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**JERSEY RACING - JERSEY DERBY MEETING REPORT**

**By Mark Johnson**

**WOLF HUNTER**, trained in St Martin by James Moon and ridden by leading French amateur rider Damien Artu, confirmed himself as the best 3 year-old to have raced in the Channel Islands for many years when winning Sunday’s Millbrook 2019 Jersey Derby.

His dramatic last-to-first success, in the most prestigious race of the Channel Islands racing season, saw him take his record at Les Landes racecourse to five wins from just six starts with all five victories coming over different distances.

In a tactical race, run at a very slow tempo in the first half-mile of the 1½ mile contest, WOLF HUNTER took an extremely keen grip at the rear of the six-strong field as Artu attempted to conserve his stamina - this being his mount’s first try over 1½ miles.

Artu let the handbrake off on the turn into the home straight, “slightly earlier than I had originally planned” he admitted in the post race interview, due to the fact his minute “postage stamp” size racing saddle had slipped due to the keenness of WOLF HUNTER through the race.

Despite the slipping saddle Artu maintained his balance and WOLF HUNTER (sent off the 2/1 second favourite) took the lead a furlong from home to beat even-money favourite WHITE VALIANT two lengths with three-time Jersey Derby winner AUISSIE LYRICS a further 3¼ lengths back in third place.

WOLF HUNTER runs in the colours of David Moon (the trainer’s father) and Caroline Michel. The chestnut gelding, by Sir Prancelot, began his career last year in the UK when trained by Richard Hughes for whom he won once in eight starts as a 2 year-old - over 6 furlongs at Kempton on the all weather last August.

“I bought him at Newmarket last Autumn at the Tattersalls Horse In Training Sale for 10,000 Guineas” explained an obviously delighted David Moon after the race as he proudly held the Jersey Derby Trophy. “I thought then we had bought a sprinter not a potential Derby winner”.

In modern-day racing terms, his bargain purchase has proved to be not only a classy but also an amazingly versatile 3 year-old.

Having won on Easter Monday over 7 furlongs (1,400m) he has since gone on to win over 1m½f (1,700m), 1m1f (1,800m), 1m2f (2,000m) and then this Jersey Derby victory over 1m4f (2,400m).

With five wins this season, WOLF HUNTER is the winning-most horse in the Channel Islands so far in 2019 and he was providing his trainer James Moon with back-to-back wins in the Jersey Derby - Moon having sent out Black Night to win twelve months ago.

The trainer had good news to report of his other stable star who has had to miss this season due to injury, “he thinks he is a stallion now - fully recovered and is in great form. I thought about bringing him back to run him at Deauville this Autumn but now I think we’ll wait for next year”.

Sunday’s big race runner-up WHITE VALIANT, the son of the 2003 winner Minnie’s Mystery, ran a terrific race in defeat, “we were just beaten by a better horse on the day”, confessed his trainer Tony Le Brocq after the race. However there should be plenty more mouth-watering clashes between the winner and runner-up to come in the future.

Another horse to win for the fifth time in 2019 on Sunday’s card was MOLLIANA. However the 4 year-old filly trained by Neil Mulholland started her winning over in the UK, over hurdles in March, at Fakenham.

She recorded her fourth local success when taking the Animal Health Trust Handicap, over 1m1f, by 1¾ lengths from SNEJINSKA.

The win of MOLLIANA was a belated first winner of the Channel Islands season for four-time Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor. It has been a frustrating campaign for the popular rider, who in the last couple of years has become something of internet star through his alter ego Wocket Woy. This victory came on his 28 ride of the season during which he has finished runner-up seven times and third five times. “You can’t loose what you never had”, quipped Batchelor as he weighed-in.

It has also been a frustrating season for St Helier-based trainer Christa Gilbert who was C.I. Champion Trainer in 2017. She too recorded her belated first winner of the campaign when CHAPEAU BLEU (the 10/1 rank outsider of the six-strong field) won the Derby Day Dash Handicap Sprint under Serena Brotherton. This victory came with Gilbert’s 41st runner of the season.

Jockeys’ Championship leader Freddy Tett not only recorded a first-and-last race double on the card he also registered a notable career landmark too. His first race winner BAL AMIE, in the Vardon Conditions Hurdle, was his fiftieth career winner under rules split between the Channel Islands, the UK and France.

Tett completed his double aboard BOWL IMPERIOR in the 2 mile Millais Marathon Handicap by three-quarters-of-a-length from KENOUGHTY. Both Tett’s winners are trained by Aly Malzard.

Next meeting, on Sunday 11th August, is Ladies Day. There will be an extra carrot for punters to try and hit the Pick4 Jackpot at that meeting as it wasn’t hit on Sunday and the carry-over into the Ladies Day pool will be a whopping £1,118.96

With just two meetings (ten races) of the season to go Freddy Tett and Aly Malzard have clear leads in the Jockeys & Trainers Championships.

**Jockeys Championship**

Freddy Tett 9 wins

Sam Twiston-Davies 5

Serena Brotherton 4

Mark Quinlan 4

Philip Prince 4

**Trainers Championship**

Aly Malzard 13 wins

Neil Mulholland (UK) 8

James Moon 6