

PAS CAN STAR IN EVENING ACTION

FRIDAY EVENING'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson

The Jersey Race Club stages the first of its two popular evening meetings of the year this Friday at Les Landes Racecourse. As well as five competitive races on the track, racegoers at the St Ouen venue should also get to see arguably the best sunset in the world of racing shortly after the last winner has passed the post. Gates open at 5pm with the first race at 6.30pm.

Feature race on the card is The Quilter Cheviot Handicap (7.40) which has attracted a cracking field of seven. This race is run over the specialist distance of 7 furlongs (seven-eighths of a mile or 1,400 metres) over which many horses struggle - it saps the stamina of sprinters but isn't enough of a stamina test for milers - but some excel.

In the latter category of excelling is PAS D'ACTION who has made his name winning this type of race with nine of his eleven career victories being achieved over this exact course and distance. The Aly Malzard-trained 8 year-old has been in great form already this season, winning both in April and May, and although his task now becomes harder due to a rise in the handicap weights it will take an inform rival to deprive PAS D'ACTION a twelfth career win.

Question marks about the specialist distance of this race hang over several of the other major contenders - Valmina is a classy sprinter but although he has also won eleven times during his career no wins have come beyond 6 furlongs (1,200 metres) whilst hat-trick seeking Benoordenhout is best at a mile plus.

Fans of jump racing are in for a treat over the next two meetings at Les Landes. At the meeting after this - on Friday evening 1st July - the feature race will be the 2016 Channel Islands Champion Hurdle and this Friday's opening UBS Handicap Hurdle (6.30) certainly wets the appetite with the biggest field for a Hurdle race at Les Landes in many years - eight runners - going to post for the 2m1f contest.

This is likely to be run at a furious early tempo and jockeyship is also likely to play a major part in the outcome given the big field. Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor gets back aboard the mare FOURNI for the first time since winning a 2-mile Handicap Hurdle on her here in August last year which looks highly significant.

FOURNI, who like PAS D'ACTION hails from the powerful Aly Malzard stables, has already shown her well-being this year winning a 1m6f Flat Handicap last month by half-a-length from Cahill. The latter went on to win a 2m2f Handicap Hurdle at the last meeting but is now much worse off at the weights while others to consider include front-

runner Steely, stable mate Dalmo and Hawaiian Freeze who made a winning Hurdles debut last month and has since won again on the Flat.

Just four sprinters go to post for the Green Valley Handicap (7.05) over 5½f but it sees old rivals Country Blue and PURLEY QUEEN go head-to-head again. Last year's winner Country Blue recorded his sixth course and distance success when taking the 2016 "Jersey Bullet" at the last meeting with PURLEY QUEEN a close third but a 3lbs pull in the weights, and a change of rider to Mark Quinlan, may see PURLEY QUEEN record her fifth course and distance win.

The UBS Handicap (8.15) over 1m1f is another really tricky puzzle to solve. It might be worth looking for a bit of value here given the open nature of the race and BROWN VELVET catches the eye stepping up in distance. The 4 year-old daughter of Kodiak has won just one of her 13 starts (over 5½ furlongs at Bath in May 2014) but she seems to be steadily improving for trainer Karl Kukk and might be able to open her Jersey account at the expense of Black Night, who won at the last meeting over 1m4f, Larch and Lucifers Shadow.

As the sun sets over the North-West corner of the islands nine runners will go to post for the concluding Liberation Brewery Handicap (8.50).

Tony Le Brocq has his horses in good form and his MR OPULENCE deserves a win on the back of consistent placed efforts this season.

This year the Channel Islands Jockeys and Trainers Championships both look to be wide open. After four of the season's ten meetings Philip Prince (4 winners) leads Jemma Marshall and Tim Clark by a single victory in the Jockeys' title race, with three-time and reigning Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor one of a trio of riders with two wins. Twelve-time and reigning Champion Trainer Aly Malzard (5 winners) is a couple of victories clear of Tony Le Brocq, James Moon and the UK's David Evans (all with 3 winners) in the Trainers table.

* Last season's Channel Islands Champion Hurdle winner (and the 2014 Jersey Derby winner) ROSSETTI won at Stratford, in the UK, over Hurdles on Tuesday. The grey 8 year-old was trained by Aly Malzard in Jersey but is now in the care of Neil Mulholland in the UK.

6.30	3	FOURNI
7.05	2	PURLEY QUEEN
7.40	4	PAS D'ACTION
8.15	3	BROWN VELVET
8.40	3	MR OPULENCE