

D-DAY FOR BLACK NIGHT

SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW

By commentator Mark Johnson

Sunday is Derby Day on Jersey and the big race should be a classic.

A competitive field of nine are due to line up for the most prestigious race of the year in the Channel Islands.

The mile-and-a-half Jersey Derby, sponsored by La Vallette Investment Management Ltd, is due off at 3.40 where it will be the third of five races on the card run at Les Landes Racecourse, St Ouen, first race 2:30pm.

The Derby is the true championship race of the season on the flat in the Channel Islands (run at level weights in theory to decide the best horse in the Islands) and whoever wins on Sunday will quite rightly be lauded as a local champion.

For not only is the nine-runner field the biggest to line-up for the race in many years it is also, without doubt, the classiest too.

AUSSIE LYRICS, trained by Christa Gilbert at Holly Farm in St Helier, has already rubber-stamped his name into the history of the famous race. Twelve months ago, he became the first horse in 32 years to win the Jersey Derby three-times.

That third consecutive Derby victory came at the end of an epic stretch-long head-to-head duel with his old adversary BLACK NIGHT. One of the best races ever seen at Les Landes resulted in a nose (literally a nostril) verdict going the way of AUSSIE LYRICS ridden by Alice Mills.

Now 8-year-old AUSSIE LYRICS bids to totally rewrite the record books. A fourth straight win would be a record since the Jersey Derby was first run in its current format in 1967. Another victory in the race would also give his trainer (who secured her first Channel Islands Trainers Championship last year) a sixth win in the last 7 years - Mrs Gilbert also saddled Major Maximus to win the race in 2012 & 2013.

AUSSIE LYRICS comes to this year's race with just one prep run under his belt - he beat Derby rival BARWICK a length in a handicap over this course and distance in April. That day he received 14lbs from BARWICK, now he has to meet that higher rated rival on level terms.

There-in lies the enormity of the task facing AUSSIE LYRICS. On ground arguably firmer than he finds ideal, and after an interrupted early season, he has this year to face three rivals who are officially rated superior to him - BLACK NIGHT, BARWICK & LASTMANLASTROUND.

2018 could, and should, be the year that **BLACK NIGHT** finally gets his Jersey Derby. It would not come out of turn.

James Moon's 6-year-old **BLACK NIGHT** would have been favourite

for the race in 2016 but for an eleventh-hour setback (shoulder injury) that ruled him out of the contest. Then of course last year he came out the wrong side of a head-bob finish.

Since that defeat in this race last year he has taken all before him in Jersey, winning the Clarendon Handicap (over the same exact course as the Derby) last August and winning all three of his races so far in 2018.

In April he won the 1m½f Jersey Guineas by 6 lengths, he then won a Handicap over the same distance by 8 lengths before completing his Derby prep with a 3½ length success over 1m1f last month.

The official Channel Islands Handicapper has, not surprisingly, been impressed by **BLACK NIGHT** this year. Having started the season on an Official Rating of 94 he has now gone up to 103 (no horse has been rated 100+ on the flat in Jersey for decades) which puts him 14lbs clear of **BARWICK**, 19lbs clear of **LASTMANLASTROUND** & 27lbs clear of **AUSSIE LYRICS**.

BLACK NIGHT, who will be ridden by French-based jockey Davy Delalande, is therefore very much the horse to beat.

Jersey Derby Trivia -

THREE-TIME JERSEY DERBY WINNERS

In the last 50 years

2015, 2016, 2017 **AUSSIE LYRICS** (Christa Gilbert)

1983, 1984, 1985 **WHITWORTH** (Jeremy Hollowell, Guernsey)

1970, 1972, 1974 **IT'S A JINX** (Stephen Arthur)

Top Trainers

Two trainers involved in this year's race, Christa Gilbert & Aly Malzard, have five wins in the Jersey Derby.

Christa Gilbert has won it with Aussie Lyrics (2017, '16 & '15) and Major Maximus (2013 & '12)

Aly Malzard has won it with Rossetti (2014), Koka Fast (2010), The West's Awake (2008) & Crossways (2006 & '04)

Brace for Batch

Jockey Mattie Batchelor has ridden the winner of the Jersey Derby twice on Aussie Lyrics (2016) & Koka Fast 2010.

Two other jockeys, in this year's race, to have already ridden the winner are Alice Mills (last year on Aussie Lyrics) & Freddie Tett (on Aussie Lyrics in 2015)

Rare UK-trained raider

Lastmanlastround (trained by Richard Guest) is a rare UK-trained runner

in the Jersey Derby. The last UK-trained winner was View From Above in 1991 trained by Guy Harwood & ridden by Nick Walker Barwick in this year's race was previously trained by George Baker in the UK but has officially been transferred to Al Malzard for this run.

