

## **AUSSIE CAN WIN CLARENDON TEST AGAIN**

### Monday's Jersey Horse Racing Preview

By Mark Johnson

The 2019 Channel Islands horse racing season comes to a close on Bank Holiday Monday when Les Landes Racecourse, in St Ouen, stages its final meeting of the year. The five race card, which gets underway at 2:30, features the most prestigious handicap of the local racing year – The Oakbridge Clarendon Handicap.

The 1m4f (2,400m) Clarendon Handicap (race three on the card at 3:40) has attracted a select field of six who between them have already won 12 races in 2019.

Statistics say The Clarendon is a very difficult race for a horse to win twice – hardly surprising as it is the classiest 1m4f handicap of the year – and the last horse to win two Clarendons was the great Off Minor in 2003 & 2006.

**AUSSIE LYRICS**, trained in St Helier by Christa Gilbert, can emulate that feat by winning his second Clarendon having first lifted the prize in 2015. The three-time Jersey Derby winner has gone up 2lbs in the weights for his length defeat of **HARD TO HANDEL** over course & distance on Ladies Day. That victory, under Monday's big race rider Mattie Batchelor, was the thirteenth win of 9 year-old grey **AUSSIE LYRICS**' career with ten of those victories coming over Les Landes' 1m4f distance.

Four-time Channel Islands Champion Jockey Mattie Batchelor bids to become the first rider this century to win the Clarendon on four occasions. Following wins in 2009 and 2012 he recorded his third success in the race twelve months ago aboard Winklevi who ironically beat **AUSSIE LYRICS** into second.

Being a handicap – an independent assessor gives each runner a different weight based on its recent form in theory to give each horse an equal chance of success – **AUSSIE LYRICS** will have to be at his very best to win again. He is the class act but that also means top-weight and he must concede at least 5lbs all of his rivals.

Main dangers to **AUSSIE LYRICS** may be lurking at the bottom of the weights in the shape of **MOLLIANA & KENOUGHTY**.

The UK-trained mare **MOLLIANA** (UK trainers have won the race twice this century including her trainer Neil Mulholland in 2014 with Midnight Sequel) bids for her seventh win of 2019 and her sixth on Jersey. Her official rating has gone up 22lbs since she won here in mid-May and she only scrapped home by a short-head in the Jersey Oaks on Ladies Day. She however still receives 22lbs from the top weight in this handicap.

3 year-olds had a poor record in the Clarendon until Winklevi won the race twelve months ago so the improving **KENOUGHTY** enters calculations as he attempts to give trainer James Moon his third Clarendon in four years. **KENOUGHTY**, who won over 1m6f on Derby Day, receives a whooping 30lbs from **AUSSIE LYRICS**.

Trainer Aly Malzard seeks her fourth Clarendon win with a brace of representatives – **ISLAND SONG** and **HARD TO HANDEL** – while Karl Kukk is represented by **GABSTER** who has won both on the flat and over hurdles so far in 2019.

The final meeting of the season opens with the longest race of the year in the Channel Islands – the 2½ mile Lady Brenda Cook Memorial Handicap Hurdle. **MAGICAL THOMAS**, trained by Neil Mulholland, made an impressive debut on Jersey when winning over 2m1f on Ladies Day, beating FRIVOLOUS PRINCE 8 lengths.

Although the runner-up now gets a significant 13lbs pull in the weights he doesn't seem as likely to be as effective over this marathon trip as **MAGICAL THOMAS** who was staying on strongly at the end of that race three weeks ago.

Dual Jersey winner this season BAL AMIE has winning 2m4f form over fences in France and his proven stamina definitely brings him into the equation today. FOURNI has twice finished runner-up over 2m4f here at Les Landes & will be staying on at the finish.

The Sue & Nigel Pritchard Handicap Sprint (3:05) is a really competitive sprint handicap featuring the winners of all five of the previous 5½f races run at Les Landes so far this season. The Aly Malzard-trained **RELAXED BOY** has finished runner-up in a couple of those races (as well as winning over 7f) and is now 5lbs better off at the weights with CHAPEAU BLEU than when that rival beat him 1¼ lengths in the Derby Day Dash last month

Three-time winner here this season MAN OF THE SEA didn't fire at all in the Derby Day Dash but that was his sixth run in the space of 2½ months and he has now been given a month break. He could easily bounce back. "Jersey Bullet" winner FRUIT SALAD was runner-up in this race last year, and is another for the short list, while this is likely to be the swansong for ten-time Les Landes sprint winner COUNTRY BLUE before his retirement.

One of the most popular races of the season with local race fans is Hunscombe Stud "The Glory Bee" Handicap (4:15) over 1m2f. "The Glory Bee" gives horses who haven't won so far during the year one last chance to get their head in front before the winter break.

This represents a significant drop in grade for **SAFIRA MENINA** who is on a very long losing run (26 races) but who thoroughly deserves to win a race given some of the excellent performances she has registered this season including when beaten just a short-head by Molliana in the Jersey Oaks on Ladies Day. Despite top weight she may be able to boss this field.

At the other end of the weights – officially rated 27lbs lower – is perennial bridesmaid MENDACIOUS HARPY who could easily fill second place again today. Of the possibly bigger priced runners, longstanding maiden WILLIAM BOOTH has caught the eye a couple of times this season and may be open to further improvement.

The fiftieth, and final, race of the Channel Islands season is the Bloodstock Advisory Services Handicap Mile (4:50). Three-times already this season **HONCHO** and Victoria Malzard have whizzed off in front over this 1m½f distance and haven't been caught. It could happen again – this arguably isn't as strong a race as the one the combo won here in June & **HONCHO** is now only rated 4lbs higher than when winning that race. BROWN VELVET bounced back to form on Ladies Day, winning over this trip, and should be expected to run well again.

After the final race, presentations will be made in the winners' enclosure to the Champions of the 2019 Channel Islands racing season. With five races to go the jockey trainer standings are –

Jockeys

Freddy Tett

9 wins

Serena Brotherton 5  
Sam Twiston-Davies 5

Trainers

Aly Malzard 13 wins  
Neil Mulholland 10  
James Moon 6

SELECTIONS

2:30 1 MAGICAL THOMAS  
3:05 1 RELAXED BOY  
3:40 1 AUSSIE LYRICS  
4:15 1 SAFIRA MENINA  
4:50 2 HONCHO