

CAHILL CLAIMS CHAMPION HURDLE

FRIDAY EVENING'S JERSEY RACING REPORT

By Mark Johnson

CAHILL, trained by Christa Gilbert & ridden by Alice Mills, rallied gamely after the final hurdle to win the JT Rewards 2018 Champion Hurdle at a sun-baked Les Landes Racecourse last Friday evening.

Five horses went to post for Jersey's most important race over jumps but turning for home, approaching the second last flight of hurdles, the race had developed into a match between CAHILL (the 7/4 second favourite) and the UK-trained 4/6 Favourite BARWICK.

BARWICK, ridden by Mattie Batchelor, went on narrowly as they prepared to jump the second last but a rallying CAHILL was far more fluent at the final hurdle and kept on well to beat his main rival 1½ lengths at the line. The pair were 11 lengths clear of third-placed VERONICA'S NAPKIN.

This was a fifth victory in 29 career starts for CAHILL, a 6 year-old gelding by the sire Lawman. Following an initial victory on the flat in the UK (at Wolverhampton in October 2015) CAHILL established himself as one of the leading Channel Islands-based hurdlers during the 2016 season when winning twice and also finishing just a head runner-up to ROSSETTI in this race.

Last season his campaign was somewhat curtailed through niggling training issues and injury (he was only third in this corresponding race) but he bounced back to form winning his prep race last month and stepped up on that effort to secure both his trainer & rider their first success in the Champion Hurdle.

"He was really gutsy out there", said jockey Alice Mills after the race, "I knew I still had a good chance coming to the last & jumping that better than the runner-up really made a difference".

CAHILL is owned by retired professional jockey & trainer Ron Vibert who would now like to try and win steeplechases back in the UK with him. "I have always thought he would make a really nice chaser", Mr

Vibert explained, “he is the right age to go chasing and I think we could have some good fun with him over there in the Autumn”.

CAHILL completed a doubles on the card for trainer Christa Gilbert and jockey Alice Mills initiated in the previous race by CAPTAIN JAMES in the President’s Handicap over 7 furlongs. Sent off 6/4 Favourite he won by 4 lengths from MENDACIOUS HARPY.

Local trained Tony Le Brocq only has two horses currently in training but his whole string was successful on Friday evening in back-to-back races. After BENOORDENHOUT romped to a 5 length success in the 1m2f Ravenscroft Handicap - the penultimate race on the card - GREY PANEL almost matched the feat by storming to a 4 length victory in the concluding L’Ordre des Coteaux de Champagne Handicap over 1m4f.

Popular 10 year-old GREY PANEL is the winning-most horse at Les Landes currently in training - this triumph being the fifteenth of his career from 53 starts. All his races have been at Les Landes.

GREY PANEL is out of the mare MINNIE’S MYSTERY who many local racegoers may remember winning the 2003 Jersey Derby when trained by Colin McCready. It was quite a week for her offspring - last Tuesday GREY PANEL’s 8 year-old half-brother (therefore also out of the mare Minnie’s Mystery) ROY ROCKET won his eighth race at Brighton. They are a family of course specialists as ROY ROCKET has only ever won at Brighton.

Both BENOORDENHOUT and GREY PANEL were ridden to their wins by Paddy Pilley.

It was a good evening for veterans on Friday. The opening Wilsons Estate Agents Handicap over 5½f went to sprightly 12 year-old DOCTOR PARKES trained in the UK by Natalie Lloyd-Beavis and ridden by Philip Prince. He was following up a win over the same sprint distance at the previous meeting.

The big crowd who attended the Jersey Race Club’s second, and final, Friday evening meeting of the year not only enjoyed a fantastic evening weather-wise but many also went home with a profit having cheered home three winning favourites and two successful second favourites. The

carry-over Pick4 Jackpot paid £90.40 for a £1 stake.

* Before racing a moments silence was observed to remember one of the JRC's longest serving officials, Clerk of Scales Wendy Barrette, who passed away the previous Sunday after a long illness. Jockeys at the meeting wore black armbands as a mark of respect.

* With just three meetings left of the season the races to be 2018 Champion Jockey & Champion Trainer are still wide open.

In the Jockeys' Championship Philip Prince & Alice Mills both have 5 winners, one victory ahead of both reigning Champion Paddy Aspell & French-based Davy Delalande.

In the Trainers' Table reigning Champion Christa Gilbert now has 6 winners, one ahead of Karl Kukk & James Moon with thirteen-times Champion Aly Malzard still very much in the hunt with 4 winners.

The most prestigious race of the entire Channel Islands racing season - the Jersey Derby - is the centre-piece of the next meeting at Les Landes on Sunday 22nd July. First race at 2:30pm.