

HARD TO IGNORE HANDEL

Friday Evening's Jersey Racing Preview

By Mark Johnson

This Friday the Jersey Race Club hosts the first of its back-to-back evening meetings this season at picturesque Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen. The five-race card gets underway at 6.30 and after the last race, due off at 8.50, racegoers can not only enjoy live music but also one of the best sunsets in the world of racing.

The prevailing hot drying weather has had something of a knock-on effect on this meeting, with field sizes slightly smaller than might normally be expected, but there still looks to be some competitive racing on the card.

The featured Quilter Cheviot Handicap over 1m1f (1,800m) at 7.40 appears to be a particularly good race, with a field of six going to post, and **HARD TO HANDEL** deserves to win a race like this.

Hard To Handel has run up a sequence of thirteen straight defeats since his last victory, at Wolverhampton in December, but he has now run three really solid races this season in Jersey. Having just his second run for Champion Trainer Aly Malzard, Hard To Handle should register a fifth career success if able to replicate the form of his 7 lengths second to the classy Black Night in the Jersey Guineas last month or the 2 lengths second to Grey Panel, on his debut for his new yard, at the last meeting.

Hard To Handel has the assistance in the saddle of this season's leading jockey in the Channel Islands, Paddy Aspell, and the rider can initiate a double in the opening UBS Handicap Hurdle aboard **STEELY** trained by Karl Kukk.

Unfortunately, when the ground firms up the races that get effected most are, not surprisingly, the Hurdle races and this event is a match between Steely and Channel Islands debutant Beyond Measure.

Steely tends to go off hard in front and say "Catch me if you can", a tactic which resulted in a 12 length victory at the last meeting and may prove too fast a pace for his sole rival here.

The Green Valley Handicap (7.05) looks a straight head-to head between dual Channel Islands Champion Sprinter **COUNTRY BLUE** UK-trained raider Monsieur Paddy. A cut leg forced Country Blue to miss his hat-trick bid in the "Jersey Bullet" at the last meeting but he can now record his tenth success at Les Landes (he also won once in France) on his fiftieth career start.

Monsieur Paddy represents UK-based trainer Tony Carroll who has an incredibly good strike-rate when sending runners to Jersey. He has had four winners from nine runners in 2015/16 and he was a perfect two for two last year.

Carroll's other runner on the card is **SIR JAMIE** in the Glorious Les Landes Races Handicap (8.15) and this relatively unexposed top weight can add to his trainer's impressive record. Sir Jamie won at Wolverhampton last month and may be able to concede weight to recent local winners Captain James and Grey Panel.

MR OPULENCE, who ran poorly but lost a front shoe at the last meeting, can put that disappointing effort behind him and follow-up last year's victory in the concluding YKTR Handicap (8.50) at the expense of Spring Dixie.

SELECTIONS

6.30 2 STEELY
7.05 1 COUNTRY BLUE
7.40 1 HARD TO HANDEL
8.15 1 SIR JAMIE
8.50 3 MR OPULENCE

