

ROSSETTI TO RISE OVER HURDLE RIVALS

SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson

Potentially one of the best, most dramatic and most exciting race meetings to be run in Jersey for several years takes place at Les Landes Racecourse, St Ouens, this Sunday but don't be late as the opening race at 2.30pm is the featured Dallas Burston Group Champion Hurdle - the most important jumps race of the Channel Islands season.

As well as the best jumping horses currently in the Channel Islands Sunday's card also boasts an additional sixth race (restricted to international Amateur Riders), a £1,500 plus carry over in the Pick 4 Jackpot and a horse bidding to win the same corresponding race for an unprecedented fourth year running.

For logistical reasons (principally due to the time it takes to get the hurdles on, and safely secured, to the track) the Champion Hurdle has to be run as the first race on the card but this is certainly no under-card event as it sees a mouth-watering clash between the Channel Islands' two heavy weight jumpers - the reigning champion **THE BAY BANDIT** and the up-and-coming rising star **ROSSETTI**. In all six horses will go to post for the race between them the winners of 24 races in total.

Trained in England by Neil Mulholland **THE BAY BANDIT** won four times at Les Landes last year, including this race by two lengths, but he has yet to win in 2015. He took a tired fall, at the second last hurdle, at the Easter Meeting since when he has been jumping bigger fences in England finishing second at Newton Abbot and third at Uttoxeter.

It is just less than calendar year since **ROSSETTI**, trained locally by Aly Malzard, won the Channel Islands' most important flat race - the Jersey Derby - but this year he has been campaigned with this race as his target and he currently boasts a record of two wins from three starts over hurdles. He too fell, on his penultimate start, but he was pinpoint accurate with his jumping when winning at the last meeting. His rider, Mattie Batchelor, bids to land his own hat-trick in the Champion Hurdle having first won it in 2013 Sir Alex Ferguson's **IF I HAD HIM** and he was also aboard **THE BAY BANDIT** last year.

Other contenders include five-time hurdles winner **DALMO**, and last year's fourth **STEELY**, both of whom are trained by Karl Kukk.

The official handicapper believes the 8 year-old **THE BAY BANDIT** is still just the slightly better horse (he has him 4lbs clear on his ratings) but this year's hurdling championship may go to the fast improving younger novice, 7 year-old **ROSSETTI**. It should be quite a race.

After the Champion Hurdler has been crowned attention will turn to solving the Pick 4 Jackpot which, for the second meeting running, wasn't

hit at the last fixture. The two-day carry over stands at £1,503.07 so that pool should easily double on the day. Although there is an additional sixth race on Sunday's card, officials have quite rightly decided that as usual it will be races 2,3,4&5 which form the Pick 4 Jackpot - the concluding Amateur Riders race will not be part of the wager.

Race Two - the first leg of the Pick 4 Jackpot - is the 7 furlong Liberation Brewery Handicap (3.05) for which five go to post. Last year this race went to English-trained raider **WICKED TARA** by 2 lengths and she turns out again but perhaps this time it is best to concentrate on the two runners saddled by Jersey-based Angie Corson - recent winner **CHESTER'SLITTLE GEM** and veteran **FAST FREDDIE**. The vote goes to **CHESTER'SLITTLE GEM** who landed a 6/1 shock win at the last meeting over this distance, in a stronger race, for popular owner/bookmaker "Honest Nev" Ahier.

Only four sprinters go to post for Race Three (3.40) - the Brady & Gallagher (1999) Ltd Handicap over 5½ furlongs but it might be quite close between two Aly Malzard trainees - **SPANISH BOUNTY** and **COUNTRY BLUE**. It is likely the hat-trick seeking **COUNTRY BLUE** will go off favourite but **SPANISH BOUNTY** beat his stablemate earlier in the season and is now better off at the weights.

Biggest field of the day, eight runners, go to post for Fourth Race the CJE Handicap (4.15) over 1m1f but all eyes will be on one horse - **GREY PANEL**. This is his race.

The Tony Le Brocq-trained grey has won ten races during his career, all of them at Les Landes, but he has won this race for the last three years including by three lengths twelve months ago. Arguably, with the likes of **HERBALIST**, **PAS D'ACTION**, **CARRERA** and **LUCIFERS SHADOW** in the field, this is a stronger renewal but an unprecedented fourth straight win in the race certainly looks a strong possibility.

Race Five (4.50) is The Building A Better Working World Handicap over 1m6f in which another horse to win the race twelve months ago returns to try and repeat the feat - **KING KENNY**. Any of the four runners can be given a chance here but the small field may allow English-trained raider **RIVER DU NORD** to dictate matters from the front.

For the first time in many years (with the exception of occasional children's pony races) there is an additional sixth thoroughbred race Sunday's card - The Amateur Jockeys Association of Great Britain Handicap over 1m2f at 5.10 - there is planned to be just a twenty minute gap between the last two races on the card.

Five runners will go to post for this, and it looks quite competitive, but local trainer Christa Gilbert has her horses in great form at present (she has saddled six winners already this season at Les Landes) including recent French import **CAPTAIN JAMES** at the last meeting. He may be

able to follow up ahead of MRS BURBIDGE and BECK'S BOLERO

SELECTIONS

2.30	#3	ROSSETTI
3.05	#1	CHESTER'S LITTLE GEM
3.40	#1	SPANISH BOUNTY
4.15	#6	GREY PANEL
4.40	#3	RIVER DU NORD
5.10	#1	CAPTAIN JAMES