

## **VALIANT'S DATE WITH DESTINY** **SUNDAY'S JERSEY RACING PREVIEW**

By Mark Johnson

Sunday is Derby Day on Jersey and **WHITE VALIANT**, son of the 2003 Jersey Derby winner Minnie's Mystery, faces his date with destiny.

A big crowd will be expected at Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen for Sunday's five race card (first race at 2:30pm) featuring as it's centre-piece the running of the most prestigious race of the local season - the 1m4f Millbrook 2019 Jersey Derby at 3:40pm.

A classy six-strong field will line-up for this year's renewal of the big race with 6 year-old grey **WHITE VALIANT** (ridden by Mark Quinlan) and 3 year-old **WOLF HUNTER** (under Damien Artu) likely to vie for favouritism. Between them the pair have won seven races already this season at Les Landes.

Originally trained in Newmarket by John Berry - for whom he won twice in "Bumpers" at Huntingdon and Fontwell - **WHITE VALIANT** moved to the yard of St John-based trainer Tony Le Brocq this season.

He immediately made an impact on the local racing scene winning on his local debut, over 1m2f, on Easter Monday and he has won twice again since over the Derby distance of 1m4f.

It is in his genes that **WHITE VALIANT** should be successful in the Channel Islands. By the three-time Arc de Triomphe runner-up Youmzain he is out of the brilliant local race mare Minnie's Mystery whose biggest career win came in the 2003 Jersey Derby when, ridden by Kevin Bradshaw, she beat the great Off Minor by half-a-length.

Since her retirement from racing Minnie's Mystery (who is now 21 years of age and lives on a stud farm in France) has excelled as a successful broodmare with her other offspring including recently retired 15-time Les Landes winner Grey Panel and 9-time Brighton winner Roy Rocket.

Minnie's Mystery was trained by Scotsman Colin McCready who, although now retired from training, still plays a key role with the Jersey Race Club as assistant starter. Both Minnie's Mystery and **WHITE VALIANT** carry the same mauve colours, with black sleeves and cap.

**WOLF HUNTER**, trained in St Martin by James Moon who sent out the currently sided-lined Black Night to win the race twelve months ago, is the obvious main danger.

He too began his racing career over in the UK last year, where he won a 6f Nursery Handicap at Kempton last August for trainer Richard Hughes, before coming to Jersey this season.

The son of Sir Prancelot is the first, and so far only, horse in 2019 to win four local races and those victories have been achieved over four different

distances. He won on Easter Monday over 7f before taking the Jersey Guineas over 1m½f. After his local defeat (in a sprint) he has since won again over 1m1f and most recently over 1m2f.

Sunday will be his first attempt at a mile-and-a-half which, given his keen run style early in his races, might be a concern. However it is tremendous that connections are having a go at the biggest prize of all and it would be no surprise to see him win.

One stat he will have to overcome is the lack of success by 3 year-olds in the Jersey Derby over the years. Granted very few horses of his age ever tackle this race but no horse of that age has won it for decades.

AUSSIE LYRICS bids to make his own piece of Channel Islands racing history in the race. The Christa Gilbert-trained 9 year-old bids to become the first ever four-time Jersey Derby winner at Les Landes (*three horses in total have won the race three times - see below*) but he has only raced once so far this season, finishing fourth to WOLF HUNTER in his comeback over 1m2f, and others may have speedier legs now.

ISLAND SONG, who is owned by the race sponsor Geoff Somers and will be ridden by leading jockey of the season Freddy Tett, attempts to become only the third winning mare this century after Minnie's Mystery in 2003 and Danehill Dazzler in 2009. She represents 14-time C.I. Champion Trainer Aly Malzard who is seeking her sixth win in the race.

Mrs Malzard will also be represented by 11 year-old BARWICK who has finished runner-up in the last two renewals of the C.I. Champion Hurdle but was only eighth in this race last year. The field is completed by the appropriately named Karl Kukk-trained 3 year-old ST OUEN.

The official handicapper has **WHITE VALIANT** just a pound superior to WOLF HUNTER on ratings. Therefore a tight finish could again be on the cards (both the last two renewals have been won by the minimum margin - a nose) but the possible stronger stamina of **WHITE VALIANT** may be the key to success.

