

HARD RIDE SEES BROTHERTON AT HER BEST
JERSEY RACING - WARWICK VASE MEETING REPORT
By Mark Johnson

Serena Brotherton is currently one of the best amateur jockeys race riding throughout Europe and anyone needing confirmation of this should watch the ride she gave **HARD TO HANDEL** to win the featured JT Rewards & Liberation Brewery 2019 Warwick Vase Handicap at Les Landes on Spring Bank Holiday Monday.

In the mile-and-a-quarter race, run at a furious pace right from the start, UK-based Brotherton did not get involved in the early battle for the lead nor did she panic when her mount was outpaced as the race developed in the dip under half-a-mile from home.

Mattie Batchelor looked to have made a decisive move on Ice Royal, kicking clear early in the home straight but having passed several tiring rivals wide around the final turn Serena Brotherton then switched the staying on Hard To Handel to the inside rail to give the 7-y-o a shot at reeling in the leader.

Crossing the line Brotherton, who was riding Hard To Handel for the first time, gave an uncharacteristic punch of the air signifying her delight at securing victory on a notoriously difficult horse to win with. Hard To Handel was snapping a 28 race losing streak since the last of his previous four wins at Wolverhampton in December 2016. He had finished runner-up in all three of his previous runs this year and has filled the runner-up spot 12 times in all during his career.

Despite his long losing run it didn't stop punters backing Hard To Handel and he was backed down to 4/1 second favourite in the competitive field of eight. He beat 13/2 chance Ice Royal by 2¼ lengths with the 8/15 favourite Island Song a further 2 lengths back in third.

All the first three home are trained next to the course by Aly Malzard who went on to land a treble on the day courtesy of **HONCHO** (ridden by daughter Victoria) and **BOWL IMPERIOR** (under Freddy Tett) in the 1m6f Green Island Restaurant Handicap.

Bowl Imperior, the 2017 Channel Islands Champion Racehorse after winning four-times that year, was side-lined for all of last season but he doesn't appear to have lost a step performance-wise. He has now won

both his races so far in 2019 having won a 2m1f Handicap Hurdle at the previous meeting here he beat stablemate Fourni (running her best race for some time) a length.

The grey Honcho will always have a special place in the heart of 18 year-old Victoria Malzard. Not only did he give the local amateur rider her a first winner under rules on Easter Monday he provided his young jockey with a second winner of her career/season when making virtually all of the running, under top weight in the 1m½f Windsor House Handicap, to beat Koshi 5 lengths.

It was an up-and-down day for the team representing UK-based trainer Neil Mulholland and his owner Mike Burbidge. They won with their first runner of the afternoon **MAN OF THE SEA** (ridden by Philip Prince) who made it back-to-back wins at Les Landes over 5½f in the YKTR Handicap. He will return for a crack at the most important sprint of the year, the Jersey Bullet, at the next meeting on Sunday 9th June.

However their other representative Molliana was sent off odds-on favourite to follow up her win at the previous meeting in the race eventually won by Honcho. Her supporters knew their fate very early as she slipped up on the paddock turn after just a furlong. Thankfully horse, and rider George Rooke, walked away unscathed.

On a day when four of the five winners were recording their second victory of the local season **GABSTER** did just that in the opening La Verte Rue Associates Maiden Hurdle over 2m1f.

Trained by Karl Kukk the 6 year-old mare was making her debut over hurdles having previously won on the flat over 1m4f on Easter Monday.

Gabster was a winning comeback ride for jockey Mark Quinlan whose biggest success previously in the Channel Islands came aboard the Neil Mulholland-trained Midnight Sequel in the 2014 Clarendon Handicap. He had not ridden on Jersey since early in the 2017 season and had “hung up his boots” after riding at Strasburg in October last year.