

DÉJÀ VU AS BLACK BEATS HANDEL AGAIN

Sunday's Jersey Racing Report

By Mark Johnson

It was a case of déjà vu at Les Landes Racecourse on Sunday as **BLACK NIGHT**, the highest rated horse currently running on the flat in the Channel Islands, impressively won the Liberation Brewery 2018 Jersey Guineas (feature race at the belated opening meeting of the Channel Islands Racing Season) for the second time. He had also won the race last year and on both occasions the horse to chase him home in second was Hard To Handel.

The winning margin, and superiority of Black Night over his rivals in this extended mile "conditions" race, was also remarkably similar. This year his margin of success was 6 lengths, last year it had been 7 lengths.

Trained locally by James Moon and ridden by French-based jockey Davy Delalande, who was paying his first visit to Les Landes Racecourse, Black Night raced prominently throughout before pulling clear of his ten rivals in the home straight. He was returned the even-money favourite.

This was an eighth career success for the diminutive 6-y-o Black Night with all but one of his victories coming on Jersey. Wonderfully versatile in regard to the distance he runs, the still entire son of Excellent Art ended last season winning the prestigious 1m4f Clarendon Handicap having finished just a nose runner-up to Aussie Lyrics in an epic race for the Jersey Derby last July.

A mouth-watering rematch in this year's Jersey Derby (on Sunday 22nd July) looks on the cards between Black Night and **AUSSIE LYRICS** after the latter also repeated his victory of twelve months ago in the 1m4f YKTR Handicap. Ridden by Alice Mills, for Champion Trainer Christa Gilbert, Aussie Lyrics beat UK-trained raider Barwick by a length.

This was a twelfth career success for 8-y-o Aussie Lyrics whose tally has been achieved with eight wins on Jersey plus three in France and one in the UK. His campaign is once again being centred around him winning another Jersey Derby. Already winner of the last three renewals of the Channel Islands' most important race a fourth victory would be a record.

At a meeting which originally saw Les Landes covered in fog (which lifted during racing) **SING SOMETHING** emerged from the mist to sprint to victory in the Geoffrey Edwards Memorial Handicap Sprint, over 5½ furlongs, thus initiating a double for trainer Christa Gilbert and stable jockey Alice Mills.

A 5-y-o son of Paco Boy, Sing Something was making his fiftieth racecourse appearance in total but this was his debut in the Channel Islands. The ex French-trained grey had only previously won twice – on both occasions winning on the all

weather track at Deauville. Here he beat Lady Joanna Vassa (another UK-trained runner on the card) by a length.

The opening race of the season, the C&J Carpenters Handicap Hurdle, was almost totally obscured by fog but the first to appear on the run from the last of the nine flights of hurdles jumped was **STEELY** trained by Karl Kukk and ridden by reigning Channel Islands Champion Jockey Paddy Aspell.

Steely, who had also won this race back in 2016, pulled clear to beat Bowl Imperior 14 lengths. Last season Steely recorded the biggest win of his career when he took the Channel Islands Champion Hurdle but unfortunately a repeat bid in Jersey's most important race over jumps looks highly unlikely as the 10-y-o was found to be lame on Monday morning and he faces some time on the sidelines.

A clean-sweep for local Jersey trainers (there had been ten UK-trained horses originally on the card) was completed when **OCEAN CRYSTAL** won the concluding President's Handicap over 1m1f.

The 6-y-o grey mare beat Captain James and First Cat (who couldn't be split by the judge and dead-heated for second place) home by a length in a blanket finish. This was a fourth career success for Ocean Crystal, winner of the last two renewals of the "Glory Bee" Handicap in August. She was saddled by former multiple Champion Trainer Aly Malzard and ridden to victory by Jersey-born, UK-based, professional jockey Tim Clark.

Despite the early fog, the Jersey Race Club's decision to stage a free general admission raceday appears to have been a success with a bigger than usual crowd in attendance for this fixture. It is likely to be something the JRC will consider again in the future.

The next meeting at Les Landes is an additional card, not originally on the fixture list, put on to make up for the lost Easter Monday meeting. It is the Liberation Meeting on Sunday 13th May (first race 2:30) but before that racegoers in the Channel Islands get their annual chance to seeing racing on Guernsey when a five race card takes place on the Island at L'Ancrese Common on Monday 7th May.