

VALIANT IN VICTORY
JERSEY RACING - EASTER MONDAY MEETING REPORT
By Mark Johnson

The 2019 Channel Islands racing season got underway to a spectacular start at Les Landes Racecourse on Easter Monday.

In front of a record modern “Opening Day” crowd, estimated by officials to be around 4,000, the St Ouen cliff-top venue not only sizzled on a hot sunny day it also saw some breathtaking performances out on the track.

It was **WHITE VALIANT** - a horse simply bred to be a champion around Les Landes - who stole the show on his Channel Islands debut.

His 4 length victory, from the well-backed favourite Hard To Handel, in the mile-and-a-quarter Liberation Brewery Handicap was not only visually impressive it was also remarkable as he was required to carry automatic joint top-weight in the race given he had never officially run a flat race previously.

A 6 year-old son of three-time Arc de Triomphe runner-up Youmzain, White Valiant had begun his racing career in the UK with Newmarket-based trainer John Berry for whom he won two Bumpers (National Hunt Flat Races) before disappointing over hurdles.

Berry’s hopes of running White Valiant officially on the flat in the UK were scuppered when the horse became very claustrophobic in the starting stalls. With no starting stalls used on Jersey (races are started by tape) White Valiant joined the yard of local trainer Tony Le Brocq.

But it was probably already written in the stars that White Valiant would not only race at Les Landes but potentially become a star here too.

He is out of the mare Minnies Mystery who won the 2003 Jersey Derby when trained locally by Colin McCready. Indeed the colours carried by White Valiant - mauve with black sleeves and cap of owners Maple Grove Racing - are the same colours carried by Minnies Mystery.

In just one impressive performance White Valiant can now be justifiably considered a major contender for this year’s Jersey Derby, on Sunday 21st July, but he still has a long way to go to equal the exploits of his half-brother Grey Panel (same mother but different sire) also trained by Tony Le Brocq who has won 15 times around Les Landes.

White Valiant brought up a notable landmark for his winning rider, UK-based professional jockey Dave Crosse, on his first ever visit to Les

Landes. It was the 200th career winner for Irishman Crosse whose career highlight was a win on The Bushkeeper in the 2002 Cheltenham Festival.

At the other end of her race riding career Victoria Malzard, 18 year-old daughter of 14-time Channel Islands Champion Trainer Aly Malzard, rode her first winner under rules when **HONCHO** (trained by Mum) made all the running to win the concluding Bloodstock Advisory Service Handicap, over 1m½f, beating William Booth 8 lengths.

This is the start of the third season that Victoria has ridden in races and she was unlucky last year not to get on the score sheet having finished runner-up on four occasions. She had however previously ridden winners in pony races.

There was a nasty incident on the home turn in this race when Koshi (Paddy Aspell) fell and hampered Brown Velvet who unseated her rider Charlotte Prichard. Unfortunately Aspell (the 2017 Channel Islands Champion Jockey) injured a knee in the fall and that may well keep him out for much of the season, although he had already ridden a winner on the card when **GABSTER** (trained by Karl Kukkk) took the 1½m Le Verte Rue Handicap.

Trainer Aly Malzard initiated a double on the day - in the Koka Fast Handicap Hurdle - with **BARWICK** under Freddie Tett. This was an eleventh career win for 11 year-old Barwick. He jumped Les Landes' new safety hurdles (being used in a race for the first time) quickly and accurately and pulled 16 lengths clear of runner-up Veronica's Napkin. Barwick is on course for the Channel Islands Champion Hurdle on Friday 5th July, a race in which he was second last year.

Most valuable race on the card, the Jersey Bookmakers Feature Handicap over 7 furlongs, went to 3 year-old **WOLF HUNTER** trained by James Moon and ridden by French rider Damien Artu.

A winner in the UK last August at Kempton, when trained by Richard Hughes, Wolf Hunter is another exciting newcomer to Channel Islands racing this season. He looked in trouble a furlong out, when joined by Ice Royal, but he found a different gear and pulled away to score impressively by 5 lengths.

As is often the case on opening day of the season, winner finding was not easy for the huge holiday crowd which has resulted in two very

significant Carry Overs in the Tote pools for the next meeting at Les Landes on Sunday 12th May.

The Pick4 Jackpot was not hit so there is a Carry Over of £906.67 in that pool going in to the next meeting & also, more unusually, the Exacta (where racegoers have to pick the first & second home in correct order in a race) wasn't hit in the final couple of races either leading to a Carry Over of £739.50 into the Exacta Pool for the first race on 12th May.

Although Les Landes doesn't now race until Sunday 12th May there is racing in the Channel Islands ahead of that as the Guernsey Race Club stage their annual day of racing at L'Ancrese Common on Bank Holiday Monday 6th May. Several Jersey-trained horses will be in action there.