

LUCIFERS CAN LAND LADIES DAY FEATURE SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson

This Sunday Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen hosts its annual Ladies Day with five competitive races on the track (first race 2.30) sharing the spotlight with a trio of competitions designed to bring a touch of Royal Ascot-style glamour to the cliff-top venue.

There will be a competition to find the "Best Dressed Young Person" (a posy being awarded to the winning girl and boy), the "Most Outstanding Hat" (open to both sexes! for which the winner receives a trophy plus a voucher from Beauty In The Bay and a bottle of Champagne) and of course the "Best Dressed Lady" - the winner of which will receive £145 Spa Voucher from Hotel de France as well as some champagne to celebrate and a posy.

The judges, who include Miss Battle of Flowers - Evie Bertram, will mingle amongst the crowd from noon onwards throughout the afternoon with the various competition finalists being invited to the Winners' Enclosure at 5.25 (about half-an-hour after the last race) for final judging and the announcement of the winners and the prize giving.

As well as the competition between fashionistas, the action on the track promises to be ultra competitive too with a strong turnout of 31 runners declared on a card comprising exclusively of handicaps.

St Helier-based trainer Christa Gilbert has every chance of landing her first Channel Islands Trainers Championship this year. With three meetings left of the 2017 campaign (a total of 15 races) she holds a three-winner lead over two St Ouen-based trainers - 13 times Champion Aly Malzard and Karl Kukk. (*see the tables below*).

Coming into this meeting Mrs Gilbert's yard is hitting at an incredible 36.3% winner/runner strike-rate this season (8 winners from 22 runners) and any local punters who have followed her runners blindly this season are showing a handsome profit as a £1 win bet, at starting price, on all of her runners so far this year would have netted you a profit of £20.75.

The Holly Farm stables have four runners on Sunday's card and must be hopeful of more success with **LUCIFERS SHADOW** their representative in the main race of the day - the seven-runner Coutts Feature Handicap Mile (3.40).

A six-times winner already at Les Landes, Lucifers Shadow was really impressive when winning by 7 lengths over this course and distance in April and has run well in defeat since. He will be ridden by Alice Mills. Main rival here could be UK-trained raider George Baker who won the 2015 Jersey Guineas on one of his previous visits to the Channel Islands.

Arguably the best race of the day comes up 35 minutes later when a strong field of eight go to post for the 1m2f Ladbrokes Ladies Day Handicap (4.15). Several of the field can be given a decent chance on their best form but it might be worth taking a chance on another Christa Gilbert-trained runner **BROWN VELVET** who appears to be fast improving as the season goes on.

A win over 7 furlongs early last month for Brown Velvet was followed by a staying on runner-up finish, in a really hot race, over a mile on Derby Day. Now she tries 1m2f for the first time but gets into this competitive handicap with an eye-catching low racing weight. Principal danger looks to be Benoordenhout who ran a lifetime best when finishing just over 2 lengths third in the Jersey Derby last month.

That Jersey Derby was of course won by Aussie Lyrics, another inmate of the Christa Gilbert yard, but he might be worth opposing in the Ladbrokes Best Odds Guaranteed Handicap (4.50) over 1m4f.

Aussie Lyrics has run in this race for the last two years, after winning the Jersey Derby at the previous meeting, and both times he has run a little flat and got beaten. He had a really hard race to win the Derby this year so perhaps he will again “bounce” from that fantastic effort.

If that is the case the horse to benefit should be UK-trained raider **BARWICK** on his Channel Islands debut. Already the winner of seven races in the UK (six on the flat and one over hurdles) he ran a good third at Epsom over 1m4f in April.

Traditionally the Ladies Day card always opens with the longest race of the entire Channel Islands racing season - the 2m4f Ladbrokes Betstation Handicap Hurdle (2.30) for which five go to post this year.

Steely completed a hat-trick of wins over hurdles here this year with a front-running victory in the 2m1f Champion Hurdle early last month but he may find it harder to dominate the field over this longer trip. This stamina-test may set up perfectly for Champion Hurdle runner-up **FOURNI** to get her revenge. She was also runner-up in this race in 2015.

The Ladbrokes Bet Live In Play Handicap (3.05) over 7 furlongs is another open looking race but **ORDER OF SERVICE**, making his debut for local trainer Karl Kukk, may be able to follow-up his win here on Derby Day over slightly further. Popular course and distance specialist Pas D’Action has had an injury interrupted season but should run well.

2017 Channel Islands Jockeys Championship

Paddy Aspell	11 winners
Alice Mills	7
Jemma Marshall	3

Philip Prince 3
Mattie Batchelor 2

2017 Channel Islands Trainers Championship

Christa Gilbert 8 winners
Aly Malzard 5
Karl Kukk 5

2017 Leading Horses

Captain James 3 wins
Steely 3
5 horses have 2 wins

Sunday's Selections:

2.30 5 FOURNI
3.05 1 ORDER OF SERVICE
3.40 4 LUCIFERS SHADOW
4.15 7 BROWN VELVET
4.50 1 BARWICK