

MOLLIANA – IS MUCH THE BEST

By Mark Johnson

MOLLIANA, trained in the UK by Neil Mulholland, capped a tremendous 2019 campaign by securing the accolade Channel Islands' "Horse of the Year" when winning the Oakbridge Clarendon Handicap, at Les Landes Racecourse in St Ouen, yesterday.

The four-year-old filly came home 2 ¼ lengths in front of Island Song in the most prestigious handicap of the Channel Islands' racing season – the centre-piece of the Jersey Race Club's final meeting of the season. Ridden to victory by Brendan Powell, **MOLLIANA** was sent off the 13/8 favourite in front of a large Bank Holiday crowd of around 3,000 racegoers.

In a mile and a half race run at a strong pace throughout, set in the early stages by the outsider **GABSTER**, **MOLLIANA** always traveled well, stalking the pace, in fourth position in the high-quality six runner field. Emerging out of the dip, with about three furlongs to run, **MOLLIANA** smoothly made headway to challenge **ISLAND SONG** and **AUSSIE LYRICS** (the 2015 winner, and second-favourite for this renewal), eventually leading just outside the final furlong.

Before March of this year **MOLLIANA** had not won a race, but she has become a winning machine in the last six-months, first winning a hurdle race at Fakenham and now having won six-times at Les Landes this year during which time she been raised 22lbs by the handicapper before he even takes this victory into account.

The battling, tenacious attitude of **MOLLIANA** has been clear to see all season, but was most evident in a short-head victory in the inaugural Jersey Oaks, at the previous meeting, when she clearly turned her head and showed her teeth at her nearest rival **SAFIRA MENINA**. Yesterday she didn't have to be at her "street-fighter" best to secure her sixth local victory of the year – making her the winning-most horse in the Channel Islands in 2019.

The final day of the Channel Islands racing season was dominated by trainer Neil Mulholland and rider Brendan Powell as they swept a treble in the first three races with **MAGICAL THOMAS** in the longest race of the year – the 2 ½ mile handicap hurdle – and **MAN OF THE SEA** (winning his fourth race of the year at Les Landes) in the 5 ½ furlong sprint handicap. Despite his treble it was not enough for Neil Mulholland to take his second trainer's championship as he only tied on 13 winners for the season with St Ouen-based Aly Malzard and lost out on 2nd and 3rd place count back. Mrs Malzard, who stable is right next to the track, was winning her modern-day record 15th Channel Islands Trainers Championship.

Amateur rider Freddy Tett won his first Channel Islands Jockeys Championship with nine winners during the season, three ahead of Serena Brotherton.