

BEN CAN BOSS BIG FIELD

SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By Mark Johnson

After the annual visit to Guernsey's L'Ancrese Common on May Day Bank Holiday Monday, Channel Islands racing action returns to the more familiar surroundings of Jersey's Les Landes Racecourse, St Ouen, this Sunday (first race 2.30, gates open noon) with an unprecedented 42 runners declared for the five races.

This is the biggest equine turnout for a meeting at Les Landes in several years and the key to punting could be to look for value in open looking races in which several likely favourites appear very opposable.

Ten runners are due to go to post for the featured 2016 Warwick Vase Handicap over 1m2f (3.40) and several can be given a solid chance in a race likely to be run at a frantic early tempo.

Class horses, and likely favourites, in the field are Aussie Lyrics (who won both the Jersey Derby & the Clarendon Handicap last year over 1m4f) and his stablemate from the Christa Gilbert yard Major Maximus (winner of the 2012 & '13 Jersey Derbys and a winner over 1m4f here on 17 April). Both hold major claims but the shorter distance of this race should suit **BENOORDENHOUT**, trained by Tony Le Brocq and ridden by Tim Clark. Both his career wins have come over this distance at Lingfield and he finished an eye-catching 3½ lengths fourth to Pas D'Action in the Jersey Guineas on 17 April, over an inadequate 1m½f.

The smallest field of the day goes to post for the opening Hawk Family Maiden Hurdle (2.30) over 2 miles but although only three are set face the starter it is an intriguing contest as all of the trio are making their debut over jumps. Twelve months ago this race saw the winning hurdling debut of 2014 Jersey Derby winner Rossetti, who went on to win last season's C.I. Champion Hurdle in July, and his stable companion from the Aly Malzard yard **PASSIONATE AFFAIR** looks the most exciting hurdling prospect in this field. He has only won once in 17 starts on the flat (a Lingfield 1m4f Seller in June 2014) but with champion jockey Mattie Batchelor in the saddle he can double his career tally here.

I imagine the Les Landes starter will probably have a sleepless night on Saturday if he thinks too much about the second race on the card - the Bloodstock Advisory Services Handicap (3.05) over 7 furlongs. Eleven runners departing from this tricky downhill start could be "fun" and luck in running could be a major factor in the result.

A possible angle into the contest is to go for a speedy pace horse who may get clear of trouble early but then start to run out of stamina late (top sprinters Country Blue, Purley Queen and Valmina all fit that bill) while two previous winners reoppose in the shape of Spanish Bounty (won last

year beating Country Blue a head) and Pas D'Action (won in 2014).

However this is the kind of race which might just throw up a real shock and UK-trained raider **TAX REFORM** might just have things fall his way. He is still a maiden (a career record of 0/36 hardly sets the pulse racing) but he has been runner-up in both his C.I. starts this year - in the Jersey Guineas here on 17 April behind Pas D'Action and then in a mile Handicap on Guernsey last time. A rough race like this may just suit him.

On paper the Plantagenet Mile Handicap (4.15) looks another wide open affair but perhaps it is as simple as **LUCIFERS SHADOW** winning this race again. He has won it for the last two years - by 5 lengths in 2014 but by just a nose last year. The Christa Gilbert-trained grey may be able to reverse recent form with Grey Panel and Captain James over this slightly shorter trip while English-raider Admirable Art ran poorly (when a short-priced favourite) on his only previous visit to the track.

The concluding Hawk Family Handicap (4.50) over 1m6f sees eight stayers go to post. The dark horse of the race is Cahill who makes his Channel Islands debut. Although he has only won once during his career he did so emphatically as the victory came by 19 lengths over 1m6f at Wolverhampton last October. He could be streets ahead of the locals but it might be worth taking him on with the Karl Kukk-trained **DALMO** who looks dangerously handicapped on the flat if able to replicate the form of his 2½ mile hurdles win here in August. He is already a six-times winner over hurdles but had issues with ulcers for much of last year so it is likely we have yet to see the best of him.

Although there is no carry-over for the Tote's popular Pick 4 Jackpot (in which racegoers have to pick the winner of the four flat races on the card - races 2,3,4 & 5) there is sure to be a decent pool generated because of the big field sizes at this meeting. If you are wondering, given the current number of runners, there are 8,800 possible winning permutations!

Selections:

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|------|---|---------------------|
| 2.30 | 1 | Passionate Affair |
| 3.05 | 9 | Tax Reform |
| 3.40 | 8 | Benoordenhout (NAP) |
| 4.15 | 4 | Lucifers Shadow |
| 4.50 | 6 | Dalmo |