## **Jersey Derby Trivia -**

### **THREE-TIME JERSEY DERBY WINNERS**

In the last 50 years

2015, 2016, 2017 AUSSIE LYRICS (Christa Gilbert)

1983, 1984, 1985 WHITWORTH (Jeremy Hollowell, Guernsey)

1970, 1972, 1974 IT'S A JINX (Stephen Arthur)

### **Top Trainers**

Two trainers involved in this year's race, Christa Gilbert & Aly Malzard, have five wins in the Jersey Derby.

Christa Gilbert has won it with Aussie Lyrics (2017, '16 & '15) and Major Maximus (2013 & '12)

Aly Malzard has won it with Rossetti (2014), Koka Fast (2010), The West's Awake (2008) & Crossways (2006 & '04)

### Brace for Batch

Four-time Channel Islands Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor (aboard Aussie Lyrics on Sunday) has ridden the winner of the Jersey Derby twice on Aussie Lyrics (2016) & Koka Fast 2010.

### Mares are rare

Only two mares have won the Jersey Derby this century - Minnie's Mystery (the dam of White Valiant) in 2003 & Danehill Dazzler in 2009. Island Song, who runs in the blue & white colours of race sponsor Geoff Somers, bids to become the third.

### **The Jersey Derby Field (including Jockeys & Morning Line odds) & form line**

1. AUSSIE LYRICS (Mattie Batchelor, 7/2)

Three-times winner of this race but only fifth in last year's renewal

2. BARWICK (Victoria Malzard, 5/1)

Veteran 11 year-old, runner-up in the C.I. Champion Hurdle last time out

3. WHITE VALIANT (Mark Quinlan, 7/4 Fav)

Son of the 2003 winner, three wins already in his first season on Jersey

4. ISLAND SONG (Freddy Tett, 4/1)

Owned by the race sponsor, bids to be the first winning mare since 2009

5. ST OUVEN (tba, 16/1)

Only a 3 year-old whose sole success came over 7f at Brighton last year

6. WOLF HUNTER (Damien Artu, 2/1)

A 3 year-old four-time winner this year over different, shorter, trips

### **The Rest of Sunday's Card**

Although overall field sizes are a little smaller than for many of the earlier meetings this season at Les Landes the racing on Sunday looks really competitive right through the card.

The opening Vardon Conditions Hurdle over 2m1f sees **VERONICA'S NAPKIN** and **BAL AMIE** (third & fourth respectively in the Channel Islands Champion Hurdle earlier in the month behind Mrs Burbidge) both drop in grade and lock horns again. There was 3¾ lengths between them in the Champion Hurdle so the James Moon-trained **VERONICA'S**

**NAPKIN** can once again confirm that form. **FOURNI** is another danger.

The Derby Day Dash Handicap (3:05) sees UK-trained **MAN OF THE SEA** bid for his fourth course & distance win of the season. At the last meeting Neil Mulholland's 7 year-old sprinter held on by a fast diminishing three-quarters-of-a-length from **RELAXED BOY** but with a 2lbs pull in the weights the latter can now come out on top.

The Animal Health Trust Handicap over 1m1f (4:15) is always a very competitive race on the Derby Day under-card and it is no exception this year. **ICE ROYAL** is now 0 for 12 since coming to Jersey but this looks the ideal opportunity for him to finally break his duck locally after some good runs in defeat. Bang in-form mare **MOLLIANA** is the one to beat.

Don't leave before the last race - the first 2 mile flat race to be run at Les Landes for several years - it promises to be an intriguing match-up between champion local stayer **BOWL IMPERIOR** and up-and-coming 3 year-old stayer **KENOUGHTY**. With **BENOORDENOUT** (placed in the last two Jersey Derbys) and the mare **SAFIRA MENINA** (third in last year's Jersey Derby) also in the mix it looks an exciting end to the day.

Selections:

2.30	4	<b>VERONICA'S NAPKIN</b>
3.05	1	<b>RELAXED BOY</b>
3.40	3	<b>WHITE VALIANT</b>
4.15	1	<b>ICE ROYAL</b>
4.50	3	<b>BOWL IMPERIOR</b>