Eye-catching Jockey Bookings

Mattie Batchelor is the best known current rider seen in the Channel Islands but other notable names to appear on the roll of honour include Robert Havlin (2004, Crossways) & Richard Dunwoody (1990, Misaff).

The Jersey Derby Field (including Jockeys & Morning Line odds) & form line

1. AUSSIE LYRICS (Alice Mills, 9/2)

Winner of this race for last 3 years, won his only race this year in April.

2. BARWICK (Mattie Batchelor, 3/1)

Winner here last August & runner-up in the C.I. Champion Hurdle latest.

3. BENOORDENHOUT (Paddy Pilley, 10/1)

Third in this race last year. Won twice this year over shorter distance.

4. BLACK NIGHT (Davy Delalande, 4/7 Fav)

Runner-up last year. Nine times winner at Les Landes & 3/3 this year.

5. BONJOUR (Tom Garner, 50/1)

Well-bred but lightly raced maiden. Looks outclassed.

6. LASTMANLASTROUND (Philip Prince, 8/1)

UK-trained winner of 3 races over shorter including on Guernsey in May.

7. GABSTER (Paddy Aspell, 16/1)

In form mare, won her last 3 races, but significantly up in grade now.

8. SAFIRA MENINA (Freddie Tett, 50/1)

All 3 wins have come over this distance but latest was in Nov 2016.

9. SPRING DIXIE (Michelle Hooper, 33/1)

Won twice last year in much lower grade, but off the track for 12 months.

The Rest of Sunday's Card

The Jersey Race Club, principally through its Les Landes Clerk of the Course Mark Evans, has worked hard this week to ensure decent safe ground for the Derby Day runners due to the continued dry spell.

The course has been watered throughout the week by sprinklers while bowsers distributed 25,000 gallons of water on to the course on Monday, Wednesday & Friday.

The JRC have been rewarded with a fantastic turnout. A total of 33 declared runners on the five-race card, including a modern day record 9 in the Jersey Derby, is more than many would have expected given the

prevailing weather conditions.

Derby Day traditionally gets underway with a 2 mile Hurdle restricted to horses who have not won more than once previously over jumps. Six go to post for this opening Millbrook July Conditions Hurdle (2:30) but realistically it may effectively boil down to a match between up-and-coming jumper **SAMUEL FRENCH** and classy flat performer **CAPTAIN JAMES**.

SAMUEL FRENCH (representing the Black Night team of trainer James Moon and jockey Davy Delalande) ran a huge race to be 3 lengths runner-up to subsequent Channel Islands Champion Hurdle winner Cahill last time out and is taken to win his first race at the expense of seven-times flat winner **CAPTAIN JAMES** who has yet to convince over obstacles.

The six-strong field for the Patricia K Pritchard Handicap Sprint (3:05) comprises several horses who have repeatedly been running against each other all season. At the revised weights, following the win of **DOCTOR PARKES** last time out, it may now be the turn of local favourite **COUNTRY BLUE** to win again.

Traditionally the Animal Health Trust Handicap (4:15) over 1m½f on Derby Day is one of the most competitive handicaps of the entire Channel Islands season. This year, with eight closely matched runners, looks no exception and 2016 winner **CHAPEAU BLEU** is narrowly given the edge to beat last year's winner **ORDER OF SERVICE**.

The concluding 1m6f Handicap should present **HAWAIIAN FREEZE** with an ideal opportunity to get back into the winner's circle. She was runner-up in this race twelve months ago, one place ahead of **OCEAN CRYSTAL** who takes her on again.

Selections:

2.30	6	SAMUEL FRENCH
3.05	5	COUNTRY BLUE
3.40	4	BLACK NIGHT
4.15	5	CHAPEAU BLEU
4.50	1	HAWAIIAN FREEZE

2018 JERSEY DERBY

AUSSIE LYRICS V BLACK NIGHT HEAD-TO-HEAD

AUSSIE LYRICS

BLACK NIGHT

Christa Gilbert	TRAINER	James Moon
Alice Mills	JOCKEY	Davy Delalande
France	BRED IN	Ireland
8 years-old	AGE	6 years-old
35	TOTAL RACES	27
10	CAREER WINS	10
8	WINS ON JERSEY	9
8	WINS AT 1m4f	3
76	OFFICIAL RATING	103
£37,044	PRIZEMONEY	£25,693