

CLARENDON CLOSES CHANNEL ISLANDS CAMPAIGN MONDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson

The 2015 Channel Islands racing season comes to an exciting conclusion this Sunday when Les Landes Racecourse, in St Ouens, hosts an ultra competitive five race card (first race 2.30) the highlight of which is Jersey's most important Handicap race of the year, The Ross-Gower Associates Clarendon Trophy, over a mile-and-a-half.

Also yet to be decided this season is the destiny of the Channel Islands Trainers Championship which is going right down to the wire with two Jersey-based trainers, Aly Malzard (who trains next to the racecourse in St Ouens) and Christa Gilbert (who is based at Holly Farm, St Helier) tied on nine winners ahead of the final day of action.

Eleven-times Champion Aly Malzard has the upper-hand going into the final day as should the two finish level on winners at the end of the day she will regain the Championship (last won by her in 2013) courtesy of the greater number of seconds she has also sent out during the season.

The current standings read -

Aly Malzard: 9 winners; 17 seconds; 6 thirds; £26,390 prize money; 60 runners in total

Christa Gilbert: 9 winners; 3 seconds; 6 thirds; £17,140 prize money; 24 runners in total

As one would expect both stables are attacking the final day card with a strong team (between them their 15 runners make up 45% of the runners on the day) with Malzard sending out ten horses and Gilbert five.

The featured Ross-Gower Associates Clarendon Trophy (3.40) could be a vital skirmish in the Trainers Championship battle with this year's Jersey Derby winner AUSSIE LYRICS (Gilbert) taking on the last year's Jersey Derby hero and this season's Channel Islands Champion Hurdle winner ROSSETTI (Malzard) with dual Jersey Derby winner in 2012 & 2013 MAJOR MAXIMUS (Gilbert) also amongst the nine-strong field.

However it is another previous Jersey Derby, and Clarendon, winner **KING KENNY** (who took both races way back in 2011) who may have one more big prize in him. In what looks the most open renewal of the Clarendon for many years he should get a strong pace to run at and, given he has won over 1m6f twice already this season, the ever-green ten year-old trained by Angie Corson should stay on strongly at the end.

The opening Hennessy Handicap Hurdle (2.30) sees a rematch between the first three home in the 2½ mile Handicap Hurdle, won by DALMO, at the last meeting. This Sunday's race is over just 2 miles and that, linked to that fact she now gets a 5lbs pull in the weights and the assistance of Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor in the saddle should see **FOURNI**

reverse the placings to give Aly Malzard the first winner on the card.

Two horses have dominated the sprint division of racing on Jersey this year - PURLEY QUEEN (Gilbert) and **COUNTRY BLUE** (Malzard) - and they go head-to-head again in the Liberation Brewery Handicap (3.05) over 5½ furlongs. At the weights **COUNTRY BLUE** is selected to win for the fourth time this year over this course and distance.

The Jersey's Finest Establishments "Glory Bee" Handicap (4.15) is a unique race in the Channel Islands season and a popular traditional chief-supporting feature on the final day of the season. It is restricted to horses who haven't managed to win during the current year - so it is rather a "last chance saloon". Six will shoot for belated glory this year and although overall form this season points to CARRERA he has only won one of his 31 starts and has been runner-up eight times. It may pay to side with seven-times Les Landes winner **BECK'S BOLERO**.

Nine go to post for the season finale, the HSBC Handicap Mile (4.50) with last year's runner-up **LUCIFERS SHADOW**, one of two in the race for Christa Gilbert, taken to reverse Derby Day form with FAST FREDDIE. Best of the Aly Malzard trio in this race may be LARCH.

* As an added incentive to find the winners on Sunday there is a £578.65 carryover in the Pick 4 Jackpot pool which was not won at the last meeting. In the Pick 4 Jackpot you have to pick the winners of the four flat races on the card (races 2 to 5).

* Immediately after racing the End of Season Awards Ceremony will take place in the Winners Enclosure. Mattie Batchelor has retained his Jockeys Championship (he has ridden 15 winners so far this season going into the final day, well clear of Mark Quinlan and Freddie Tett on six winners).

Jemma Marshall is leading Lady Rider with three winners.

Champion Racehorse of the Season could go several ways with Sunday's runners: AUSSIE LYRICS; COUNTRY BLUE; LUCIFERS SHADOW and ROSSETTI all in the mix.

Selections:

2.30 FOURNI

3.05 COUNTRY BLUE

3.40 KING KENNY

4.15 BECK'S BOLERO

4.50 LUCIFERS SHADOW