

## JERSEY RACE CLUB

Preview Monday 25<sup>th</sup> August

### River Deux Nord

#### Can River Du Nord retain her crown and make it two Clarendon wins?

The most prestigious and sought after handicap of the season, The Clarendon, gets under way on Monday and attracts a select, yet competitive field of six. Generously sponsored by one of Jersey's leading insurance and financial services businesses, Vantage, it awaits to be seen who will grasp the advantage over their fellow rivals here.

Sitting at the top of the weights, Rossetti, bids to add the final leg of Jersey's unique triple crown, to his runaway Derby success. Whilst he is now only 2lbs higher for winning the Derby by 7 lengths, much of the credit for that win must go to the sagacious ride he was given from his pilot, Craig Walker, and it is unlikely the rest of the weighing room will let him steal such a march again.

The last horse to complete the Derby/Clarendon double was the rejuvenated veteran King Kenny and it would be some story were he to reclaim his crown. Now in the twilight of his racing career, the Angie Corson stable have rekindled the enthusiasm in their stable stalwart and he created a favourable impression when getting the better of a ding-dong battle at the last meeting. Indeed, the horse he eyeballed that day was Midnight Sequel - who re-opposes on 3lb better terms. Trainer, Neil Mulholland will be looking to add the Clarendon to the Champion Hurdle the stable won earlier in the season and a reproduction of her latest two efforts will see the mare go close.

Travelling no less than 1'000 kilometers from his stable near the town of Ennigerloh in the district of Warendorf, Germany, hails trainer Rudolf Storp and his 7 year old mare, Sworn Mammy. Having won at a canter over two miles earlier in the season, she has struggled off a 16lb higher mark since and does appear better over further. Saying that, she did run an improved race in the Derby and if she doesn't get outpaced in the core of the race, then she should be staying on better than anything up the hill. The tentative vote for the race however, goes to River Du Nord. Whilst, on paper she looks to have it all to do (her last run is too bad to be true and best forgotten), the mare ran an honorable race in a hot contest behind I'm Harry earlier in the season (the pair pulled 10 lengths clear) and the trainer will have had a repeat of last year's performance in the back of her mind ever since. The defection of King of Arnor has resulted in her sneaking in at the bottom of the weights and she won the race by no less than 13lbs out the handicap last year. Lady Petrus will be trying to emulate that feat, but from 21lbs out the weights this is surely a bridge too far.

Two races on the card are sponsored in the memory of a hugely iconic figure in Jersey Racing - Joan Le Brocq. Joan, who sadly passed away in November, will be remembered as a devoted and influential part of our Island's racing circuit for decades and her name will be etched into the memories of those who enjoyed everything she brought to the Jersey Race Club.

The first race run in Joan's memory is a 2 ½ mile handicap hurdle. Four line up for the longest race of the season and much depends on who can withstand the extra distance. Likely favourite, Mr Opulence, has been placed to good effect over timber

this season and ran a game race in defeat in the Champion Hurdle. Off level weights he beat Agapanthus by 8 lengths on that day, but his adversary receives 10lbs on this occasion. Agapanthus won with consummate ease on the level at the last meeting and if translating that form to hurdles may prove a tough nut to crack. Athania meanwhile is still unbeaten over hurdles and looked the most likely winner when capitulating at the 3<sup>rd</sup> last a couple of meetings ago. Her latest run was bitterly disappointing however and consistency is evidently not a word in her vocabulary.

The Plantagenet Handicap over 7 furlongs and sponsored by Mrs Angie Richardson, a long-term and generous supporter of local racing looks to be another tricky puzzle to solve. The Christa Gilbert trained Purley Queen showed the rest of her field a clean pair of heels at the last meeting but has struggled to see out this trip in two previous tries at Les Landes. She is joint top weight with the one-eyed First Cat, who despite often hanging like he's had one too many shandies down the nineteenth hole, has plenty of ability and Karl Kukk has coerced a new sense of joie de vivre out of him this season. They have both been put up 5lbs by the handicapper for their wins at the last meeting but are entitled to plenty of respect. Off his current mark, Spanish Bounty would have won this doing handstands a couple of years ago but has looked a shadow of his former self this season. He is now 8lbs lower as a result, and a reproduction of his 2<sup>nd</sup> place behind Pas D'action over this trip in June would see him bang there (15lbs better off with that rival now). Returning to his favoured distance, Pas D'action has had another fine season. He has won his 4 of his last 5 races over 7 furlongs, which is a remarkable statistic and remains in a rich vein of form.

Chester'slittlegem has put in some eye-catching efforts of late and is chosen to get off the mark however. She came into her own at the back end of last season (when racing in the UK) and the penny looks to have dropped for Honest Nev's charge. You won't see anything rattling up the rail faster and if getting off on terms, she has the turn of foot to pounce late. It will come as a surprise if the James Moon trained, Hawaiian Freeze, has the tactical speed to keep up with this battle-hardened sextet.

The unambiguously named, The Penultimate Handicap, is another tough contest to decipher and other than the un-raced Informality, a case can be made for all of these. Herbalist ran a cracker on his first start at Les Landes but was found wanting on easier ground last time out and may be seen to better effect next season. The English assault comes in the shape of Champion Hurdle victor, The Bay Bandit. Since winning at Les Landes, he ran a very creditable race over fences at Stratford and is potentially sitting on an exploitative handicap mark. There are a few in this field who can turn the taps on when asked but his credentials are hard to dismiss. Following two plausible efforts in June, Beck's Bolero has rather gone off the boil. A short break could well have freshened him up, but is difficult to predict at present, whilst from the same stable, Rebel Woman may well have had her chance at the last meeting. Up In Flames will come good one day, but is generally disappointing and hasn't appeared to handle the track with great aplomb.

The final race on the card, The Glory Bee Handicap, is the second race run in memory of Joan Le Brocq. Glory Bee being one of the late Joan May's horses and as an owner she had a number of runners with the greatly admired trainer.

Five go to post and in what looks another competitive heat. English raider, Kristal Hart, is still a maiden from 7 starts but has shown a modicum of ability on her two most recent runs at Bath. She could still be unexposed and her UK rating may slip her under the radar here. Fast Freddie has a similar profile this season to stablemate Beck's Bolero (ran well in June but has been out with the washing since) and is equally hard to predict at present. The dashing grey, Lucifer's Shadow might be no

Swing the Axe (one of Joan Le Brocq's highest caliber performers – who also happened to be grey) but he does look quite useful at this level on his day and has been running well within himself. The Alyson Malzard trained, Jackpot, ran well in a modest contest at the last meeting and is another who can pop up when he puts his mind to it but the selection, Lively Little Lady, should be available at double-figure odds and would ignite the coffers for Jersey Race Club's "Wild West Hoe Down" or end of season party (tickets available from the race card shed for £20). Whilst, she is yet to show much on the racecourse, the filly was traveling remarkably well from out of the handicap (outpaced by the front pair two furlongs out) at her first try over a mile at the last meeting and can cause the upset of the season from the foot of the weights.

Selections:

Mr Opulence  
Chester'slittlegem  
River Du Nord  
The Bay Bandit  
Lively Little Lady