

MILESTONE WINNER FOR MATTIE JERSEY RACING - REPORT

By Mark Johnson

Four-times, and reigning, Channel Islands Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor rode his milestone 300th career winner when partnering FLUTTERBEE to victory in the concluding YKTR Handicap at Les Landes on Friday evening.

After a frustrating season so far in the Channel Islands, which had seen him ride six runners-up from 15 previous rides this year, it was the ever popular Batchelor's belated first winner of the local season.

Having ridden his first career winner in November 1996 (Nahrawali in a 2 mile Novice Hurdle for trainer Gary Moore at Windsor) Batchelor has tasted success at the highest level of jump racing in the UK including a win at the Cheltenham Festival (King Harald in the 2005 Jewson) and the 2011 Hennessy Gold Cup at Newbury aboard Carruthers.

Since Batchelor first started riding in the Channel Islands he has ridden the winners of three C.I. Champion Hurdles (2013, '14 & '15), two Jersey Derbys (2010 & last year on Aussie Lyrics) and two Clarendon Handicaps (2009 & 2012). His best seasonal winner-tally came in 2015 when he rode 17 winners locally.

His victory aboard Flutterbee on Friday evening came for trainer Aly Malzard, who has supplied the majority of Batchelor's winners over the years. In the 1m4f race, run at a furious gallop set by Grey Gem, Batchelor gave the diminutive mare Flutterbee a patient ride, picking up the leaders with a half-mile to run, and leading in the home straight. At the line 4/1 chance Flutterbee won with a bit to spare, by 3½ lengths, from the favourite Spring Dixie.

The victory of Flutterbee completed a double on the card for reigning Champion Trainer Aly Malzard who also sent out the veteran SPANISH BOUNTY to win the Green Valley Handicap over 5½ furlongs.

Any punters who thought winner finding might be easy on an evening when a total of only 24 horses lined up for the five races, manly due to the firm ground after the prolonged hot dry spell, got stung in this race as 12 year-old Spanish Bounty was sent of the 8/1 outsider in the field of four sprinters. This was a tenth career success for Spanish Bounty (who came from behind to win gamely by 2 lengths from Monsieur Paddy) but

just a second career winner for local-based rider Michelle Hooper whose previous success had come back in 2015. Hooper works for winning trainer Aly Malzard.

Feature race, at the first of the Jersey Race Club's two back-to-back evening meetings, the six-runner Quilter Cheviot Handicap over 1m1f went to BENOORDENHOUT ridden by Jemma Marshall for trainer Tony Le Brocq. The winner, who was recording his fifth career victory (three have come at Les Landes), was in front halfway down the back straight and never seriously looked like being pegged back in the home straight. He eventually beat Hard To Handel, who has now finished runner-up on his last three starts, by 3 lengths.

CAPTAIN JAMES became the first horse to win three times this season when taking the Glorious Les Landes Races Handicap over the extended mile. Trained by Christa Gilbert, and ridden by Alice Mills, 7 year-old Captain James won comfortably by 1½ lengths from the early clear leader Grey Panel.

Not surprisingly jump races, over hurdles, are the most effected runners-wise during a prolonged hot dry spell leading to firm ground and the opening UBS Handicap Hurdle, over 2m1f, was a match between STEELY and Beyond Measure. Steely under Paddy Aspell, as they did at the previous meeting, soon bounded clearer and made all the running to win unchallenged. Steely is trained by Karl Kukk.

His victory on Steely put Paddy Aspell on to the 7 winner mark for the season, clear at the top of the Jockeys' Championship from Alice Mills with 5 winners. Christa Gilbert (6 winners) is clear of both Aly Malzard & Karl Kukk (3 winners apiece) in the Trainers' Championship.

* The next meeting at Les Landes, Friday 7th July, see the first Championship Race of the Channel Islands' season - the Champion Hurdle. It is another evening card with a first race at 6.30pm.