes with horses, jointly owned with her late partner Johnny Mercier, in the same silks. One of their best horses was the brilliant mare Palala River - the dam of River Du Nord.

Sadly Johnny, a larger than life character at the races and a staunch supporter of Channel Islands racing, passed away in early May last year and after River Du Nord (under Jemma Marshall) had dug deep to beat the dual Jersey Derby winner Aussie Lyrics half-a-length in a thrilling finale there were understandably emotional scenes in the winners' enclosure.

"There's a star shining in the sky over Les Landes today - Johnny was looking down guiding the horses home", said the trainer before confirming that the family line of Palala River and River Du Nord is set to continue as River Du Nord is now in foal.

Although River Du Nord's biggest win to date came in the 2013 Clarendon Handicap ("The Clarendon" is always the feature race on the August Bank Holiday Monday card) she will not be able to line up in that event this year due to not being qualified - if not locally trained, horses must have run at least twice in the Channel Islands during the current season but this was her first visit here in 2016.

The owner/trainer double was initiated by Jazzy Lady in the Ladbrokes Betstation Handicap Hurdle. Run over 2½ miles, therefore the longest race of the Channel Islands season, it attracted a competitive field of six and saw Jazzy Lady come from off the pace to lead approaching the last of the ten flights of hurdles to beat Hawaiian Freeze four lengths.

Jazzy Lady (a four-times flat winner but scoring for the first time over jumps) was a winner on her first ride in the Channel Islands for trainer Sue Gardner's daughter Lucy - a successful amateur over in the UK.

St Ouen born but now UK-based apprentice jockey Tim Clark briefly took a narrow lead in the race for the 2016 Channel Islands Jockeys

Championship when making all the running aboard SWISS CROSS to win the second race - the Ladbrokes Grid Price Surge Handicap, over 7 furlongs - by 6 lengths from First Cat. It was Clark's eighth win of the Channel Islands season.

Trained in Newmarket by Phil McEntee, the 9 year-old Swiss Cross was winning for the eighth time during his career but was snapping a 38 race losing streak stretching back to a win at Epsom in July 2014. This was a first winner in the Channel Islands for McEntee and he is keen to return - quite possibly with Swiss Cross before the end of the season.

Tim Clark's lead at the top of the Jockeys Championship only lasted 35 minutes however as three-time, and reigning, Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor took his score on to nine for the campaign with wins in both the third and fourth races for Manton-based trainer (and Les Landes regular) George Baker.

The first leg of the Batchelor/Baker double came in the most valuable race of the day - the Coutts Handicap over an extended mile - when MENDACIOUS HARPY closed from behind to lead over a furlong out and pull 4 lengths clear of Too Many Diamonds with popular Jersey-trained veteran Fast Freddie back in third. This was a second career win for Mendacious Harpy but her debut on Jersey.

On Ladies Day at Les Landes it was fitting that four of the five equine winners were fillies or mares (only Swiss Cross registered a win for the boys) and the second Batchelor/Baker winner FLUTTERBEE may well be a 4 year-old filly to follow after her emphatic 4 length victory from Captain James, under top weight, in the Ladbrokes Ladies Day Handicap over 1¼ miles.

Twice a winner last year at Brighton, over 7 furlongs and then 1½ miles, she looks a versatile horse tailor-made for Les Landes and given her trainer's successful strike-rate with Jersey raiders it should be no surprise to see her return for further success here in the future.

To confirm with two meetings to go this season Mattie Batchelor leads Tim Clark 9 wins to 8 in the Jockeys Championship while Aly Malzard still leads Tony Le Brocq 10 wins to 7 in the Trainers Championship.

The next meeting is on August Bank Holiday Monday, 29 August, first race at 2.30pm and featuring the Channel Islands most prestigious handicap - The Clarendon.