**DON’T MESS WITH MOLLIANA**

**JERSEY RACING - LADIES DAY REPORT**

**By Mark Johnson**

Anyone in the huge crowd at Les Landes on Sunday, for the Jersey Race Club’s annual Ladies Day, who thought the inaugural running of the Ravenscroft Jersey Oaks - restricted to fillies and mares with the seven runners sporting eye-catching pink saddle cloths - would be a refined and elegant affair were in for a shock.

The race produced a frenetic seemingly “no holds barred” finish in which **MOLLIANA**, ridden by Serena Brotheron, beat SAFIRA MENINA just a short-head before having to survive an objection by Freddy Tett, rider of the runner-up, and a subsequent stewards enquiry.

Quite rightly, the stewards allowed the result to stand, as the winner had more intimidated the runner-up rather than hamper her close home.

**MOLLIANA**, trained in the UK by Neil Mulholland, has earned herself a reputation in Jersey this year as a “roll her sleeves up street fighter” and once again on Sunday she showed the tenacity which has netted her six wins in 2019 - once over hurdles in the UK and then five races on Jersey.

Edgier than usual in the parade ring before the race, where she was rearing and kicking out with both hind legs scattering other connections and officials, **MOLLIANA** looked in the mood of a championship fighter ahead of the race and was duly backed down to 11/10 Favourite.

Entering the final furlong, of the mile-and-a-quarter Oaks, there was very little between SAFIRA MENINA on the inside rail and **MOLLIANA** to her outside. They raced locked together towards the line but the critical point appeared to come abut 100 yards from the line when **MOLLIANA** turned her head to her rival and quite clearly showed her teeth. The move wasn’t at all ladylike but it was effective.

“She has just kept surprising us all season”, confessed winning owner Mike Burbidge after the race. Burbidge, a huge supporter of racing in Jersey, continued, “We thought she’d be the ideal sort of horse to do well here, having won over hurdles at Fakenham, but you never know until you bring them here for the first time. She has a tremendous will to win”.

Trainer Neil Mulholland, who was Channel Islands Champion Trainer in 2014, moved on to the ten winner-mark for the Channel Islands season (three behind Championship leader Aly Malzard with just one day of the campaign remaining) by saddling a double on the card.

He initiated the double with Jersey debutant **MAGICAL THOMAS** in the opening Ladbrokes Where The Nation Plays Handicap Hurdle. Sent off the 2/5 Favourite **MAGICAL THOMAS** pulled 8 lengths clear from 14/1 rank-outsider FRIVOLOUS PRINCE to provide his young rider Harry Reed with a first winner in Jersey.

Up until now it has been a very frustrating season for 2017 Champion Trainer Christa Gilbert. She went into Sunday’s fixture with stats of just one winner from 44 runners in 2019. Everything finally clicked into place on Ladies Day with her yard bagging a treble, and two second places, from just eight runners on the card.

**SING SOMETHING**, under George Rook, beat stable companion CHAPEAU BLEU 3 lengths in the Ladbrokes Bet Station Handicap over 7f. The winner was sent off a 5/1 chance but odds-on favourite WOLF HUNTER ran a lackluster race - the Jersey Derby winner possibly feeling the effects of a long yet fruitful campaign.

**BROWN VELVET**, also ridden by George Rook who is apprenticed to trainer (and former UK Champion Jockey) Richard Hughes, was Christa Gilbert’s second winner of the afternoon in the 1m½f Ladbrokes Ladies Day Handicap. Another relatively big priced winner, at 6/1, **BROWN VELVET** came home 1½ lengths ahead of MENDACIOUS HARPY who also finished runner-up in this corresponding race last year.

Popular grey **AUSSIE LYRICS**, the star of the Gilbert yard, recorded his first win of the year (but his thirteenth career win in total, of which 9 have now come at Les Landes including 3 Jersey Derbys) in the concluding Ladbrokes Best Odds Guaranteed Handicap over 1m4f.

Ridden by Mattie Batchelor, **AUSSIE LYRICS** (the 2/1 second favourite) beat HARD TO HANDEL a length.

There had been a carry-over of £1,118.96 in the Pick4 Jackpot pool ahead of racing on Sunday. With winners priced at 5/1 and 6/1 included in the 4 race sequence there were only 2 winning tickets at the end. Each lucky punter took home £1,835.30 for the £1 line stake.

The final meeting of the season at Les Landes, is on Bank Holiday Monday, 26th August - first race 2.30pm.

2019 Channel Islands Trainers Championship (with five races remaining)

Aly Malzard 13 winners

Neil Mulholland (UK) 10

James Moon 6

Christa Gilbert 4