

The Jersey Race Club's 2013 season passed the halfway mark at Les Landes on Friday when they held their annual evening fixture, however rather enjoying a balmy mid summers night with racing taking place against a picturesque back drop of the sun setting over the back ground of the neighbouring Islands, racegoers were greeted on arrival with a course shrouded in fog and a blustery wind conditions more akin to late autumn, indeed if the Race Club had any inclination to thank mother nature it was due to the fact that at least the rain had held off.

A mixture of poor visibility and aircraft technical problems meant that prior to the first race most of the jockeys including Tony Proctor had still not arrived at the course which meant that his intended mount Landolino who looked to be the evenings banker bet in the opening **Old Portelet Inn** Handicap Hurdle was declared a non runner. The prevailing weather conditions not only caused the absence of the pre race favourite but also denied spectators of a view of proceedings as the race was run with visibility down to a minimum which led to race course commentator having to improvise in order to keep the crowd entertained whilst the four runners went about their business, finally Azaria and Nordic Affair appeared out of the gloom with less than a furlong to go and it was the former who passed the post two and a half lengths clear with National Monument some twenty lengths further just holding off Deepika to take third.

Thankfully things improved on both the visibility and the jockey front prior to the second race The **Highclare Thoroughbred** Handicap like the opening race this went to an Alyson Malzard trained runner Pas D'Action amazingly the five year old was bottom of the handicap despite not being out of the first three on his last four runs, and once again took full advantage of the goodwill he has been shown by the handicapper to hold off the challenge of English trained raider Unlimited by a length and a half with Mr Opulence making a pleasing Les Landes debut three quarters of a length back in third. It is inconceivable that the winner will not feel the wrath of the handicapper having now saluted the judge on three occasions this season, with two of those victory's on ground that most pundits thought would be too quick for a gelding who appeared to need give in the going in order to show its best form to put things into perspective Pas D'Action's handicap mark has only gone up three pound since the start of the season.

Trainer Malzard brought up the hat trick on the evening with another well handicapped horse in the cards feature event The **Quilter** Handicap as Neuilly simply cruised away to score an easy twelve length success with Beck Bolero who has also been a model of consistency heading home the rest of the rivals who had been left floundering in the wake of the winner finishing second a neck in front of the inform Red Lago. Once again the winner has been shown incredible leniency by the handicapper having won four out of her last six races and yet was racing off a mark of just five pounds higher than at the start of the season. What was even more impressive about her performance on Friday is that the trip of one mile one furlong is well short of her best distance and come the Jersey Derby over three furlongs further at the end of July she will be very hard to beat.

With the previous two races having been won by horses that have been a model of consistency this season The **Versailles** Handicap was won by the Stephen Arthur trained Lady Petrus who burst back to form when under strong driving from jockey Tim Clark the eight year old mare put her head in front on the line to deny Rebel Women by a nose which is the shortest margin with Athania just a length away back in third as the three protagonists thrilled the crowd with the best finish of the evening. Lady Petrus was certainly not winning out of turn as it was her first win for over two years, as for the runner up she was finally allowed to race up with the pace and only just failed to win, if connections persevere with

these tactics instead of returning to the exaggerated hold up hold up rides that she has been given this season then her turn to visit the winners enclosure will not be too far away.

Final race of the evening was The **Ravenscroft** Handicap which produced a one two for trainer Joan Le Brocq approaching the final furlong it looked as if Amy Baker aboard Bollin Fergus had stolen a march on her three rivals approaching the home turn as she kicked for home, however Tony Proctor threw the kitchen sink at Moose Moran to get his mount up in the final strides to win by a length from his stablemate with Garden Party three quarters a length away back in third.

With two of the best handicapped horses running true to form it was unsurprising that the Race Club's Tote jackpot was won (not by your correspondent I hasten to add) as four winners each collected around £900 for picking the last four winners on the card.

With just four meetings left the trainers championship title appears to be in the ownership of Alyson Malzard once again given her numerical supremacy in regard to runners, whilst the jockey's title is still in the melting pot with Mattie Batchelor leading with six wins Proctor just one behind. As for champion race horse this is led by the previously mentioned well handicapped pair of Pas D'Action and Neuilly and the eventual winner could well be decided by the continued leniency of the handicapper.

The Race Club now enter the main four meetings of the season with the first of them seeing the running of the Channel Island Champion Island Champion Hurdle with the expected clash of the Sir Alex Ferguson owned If I Had Him already a winner of two races locally taking on last year's champion Landolino on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July.