

SALAD LOOKS BEST IN BULLET **SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW**

By Mark Johnson

The fastest horses in the Channel Islands take centre stage on Sunday, at Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen, when the most prestigious sprint of the local racing year - The Millbrook 2019 Jersey Bullet Handicap - is the feature race on the five race card. First race post time at 2.30pm.

Seven sprinters will go to post for this year's renewal of "The Bullet" run over 5½ furlongs, or just 1,100 metres, and it sees an intriguing clash between "the old guard" headed by last year's winner COUNTRY BLUE (seeking his fourth win in the race) and the "new kids on the block" in the shape of 3 year-olds WOLF HUNTER and MAN OF THE SEA.

A fourth victory in the race for veteran 10 year-old COUNTRY BLUE would be a fitting swansong to what has been an incredible career. The Aly Malzard-trained French-bred won once in his native France but it is on Jersey that he has excelled winning ten times over the specialist 5½f trip. Having finished runner-up to MAN OF THE SEA in both his starts so far this season, and now in receipt of a pull in the weights, COUNTRY BLUE must have a great chance of winning again.

MAN OF THE SEA, trained in the UK by Neil Mulholland, has won both the 5½f sprints to have been run this season at Les Landes. The handicapper has raised him a total of 10lbs for those victories which makes things tough for him now.

The other 3 year-old in the line-up WOLF HUNTER, trained by James Moon, makes more appeal. He too has won both his starts in the Channel Islands this year, winning a 7f handicap on Easter Monday before following up in the 1m½f Jersey Guineas last month. He now drops right back down in trip (the son of Sir Prancelot won over 6f at Kempton as a 2-y-o last August) but he is an extremely quick front-runner.

It is just possible that both WOLF HUNTER and COUNTRY BLUE will take each other on for the early lead which may set the race up for a horse coming from just off the pace. That scenario may play into the hands of the Karl Kukk-trained **FRUIT SALAD** who has finished third behind MAN OF THE SEA and COUNTRY BLUE in her brace of starts this

season. She is now significantly better off in the weights.

FRUIT SALAD, who will be ridden on Sunday by Mark Quinlan, finished runner-up in this race twelve months ago and the significant rain that has hit Les Landes racecourse this week - likely to provide the softest ground of the season so far - is another factor in her favour.

Sunday's card is without doubt one of the most open and competitive to be staged on Jersey for many years and the line-up for the second race at 3:05 - The Brady & Gallagher (1999) Handicap over 1m4f - will take some beating all season.

This looks another race which will be run at a strong early tempo with front-runners aplenty in the field including **BARWICK**, **WINKLEVI** and **ISLAND SONG**. A decent case can be made for most of the eleven runners but **WHITE VALIANT** (with Mark Quinlan riding for trainer Tony Le Brocq) may be able to resume winning ways he has scored impressively on his Jersey debut, on Easter Monday, before putting up a couple of decent placed efforts.

Stablemate **BENOORDENHOUT** is also worth noting, running in a first time tongue tie, but the ground may have gone against him. UK-trained raider **MRS BURBIDGE** also makes the shortlist having won three of her four starts on Jersey.

BOWL IMPERIOR tops the weights in the opening The Verte Rue Associates Handicap Hurdle (2:30) over 2m2f but despite having to concede 7lbs plus to all his rivals he has every chance of completing a hat-trick this season. Ridden by leading jockey of the season to date Freddy Tett **BOWL IMPERIOR** has already won a 2m1f Handicap Hurdle and a 1m6f Flat Handicap in 2019. Last year's winner of this race **VERONICA'S NAPKIN** may be the main danger.

Four-time Channel Islands Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor has had a frustrating local season so far (no winners but five runner-up placings from 12 rides) but as well as a good ride on **COUNTRY BLUE** in the "Bullet" he has a good chance of a winner aboard **ICE ROYAL** in the Geoffrey Edwards Memorial Handicap (4:15) where he can reverse Warwick Vase form at the last meeting with **HARD TO HANDEL**.

Leading UK-based jump jockey Sam Twiston-Davies has three rides

booked on the card for trainer Neil Mulholland and they can end the day with a winner courtesy of **MOLLIANA** in the 1m2f Green Valley Handicap (4:50) when KOSHI looks to be her main rival.

RECENT JERSEY BULLET WINNERS

2018	COUNTRY BLUE	Aly Malzard	Mattie Batchelor
2017	SWISS CROSS	Phil McEntee (UK)	Paddy Aspell
2016	COUNTRY BLUE	Aly Malzard	Mattie Batchelor
2015	COUNTRY BLUE	Aly Malzard	Mattie Batchelor
2014	KERSIVAY	Aly Malzard	Craig Walker
2013	KERSIVAY	Aly Malzard	Jemma Marshall
2012	TOGGLE	Angie Corson	Sophie Doyle
2011	NORDIC LIGHT	Aly Malzard	Kylie Manser

SUNDAY'S SELECTIONS

2.30	#1	BOWL IMPERIOR
3.05	#3	WHITE VALIANT
3.40	#5	FRUIT SALAD
4.15	#2	ICE ROYAL
4.40	#5	MOLLIANA