

## **UK RAIDERS MAY HAVE EASTER EDGE**

### **MONDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW**

By commentator Mark Johnson

As is traditional, the Channel Islands' Horse Racing Season opens on Easter Bank Holiday Monday at Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen.

First race, on the competitive five-race card which has attracted a very healthy 41 runners including 12 trained in the UK, gets underway at 2.30pm although gates open at noon.

The 2017 Channel Islands' season will once again consist of ten meetings - with nine held at Jersey's Les Landes Racecourse and the other staged at L'Ancrese Common on Guernsey on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May.

Feature races at Les Landes during the year will include the Champion Hurdle (Friday evening 7<sup>th</sup> July), The Jersey Derby (Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> July) and the Clarendon Handicap (Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August). The ever popular Ladies Day fixture will be held on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August - the penultimate meeting of the year.

Winner finding at the beginning of the season is never too easy given the influx of new horses to the island and the question marks over the fitness of locally-trained runners. Given the high-tech and all weather training facilities in the UK, visiting trainers and their runners at this fixture often have a considerable edge and the last time Jersey-based trainers won all five races on the opening day of the season was in 2012.

There are three UK-trained raiders, in the eleven runner line-up, for the main race of the day - The Millbrook Easter Feature Handicap (3.40) over 7 furlongs (1,400m). Worcestershire-based trainer Tony Carroll has been bringing horses successfully to Jersey for many years and won this corresponding race in 2015 with Baltic Prince.

This year he saddles the likely favourite ADMIRABLE ART who boasts an admirable wins-to-runs record of 9 victories from 48 career starts including an impressive eight-length success here at Les Landes last May. He has also already won this year having taken an all weather handicap at Wolverhampton in February.

Thirteen-times, and reigning, Channel Islands Champion Trainer Aly Malzard has four representatives in the race of which Pas D'Action, arguably the most popular horse currently in training in the Channel Islands, is her first string. Pas D'Action has won eleven times at Les Landes including this race back in 2013.

Another of the Aly Malzard team in the feature race will be Mendacious Harpy who won twice late last summer on Jersey. On Monday she will be

ridden by the trainer's 16 year-old daughter Victoria for whom it will be a first ride under rules. However Victoria doesn't lack experience around Les Landes having already ridden four pony race winners at the track.

Opening race of the season is The President's Hurdle over 2 miles (2.30) in which veteran SMART CATCH represents Tony Carroll. Having been placed both over hurdles and fences already this year he has shown he retains much of his ability at the age of 11 and he may be able to record his fifth career success at the expense of the French hurdles winner Bowl Imperior (the Malzard representative in the race) who was second last summer in the Jersey Derby on the flat.

Over the last four years raiders from the UK have won 12 of the 20 races on the opening day of the season with one trainer especially successful - Wiltshire-based George Baker with five victories including doubles in both 2013 and 2014 and the winner of the hurdle race in 2015.

Baker has just one representative on Monday's card, ALCATRAZ in the 1m2f The Trump (Not Him) Holdings Limited Handicap (4.15) and with four-times, and reigning, Channel Islands Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor onboard he can carry top-weight to success from another UK-trained runner City Ground. Best of the home team should be Grey Panel.

City Ground's trainer/rider combo of Mick Appleby and Serena Brotherton have a great chance to strike earlier on the card with RAINBOW LAD in the Jersey Bookmakers Handicap (3.05) over 1m4f. He won at Southwell over 1m6f last month but should not be inconvenienced by the drop back in trip. Locally-trained Hawaiian Freeze, who won the prestigious Clarendon Handicap here in August and who had a promising prep run, when fourth, over in the UK at Lingfield in February looks the main danger.

Aly Malzard may get on the score sheet in the last race of the day, The Bloodstock Advisory Services Handicap (4.50) over the extended mile with OCEAN CRYSTAL. She took time to find her feet in her first season in the Channel Islands last year, eventually winning the "Glory Bee" Handicap in August, but she may be worth following now. Lucifers Shadow looks a threat although he usually needs his first run of the year.

#### SELECTIONS

2.30	#3	SMART CATCH
3.05	#1	RAINBOW LAD
3.40	#2	ADMIRABLE ART
4.15	#1	ALCATRAZ
4.40	#8	OCEAN CRYSTAL