

## **JERSEY RACE CLUB**

Easter Monday 2012 preview

By Bobsbest

"Old ones, new ones, loved ones, neglected ones", Semprini's catch phrase might easily be applied to the race card for the Jersey Race Club's opening meeting at Les Landes on Monday. A few old friends, including multiple winner Danehill Dazzler, were retired after last season, but many others, together with one or two half-forgotten ones, will reappear to take on a batch of newcomers in an exciting all-handicap programme.

The Jersey Racing Post, distributed with last Tuesday's JEP, includes a couple of new features which are likely to be helpful to students of the local turf scene. For the first time all Channel Islands trainers are interviewed about their strings and there's a useful guide to current ratings compared with last season's. If you missed it be sure to pick up a free copy at the racecourse.

The season opens with Les Fontaines Happy Easter Handicap Hurdle, which despite a field of just four sets an intriguing puzzle for punters. It sees the debut of the first of many newcomers to Les Landes in Reach Out, a 4 year-old gelding previously in the care of Brendan Powell. Brendan didn't manage to win with him, but he came close with placed runs at Ffos Las and Market Rasen; on the latter occasion in June last year he went down by just half a length under AP McCoy. He's been unplaced four times since, but he runs here off a mark of just 84, 6lb below his recent UK rating, and if fully fit he should be competitive. The other three can all be tied very closely on last season's form. Azaria and Nordic Affair met three times and it's 2-1 in the former's favour; Fine The World, now with Tony Le Brocq, beat Nordic Affair a head last August and they are weighted to dead heat. Azaria is the youngest of the three and has the greatest scope for improvement.

The Goose Handicap is a mile and a half race for horses rated no higher than 65. To emphasise the gap between the best and the rest, Sans Sa Dame carries top weight of 10st 12lb; were King Kenny allowed to take part he would have to carry over 12 stone. Still, these handicaps for the slightly less gifted generally provide close, exciting races and this looks no exception.

Anfield Road, the Champion Hurdler, starts his season on the flat where he enjoys the same mark as he started last season, whereas he went up 6lb on hurdle ratings so he is well handicapped if he can

translate jumping form to the flat. Landolino, Joan Le Brocq's pick in the Jersey Racing Post's Five-to-Follow, won twice in his first season and is not harshly treated on a mark of 52. Lady Petrus is very honest, but limited and went up 3lb for winning an egg and spoon race last year; this looks harsh, but she'll try her heart out. Rebel Woman made one brief and unhappy appearance at Les Landes, hurt herself and had the rest of the season on the sidelines; she's a good sort, but will probably need the run. That leaves the Malzard trio of Sans Sa Dame, Neuilly and Les Landes. The handicapper knows the top weight well and probably has him in his grip, but he usually faces stronger opposition and Jemma Marshall is an eye-catching booking. Neuilly has bags of promise, but has had little chance to shine so far and I'm sure we've yet to see the best of Les Landes who starts on a very handy mark.

The Randalls Supporting The Jersey Race Club Public Bar Handicap not only has the longest race title of the day, it is also the most prize money with £1,900 going to the winner. It's a 7 furlong affair and really interesting, not least because it features three new-to-Jersey horses. The first, Pas D'Action must be a recent purchase, because he doesn't figure in Alyson Malzard's stable tour in the Jersey Racing Post. He's a mystery because he's unraced so carries automatic top weight. He comes from Barry Brennan's small Upper Lambourn yard and is out of a Indian Ridge mare; the latter's progeny generally like a bit of cut in the ground and he's best watched on his debut. Malzard is four-handed in this and Spanish Bounty is the most interesting. Back in 2008 he won at Newmarket off a rating of 90, but most recent winning form was off 75 at Windsor at this time last year; he's shown he can win first time out. First Cat is the other newcomer, from Richard Hannon's stable. He won a decent Sandown nursery off 76 and looked to have a bright future, but plenty of placed efforts saw his handicap mark continue to rise. He runs here off his UK rating of 77 and looks certain to make his mark at Les Landes; incidentally, he has only one eye having lost the other when kicked early in his career. Because of these newcomers last year's winner Fast Freddie gets in with 9st 11lb and looks the one to beat. We've yet to see the best of Vamos while Annia Galeria has ability, but needs to curb her headstrong tendencies.

The Harmony Farm Handicap over a mile and a quarter sees the introduction of Lang Shining, once a very promising inmate of Sir Michael Stoute's stable, he won a Newbury handicap off 89 and at his peak was rated 104, pattern race class. How the mighty have fallen, he runs here off a mark of just 66. Jamie Osborne won a few little races with him, but he is a bit of a monkey and hard to predict. That said, new scenery and a different regime may have re-ignited

his enthusiasm and it would be no surprise if he won first time up. Lang Shining gets a stone from last year's champion, King Kenny and I like the booking of Sophie Doyle for the latter's stablemate Becks Bolero.

The Old Portelet Inn Spring Handicap over the extended mile is for horses rated up to 50. Secret Assassin has been kept going through the winter and he didn't run badly on his first Wolverhampton outing. Major Maximus is one of the few to end last term on an upward curve while Grenane and Top Level have no secrets from the handicapper. Grey Panel may need further.

Selections:

Azaria  
Anfield Road  
Fast Freddie  
Lang Shining  
Major Maximus

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