

AUSSIE LYRICS & BLACK NIGHT IMPRESS IN DERBY TRIALS
JERSEY RACING - JERSEY GUINEAS MEETING - REPORT
By Mark Johnson

It may have only been the second meeting of the Jersey season on Sunday but all the talk after racing at Les Landes was already looking forward a couple of months to the Jersey Derby on Sunday 23rd July.

The authoritative victories on Sunday of both Black Night and Aussie Lyrics in back-to-back races confirmed the two locally-trained stars should now meet head-to-head in a classic renewal of the Channel Islands' most prestigious showpiece event later in the summer.

Black Night, trained by James Moon and ridden by Philip Prince, could not have been more impressive in taking this meeting's feature race - the La Verte Rue Associates 2017 Jersey Guineas over the extended mile - by 7 lengths from UK-trained raider Hard To Handel with Flutterbee a further 3 lengths back in third.

Even before this victory the 5 year-old son of Excellent Art was officially the highest-rated horse on the flat currently in training in the Channel Islands and, early in the home straight, the 2/5 favourite quickly asserted his authority over his 8 inferior rivals here. He has now won 5 of his 18 career starts and this was his fourth victory at Les Landes having scored at the course over this distance, 1m1f & 1m4f last year.

Although this was Black Night's local debut this season he had raced several times over in the UK during the winter including when running well in high level Group-company at Ascot.

Black Night would have been sent off favourite for last year's Jersey Derby had it not been for a training injury which forced him to be taken out of the big race at the eleventh hour.

His defection from that race left the door wide open for Aussie Lyrics, trained by Christa Gilbert, to win his second Jersey Derby having also taken the race in 2015.

On Sunday Aussie Lyrics made his 2017 debut (his first race since the end of August last year) in the Rocquette Cider Handicap over the Jersey Derby distance of 1m4f. Having not won first time out in any of his previous five racing seasons he was sent off 3/1 second favourite, in the field of 6, against UK-trained 4/9 favourite Rainbow Lad who had won by 10 lengths over the same distance at the track on Easter Monday.

Turning out of the dip towards the home straight the two main protagonists pulled clear of the field but with still well over a furlong to go it was clear Aussie Lyrics had the measure of Rainbow Lad. Despite idling a little in front Aussie Lyrics came home 2 lengths ahead at the line from Rainbow Lad with Hawaiian Freeze 4 lengths away back in third.

This was a tenth career success for Aussie Lyrics, who was ridden to victory by Alice Mills, having won once in the UK, 3 times in France and now 6 times at Les Landes - all his Jersey wins coming over this 1m4f.

Local punters and race fans alike now have just over two months to puzzle over who they will support on Derby Day - officially Black Night is the better horse but Aussie Lyrics is the horse who is best at the Derby distance of 1m4f (2,400m). Ground-wise both winning horses appeared to be helped by the significant rainfall which hit the St Ouen area in the run up to this meeting. The track got 16mm of rain on the Friday before racing plus another hit overnight before racing producing ground officially described as good, good to soft in places. Thankfully on the day the weather was glorious!

The win of Aussie Lyrics was the middle part of a treble on the card for St Helier-based trainer Christa Gilbert who also won with Purley Queen and Captain James.

Purley Queen (the first leg of a riding double for jockey Alice Mills) returned from an injury which curtailed her 2016 campaign to take the JT Rewards Handicap Sprint over 5½f. The 4/1 chance beat Country Blue three-quarters of a length. In hindsight, looking at the race's recent history, this was a perfectly predictable result - Purley Queen was winning the race for the third time (she also won it in 2014 & 2015) while Country Blue has now finished runner-up in it for the last 4 years!

Christ Gilbert completed her training treble in the concluding Liberation Brewery Handicap over 1m1f sending out the first and second with 9/2 chance Captain James (under Paddy Aspell) beating stablemate Lucifers Shadow (the 11/8 favourite under Alice Mills) by 3 lengths.

Paddy Aspell had initiated his own riding double aboard Little Lotte in the opening Praxis IFM Handicap Hurdle over 2m1f. Little Lotte sent off the 6/5 favourite in the field of 5, beat Fourni by 3 lengths.

Winning for Little Lotte has been like waiting for a London bus - she suffered 20 straight defeats before breaking her maiden at the 21st attempt on Easter Monday. Now she has won two races back-to-back and she is the only horse to have won at both Les Landes fixtures this year.

Although officially still trained by Tom Gretton in the UK, Little Lotte enjoyed “a working holiday” on Jersey with local trainer Angie Corson in preparation for this race.

Next racing at Les Landes is the “Warwick Vase Meeting” on Bank Holiday Monday 29th May (first race 2.30pm) and, as it wasn’t won on Sunday, there will be a carry-over for the popular Pick 4 Jackpot at that fixture of £963.