

BLUE CAN BOLT TO ANOTHER BULLET

SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson

The fastest horses in the Channel Islands take centre stage on Sunday, at Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen, when the most important sprint of the local racing year - the Stenham Wealth Management 2017 Jersey Bullet Handicap - is the feature race on the five race card which has a first race post time of 2.30pm.

Six sprinters will go to post for this year's renewal of "The Bullet" run over 5½ furlongs, or just 1,100 metres, including the winner of the race for the last two years **COUNTRY BLUE** trained next to the racecourse by Aly Malzard and ridden by Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor.

Country Blue, the Channel Islands' Champion Racehorse of 2016, is not surprisingly a standing dish in this race having finished runner-up in 2014 (to stablemate Kersivay) before winning it both in 2015 (by a length from Sunday's rival Purley Queen) and last year by a head from Valmina with Purley Queen back in third.

In an amazing coincidence both Country Blue (a ten-times career winner with nine of those victories coming at Les Landes) and his old adversary Purley Queen (herself a seven-times career winner with five Les Landes successes to her name) will be running in their 50th races on Sunday.

However the UK-trained runner in "The Bullet" Swiss Cross trumps both his two local rivals when it comes to racing miles - the 9 year-old trained in Newmarket by Phil McEntee will be lining up for the 113th time in his career having already won 12 times. Swiss Cross has raced just once so far in Jersey - winning a 7 furlong (1,400m) Handicap here in August last year.

"The Bullet" field is completed by seven-times course winner First Cat, the mare Engaging Smile and the maiden Ron's Ballad. It should be a great race in which Country Blue may narrowly complete the hat-trick.

Thirteen-times, and reigning, Champion Trainer Aly Malzard has yet to have a winner this weather effected season but her powerful stable looks primed to kick into top gear on Sunday. As well as Country Blue in the big race the yard could also be in the winner's circle with **FOURNI** (2.30) and **HARD TO HANDEL** (4.15).

Fourni faces four rivals in the opening George & Leonora Sullivan Perpetual Handicap Hurdle, over 2m2f, in which all the runners can be

given some sort of chance. Having bounced back from a nasty fall here on Easter Monday, with a solid runner-up finish on 14 May, Fourni will appreciate the added distance of this race and has a good chance to beat last year's winner of the corresponding event Cahill.

Hard To Handel was an excellent runner-up in the Jersey Guineas last time out, and has now moved stables to join Aly Malzard, so he could be favourite to beat Princess Kodia, Chapeau Bleu and 13 times course winner Grey Panel in the 1m+ Lordes Luxury Car Storage Handicap.

Dual Jersey Derby winner **AUSSIE LYRICS**, saddled by leading trainer of the season so far Christa Gilbert, continues his preparation for the defense of his Derby crown on 23rd July in the Liberation Brewery Handicap (3.05) over 1m4f. All six of Aussie Lyrics' previous Les Landes wins have come over this exact course & distance and it will be something of a shock if he can't win again at the chief expense of Flutterbee and Mr Opulence.

The concluding Animal Health Trust Handicap (4.50), over 1m2f, looks wide open. Having won the extended mile handicap on this card twelve months ago the Tony Le Brocq-trained top weight **BENOORDENHOUT** (who was runner-up in last August's prestigious Clarendon Handicap) may have the class edge over UK-raider Flying Author and winners here already this season Lucifers Shadow and Captain James.

* Having not been hit on 14 May there is a significant carryover in the popular PICK 4 Jackpot at this meeting of £963. To land the PICK 4 Jackpot you have to select the winners of races 2, 3, 4 & 5 on Sunday.

* The Jersey Race Club have announced that following the abandonment of the Warwick Vase meeting, on Monday 29th May due to thick fog, they have received permission to stage a replacement fixture at the end of the season on Sunday 10th September.

SUNDAY'S SELECTIONS

2.30	#3	FOURNI
3.05	#1	AUSSIE LYRICS
3.40	#2	COUNTRY BLUE
4.15	#2	HARD TO HANDEL
4.40	#1	BENOORDENHOUT