

VALIANT SET FOR SUNSET VICTORY

Friday evening's Jersey Horse Racing Preview

By MARK JOHNSON

The best is saved for last at Les Landes this Friday night when the St Ouen cliff-top racecourse hosts the first of its two summer evening meetings. First race on the five-race card takes place at 6:30 with the last event on the track at 8:50 followed by, what is popularly regarded as, the best sunset in the world of racing.

Fittingly the classiest race on the card is the concluding Mid-Summer Glorious Les Landes Handicap over 1m4f and although only five runners go to post it looks to be, not only the best race of the night, but also a race to watch carefully with a view to some of the season's main feature contests run over the next couple of months.

Arguably the current ante-post favourites for both the Jersey Derby on 21 July, **WHITE VALIANT**, and the inaugural Jersey Oaks on 11 August, ISLAND SONG will lock horns again as they continue preparations for their various late season targets.

Breeding is an essential part of horse racing and there is absolutely no doubt that **WHITE VALIANT** is bred to be a star here in the Channel Islands. He is a son of the 2003 Jersey Derby winner, the mare Minnie's Mystery, which makes him a half-brother to the winning-most horse on Jersey, currently in training, Grey Panel - a fifteen-times winner at Les Landes.

WHITE VALIANT was trained over in the UK by John Berry for whom he won two "Bumpers" (National Hunt Flat Races) at Huntingdon and Fontwell but then disappointed over hurdles.

He never officially raced on the flat in the UK but since joining the Jersey yard of Tony Le Brocq, for the start of this season, he has already won twice in flat handicaps - over 1m2f on Easter Monday and 1m4f at the last meeting when beating Friday's rival ISLAND SONG by 6 lengths.

The two raced off level weights on 9 June but now ISLAND SONG gets a 6lbs pull. However, given the style in which **WHITE VALIANT** travelled through the race a fortnight ago he looks capable of winning again on his way to the Jersey Derby.

Friday's race distance of a mile-and-a-half may be slightly beyond her best distance but if front-running mare ISLAND SONG gets an uncontested lead in this short field she could prove difficult to catch. It all sets up for an exciting finale to the evening.

The most valuable race on the card is the Quilter Cheviot Evening Feature Handicap over 1m1f (7:40) in which eight go to post headed by HONCHO who bids to win for the fourth time this season under young local rider Victoria Malzard.

The handicapper now has HONCHO 12lbs higher in the weights than when beginning his winning spree but, in the form of his life, he keeps defying his rising in the weights and the class of the races he runs in. This looks a race likely to be run at a strong early pace and last month's Jersey Guineas winner **WOLF HUNTER**, trained by James Moon, may be able to bounce back from finishing only sixth in the "Jersey Bullet" at the last meeting to beat HONCHO and the 2017 winner of this race BENOORDENHOUT.

UK-based trainer Neil Mulholland does extremely well when bringing a team over to Jersey (he was Channel Islands Champion Trainer in 2014) and he has saddled four winners from ten runners here so far in 2019.

He has an excellent chance of a double on this card with **MRS BURBIDGE** in the opening UBS Handicap Hurdle and **MOLLIANA** in the Marje Meyrick Handicap (8:15). Both will be ridden by leading UK jump jockey Sam Twiston-Davies who rode his 1,000th career winner when **MOLLIANA** won at the last meeting.

The Jersey Race Club Handicap (7:05) looks a wide open affair in which all of the seven runners can be given some sort of chance. **RELAXED BOY** had some decent winning form in France (he won there five times) but was very disappointing in the Jersey Guineas on his Channel Islands debut last month. In the hope he can improve for that first experience of local racing he is taken to beat MASQUERADE BLING, SING SOMETHING and FRUIT SALAD.

At the halfway point of the Channel Islands Racing season amateur rider Freddy Tett leads the Jockeys' Championship by just a single winner from reigning Champion Philip Prince. Fourteen-times Champion

Trainer Aly Malzard has a clear lead already in the race for the Trainers' title. St Ouen-based Mrs Malzard (9 winners) leads UK-based Neil Mullholland (4 wins) by five victories.

JOCKEYS CHAMPIONSHIP

5 wins Freddy Tett

4 wins Philip Prince

3 wins Victoria Malzard

3 wins Serena Brotherton

3 wins Mark Quinlan

TRAINERS CHAMPIONSHIP

9 wins Aly Malzard

4 wins Neil Mulholland (UK)

3 wins Karl Kukk

3 wins David Evans (UK)

SELECTIONS

6:30. 3 MRS BURBIDGE

7:05. 1 RELAXED BOY

7:40. 3 WOLF HUNTER

8:15. 1 MOLLIANA

8:50. 1 WHITE VALIANT