

PANEL DOES HIS MUM PROUD JERSEY RACING - REPORT

By Mark Johnson

GREY PANEL, the winning-most horse in the Channel Islands currently in training, took his career tally to fourteen victories with another success at Les Landes racecourse on Sunday.

Trained by Tony Le Brocq, and running in the colours of owners syndicate The Le Brocq Boys, the popular nine-year-old beat five rivals in the Lorges Luxury Car Storage Handicap over 1m2f (2,000m).

Ridden for the first time in a race by Jemma Marshall, and sent off a relatively unfancied 7/1 chance, Grey Panel pulled clear in the home straight to beat the favourite Hard To Handel by 2 lengths before receiving a warm ovation when returning to the winners' enclosure.

Given that most racehorses tend to come to the Channel Islands in the second half of their careers (having previously raced in the likes of the UK, Ireland and France) it is very rare to see a successful horse who has only ever raced in Jersey. He is the exception to the rule.

All of Grey Panel's 44 career starts have come at the St Ouen venue and his record is a highly commendable 14 wins, 5 seconds and 4 thirds.

Grey Panel's ability to succeed around Les Landes is certainly in his blood - his dam (mother) is the great Minnie's Mystery whose biggest win came in 2003 Jersey Derby. She was trained by Colin McCready who, now retired from the training ranks, was an assistant starter for the races on Sunday.

Minnie's Mystery has proved to be arguably as successful in the breeding paddocks as she was a racehorse. Her first offspring was Grey Panel but her other foals to race include current UK-based runner Dream Walker who has won nine times.

Feature race on Sunday's card - the Stenham Wealth management 2017 Jersey Bullet Handicap over 5½ furlongs (1,100m) - was won by UK-trained raider SWISS CROSS.

The "Jersey Bullet" is traditionally the most important sprint race of the Channel Islands racing season but unfortunately this year's event rather imploded before the tapes were released. Dual "Jersey Bullet" winner Country Blue had to scratch from the race at the eleventh hour due to cutting his right hind leg while big danger Purley Queen was ruled out

due to the prevailing firm-ground conditions after a drying week.

At the start the remaining four runners quickly became only three as the mare Engaging Smile planted herself and refused to race (connections report she will not race again in the Channel Islands) so odds-on favourite Swiss Cross was left to make all the running to beat rivals Ron's Ballad and First Cat by an unchallenged seven lengths.

On a day when prolific winning veteran horses dominated proceedings nine-year-old Swiss Cross, trained in Newmarket by Phil McEntee and ridden by Paddy Aspell, was recording his thirteenth win on his 113th career start. He is now two-out-of-two at Les Landes having also won a 7f Handicap at the track in August last year.

However this was Swiss Cross' third visit to Jersey, not his second, as he had also come all the way to the Channel Islands to run at the meeting on 29th May which had to be abandoned, on the day, due to thick fog.

Jockey Paddy Aspell, riding his first full season in the Channel Islands, has made such a good start to the season that thoughts of a first C.I. Jockeys Championship are certainly not premature.

Aspell took his score to six winners already for the campaign (two clear in the table) with a treble on the card in the first three races. All three hurdle races run so far this season at Les Landes have been won by Aspell and he followed up his earlier brace of jumps wins on Little Lottie with success on 9/2 chance STEELY, trained by Karl Kukk, in the 2m2f George & Leonora Sullivan Perpetual Handicap Hurdle. They made all the running to beat Fourni four lengths.

Middle leg of the Aspell treble came aboard SPRING DIXE in the 1m4f Liberation Brewery Handicap. To say Spring Dixie has been a perennial bridesmaid during her career would be an understatement as she was winning for the first time on her 26th start having been runner-up seven times previously. Spring Dixie was also a belated first winner of the season for 13-times Channel Islands Champion Trainer Aly Malzard.

The concluding Animal Health Trust handicap over 1m2f went to CAPTAIN JAMES who romped home by six lengths from Flying Author. This was a second win of the season for Captain James who is trained by Christa Gilbert and was ridden by Alice Mills.

With only one winning favourite on the day, and winners in the sequence with starting prices of 7/1 (Grey Panel) and 4/1 (Spring Dixie), it was no

surprise to see the carryover PICK4 Jackpot pay handsomely. A lucky winning ticket paid £695 for just a £1 stake.

Next meeting at Les Landes is the first of the season's two back-to-back evening fixtures on Friday 23rd June - first race at 6.30pm