

HEAVYWEIGHT NIGHT CRUSHES CLARENDON RIVALS

JERSEY RACING - REPORT

By Mark Johnson

Black Night, currently the highest rated horse running on the flat in the Channel Islands, put up one of the best weight-carrying performances seen locally for many years when winning the La Vallette 2017 Clarendon Handicap at Les Landes Racecourse on Monday.

Trained by Trinity-based James Moon for his mother Anne, and ridden by Philip Prince, Black Night left the top quality field for Jersey's most important and prestigious handicap of the season trailing in his wake as he cruised to an emphatic eight-length success, from three-time Jersey Derby winner Aussie Lyrics, at the end of the 1½ mile Bank Holiday showpiece.

However it was not just the stylish nature of his victory which left racegoers stunned, it was the fact that such a relatively small horse was also conceding so much weight to his rivals - a stone to runner-up Aussie Lyrics, 35lbs to the third Brown Velvet and 17lbs to the fourth Flutterbee.

At the end of July, on good ground, Black Night and Aussie Lyrics had hooked up for an epic stretch-long duel to decide the Jersey Derby over the same course and distance. On that occasion, at level weights, Aussie Lyrics won by the minimum margin - a nose.

This time around the handicapper decreed that Black Night had to concede lumps of weight all round (*the independent weights assessor - aka the Handicapper - takes overall form into account when allotting weights not just individual race performance*) but critically now the 5 year-old had the sun-baked firm ground he adores.

"It really can't be too firm for him", confessed winning trainer James Moon after the race. Moon, and rider Philip Prince, were completing

back-to-back wins in the Clarendon having won it with the mare Hawaiian Freeze twelve months ago.

“He ran really well in the Derby but even the genuine good ground we had that day isn’t for him”, explained the trainer, adding, “Then last time out we went to Deauville, but the ground was so soft and he lost a shoe”.

Black Night has now won three races this season at Les Landes and he was taking his impressive overall career total to seven wins (six on Jersey) from just 22 starts.

“Not only was the ground right for him today we also got the tactics right too unlike in the Derby”, said rider Philip Prince. “In the Derby we made the running, and he didn’t like that, so today I was relieved Aussie Lyrics make the early running - it suited us”.

Aussie Lyrics set the early pace, and stretched the six-strong field with a half-mile to run, but Black Night went with him at that point with the winner going on with about a furlong-and-a-half to run. In a matter of strides it was game over.

Few jockeys are as enthusiastic for the sport as amateur rider Freddie Tett, a London-based estate agent, whose creed is “Have saddle - will travel”. The Bank Holiday weekend was a hectic, but very successful, one for him with winners on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

On Saturday he rode a cross country Point-to-Point winner in France, on Sunday he rode a flat winner at Goodwood in Sussex and here he rode Bowl Imperior to win the opening Arzal Memorial Handicap Hurdle.

The combination had won the longest race of the Channel Islands season, over 2½ miles, at the last meeting and they followed up here with a four length victory from Little Lottie over 2¼ miles. This was actually a third straight win for the Aly Malzard-trained Bowl Imperior as he had also won a 1¾ mile flat race on Jersey Derby Day.

Trainer Aly Malzard completed a training double on the card with the victory of Ocean Crystal in the Gadget Guys 2017 “Glory Bee”

Handicap. The “Glory Bee” is a unique race in the Channel Islands racing calendar in that it is restricted to horses who have not previously won during the current season. Ocean Crystal was completing an unusual double therefore herself - having won this race last year but then going winless until the corresponding event this year! On this occasion, she pulled clear of the field well over a furlong from home to beat Hawaiian Freeze (last year’s Clarendon winner but winless since) by five lengths.

Ocean Crystal was also completing a double on the card for this year’s champion jockey “elect” Paddy Aspell who has earlier scored aboard UK-trained raider National Service in the European & Mediterranean Horse racing Federation Handicap Sprint - the final 5½f sprint of the season. Clare Ellam’s 6 year-old beat Country Blue (who was bidding for a hat-trick of wins in the corresponding race) by half-a-length.

The biggest field of the day went to post for the concluding Hunscombe Stud Breeding Success Handicap Mile which looked fiercely competitive on paper beforehand. However, the betting market got it right with 7/4 favourite Lucifers Shadow, under Alice Mills, quickening up best in what was rather a sprint finish to beat stablemate Chapeau Bleu 1½ lengths.

The first two home were saddled by this season’s champion trainer “elect” Christa Gilbert who goes into the final meeting of the season now with a four winner cushion over Aly Malzard in the Trainers table.

*The final meeting of the season at Les Landes will be on Sunday 10th September. First race at 2.30pm. This fixture doesn’t appear on most calendars/fixture lists as it is a make-up day for the Warwick Vase meeting, abandoned in May, due to thick fog.

SEASON STATS

With one meeting (five races) left this year

2017 Channel Islands Jockeys Championship

Paddy Aspell	13 winners
Alice Mills	11
Philip Prince	4
Mattie Batchelor	3
Jemma Marshall	3

2017 Channel Islands Trainers Championship

Christa Gilbert	12 winners
Aly Malzard	8
Karl Kukk	5

2017 Leading Horses

Black Night	3 wins
Bowl Imperior	3
Captain James	3
Lucifers Shadow	3
Steely	3
5 horses have	2 wins