

## **GEORGE CAN GALLOP TO GUINEAS GLORY** **SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW**

By Mark Johnson \*

Channel Islands' racegoers have their second chance this week to go racing when, after a successful if wet meeting at Guernsey's L'Ancrese Common on Bank Holiday Monday, the action returns to the more familiar surroundings of Jersey's Les Landes Racecourse this Sunday (first race 2.30).

This "Jersey Guineas Liberation Weekend Meeting" is the second of nine fixtures at Les Landes this season and it looks an ultra competitive card with a total of 36 runners declared for the five races including a line-up of nine for the featured 2015 Jersey Guineas (3.40), sponsored by The Breakwater Café in St Catherine's.

The Jersey Guineas is a 1m½f Conditions race and three of the runners stand out on official ratings as well ahead of their rivals - **DIAMOND PENNY** (Officially Rated 69), **ROSSETTI** (O.R. 68) and **GEORGE BAKER** (O.R. 68). The latter gets the vote.

Don't be confused if you briefly do a double-take when reading the racecard for this race as **GEORGE BAKER** (the horse) is trained in England by regular Jersey visitor George Baker!

The four-legged **GEORGE BAKER** recorded his sixth career win when scoring at Kempton Park over 7 furlongs on the all weather at the end of last month, so he comes here fit and in form, while there is no reason to think he will not handle Les Landes turf as four of his other five victories came on grass. Reigning Channel Islands' Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor will be aboard.

His possible dangers on paper appear to be Angie Corson's Jersey debutant **DIAMOND PENNY** (however he is likely to need the run on his first start since September 2013), Aly Malzard's **ROSSETTI** (who was a good second on Guernsey on Monday) and Karl Kukk's **FIRST CAT** who has been runner-up in this race in both 2012 and last year.

Trainer George Baker and jockey Mattie Batchelor may initiate a double in the opening four-runner George & Leonora Sullivan Perpetual Handicap Hurdle (2.30) with **RED FOUR** who bids to follow up a 16 lengths success in a similar race over course & distance on Easter Monday. Newcomer to the Channel Islands **DALMO**, a five-times winner over Hurdles during his career in England, looks an interesting recruit for jumping here for Karl Kukk and may be the danger.

Jersey's first 5½f sprint of the season, the Christopher Edwards **CIRHC** Handicap (3.05), sees a rematch between last year's winner **PURLEY QUEEN** and runner-up **COUNTRY BLUE**. Although the latter is now better off in the weights, and has the benefit of a run already this season,

the Christa Gilbert-trained **PURLEY QUEEN** won this race by 6 lengths, first time out, last year so she can come out firing on all cylinders fresh. The other intriguing runner here is Aly Malzard's **KERSIVAY** who made all the running to win the Guernsey Race's 6 furlong sprint for the third time on Monday. She will find this field much harder to dominate.

A big field of ten go to post for HMS Iron Duke Handicap over 1m4f (4.15). The Sue Gardner-trained **RIVER DU NORD** won over course & distance by 5 lengths on Easter Monday (and was also runner-up in this race last year) but it might be worth taking him on this time with dual Jersey Derby winner **MAJOR MAXIMUS**, another Christa Gilbert trainee, who is likely to come on appreciably fitness-wise for his staying on 8 lengths third behind **RIVER DU NORD** last time. **ANCIENT GREECE**, who twelve months ago won the Jersey Guineas on this very card, is another obvious player in a wide open contest.

Six go to post for the concluding La Verte Rue Handicap over 1m1f (4.50) but the two runners who may dominate the betting are **CARRERA** and **GREY PANEL**. The latter, who won the race in 2013, may shade favoritism due to his emphatic 7 lengths win here over 1m2f at Easter but **CARRERA** making his Channel Islands debut for Aly Malzard looks very interesting. Although he won only one of his 25 starts over in England (a 7½f turf race at Lingfield) he has finished runner-up in his last three races on the all weather and looks to start his Jersey career on an eye-catchingly low handicap mark.

\* Usually there are only five races on a Les Landes racecard but those arriving early at the course on Sunday will get a chance to see potential jockey stars of the future in action as there will be two Pony Races before racing at 1.30 & 1.45. Amongst the young riders taking part will be multiple Champion Trainer Aly Malzard's daughter Victoria and, having her first ever Pony Race ride, Aimee Perchard niece of Grand National winning jockey turned successful England-based trainer Brendan Powell.

\*International racing commentator, and RacingUK TV presenter, Mark Johnson will be calling the action at Les Landes on Sunday.

- 2.30 Red Four
- 3.05 Purley Queen
- 3.40 George Baker
- 4.15 Major Maximus
- 4.50 Carrera (Nap)