

## **SALAD CAN STAR IN SPRINT** **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 prestigious sprint of the local racing year - The Dallas Burstons Group 2018 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, and it looks a pretty open race.

Veteran 9-year-old Country Blue, trained by Aly Malzard and ridden by Mattie Batchelor, bids to win the race for the third time - having taken the prize in both 2015 & 2016 - but he has looked a shadow of his former self in a couple of runs this year and perhaps now he doesn't quite have the speed of a horse with younger legs.

Less than half the age of Country Blue is stable mate Al Sail. The ex French-trained 4 year-old showed tremendously fast gate speed to win at Dieppe over 5½ furlongs, last July and he should make his presence felt on only his second start since moving to Jersey.

The selection however is the 5 year-old mare **FRUIT SALAD** - trained by Karl Kukk and ridden by reigning Champion Jockey Paddy Aspell.

**FRUIT SALAD** won three times, all over 5 furlongs, when trained in the UK most recently in October last year at Newcastle. She made a very encouraging Channel Islands debut in April when a close third over this course and distance (finishing ahead of both Country Blue, Al Sail and another rival on Sunday National Service) and has since finished fourth on Guernsey when she didn't appear to handle the extremely sharp track.

The "Jersey Bullet" may be the feature race on the card but arguably the equine star of the show lines up for the following race when the highest rated horse, running on the flat, in the Channel Islands **BLACK NIGHT** faces seven rivals in the President's Handicap over 1m½f (1,700 metres).

This has all the makings of a cracking race with the diminutive and versatile **BLACK NIGHT** having to try and concede at least 9lbs to all his rivals - several of whom, such as Ice Royal and Order Of Service, come into this race with serious credentials themselves - but if the top-weight is in the same kind of form as when romping to 6 lengths victory in the Jersey Guineas in April he again is the one they all have to

beat.

**HAWAIIAN FREEZE**, like Black Night trained by James Moon, can initiate a stable double in the 1m4f Green Valley Handicap (3.05). The mare returns to racing on the flat having won a 2 mile hurdle race last time out. Her main danger is likely to be another mare Flutterbee.

Although only three go to post for the opening George & Leonora Sullivan Perpetual Handicap Hurdle over 2¼ miles (2.30) it is a difficult race to call given all of the trio have question marks over their form. It may be best to side with **BEYOND MEASURE** who at least won a similar race to this in September.

**HONCHO** was also entered in the opening hurdle race (in which he would have had an excellent chance) but connections have instead elected to run him in the concluding Brady & Gallagher (1999) Ltd Handicap over 1¼ miles on the flat. Recent winner Gabster is the danger.

\* Sunday's meeting at Les Landes is the first race meeting to be run in Jersey since a case of Strangles was confirmed, at a Jersey-based racehorse trainer's yard, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

In the interests of animal welfare, to avoid any risk (no matter how small) of cross contamination between horses in the Channel Islands and the UK, no UK-trained runners are being allowed to run at this meeting.

Also, following blood tests of all current racehorses on the island, no runners are being allowed at this meeting from the yards of local trainers who have had any horse indicate the presence of antibodies to the Strangle bacteria.

Further to those tests, of the six currently licensed trainers based in Jersey, four have been cleared to race and they have between them declared 30 runners making for an extremely competitive card.

As a goodwill gesture, all entry monies paid by UK-based trainers and by the two local trainers who are ineligible to have runners at this meeting are being returned by the Jersey Race Club.

#### SUNDAY'S SELECTIONS

2.30	#3	BEYOND MEASURE
3.05	#1	HAWAIIAN FREEZE
3.40	#2	FRUIT SALAD
4.15	#2	BLACK NIGHT
4.40	#1	HONCHO