

Review – 25 June 2021 evening meeting

Bobsbest

I don't think Harry Reed would jib at being described as a journeyman jockey. A light weight for a jump jockey - he can do well under 10 stones – he gets few opportunities to ride the top horses and this season he had managed just four wins from 42 rides. Until last Friday. At CoinShares Racecourse at Les Landes' first meeting since August 2019 Harry rode the winners of four of the five races and came close to a clean sweep. In doubling his score for the season, he recorded his first ever treble and then his first four timer.

The one that got away was the evening fixture's main event, The Quilter Cheviot Warwick Vase and there was an interesting story behind that winner, Contingency Fee, ably ridden by Grace McEntee and trained by her father. Grace had her very first race ride in Jersey a couple of years ago since when she has made her mark as an up-and-coming apprentice with 39 winners to her credit. This was her first success in Jersey, but it's a course her dad, Newmarket handler Phil McEntee, knows well. Starting out in racing he had worked for then champion local trainer Stephen Arthur in St Mary and Grace grew up with stories of how dad had fallen off a fancied runner on the far side of the Les Landes track.

Grace had to be strong at the finish to resist a persistent challenge by Harry Reed on Princess T and it was the only reverse suffered by trainer Neil Mulholland who provided all four Reed winners.

As expected, they won the opening Koka Fast Hurdle with odds-on favourite Molliana who was six lengths too good for Bal Amie with Bowl Imperior third. The ThatcherMackenzie Handicap provided the second Mulholland/Reed winner when Man of the Sea wore down Ice Royal in the final furlong with Sing Something third; Chapeau Bleu, well outpaced early, made late ground and only just failed to snatch third, going into the notebook as a future winner.

Master Burbidge is a hurdler and running over a mile and a half on the flat in The Jersey Bookmakers Handicap he had to make stamina count. Harry Reed timed it to perfection making all the running to hold off the best of the local runners, Safira Menina with Gabster third.

The programme was completed by The UBS Handicap. By the 8.50 start time the sun had made an appearance and it shone on the only 3-year-old runner, Nina's Field. N Over J, ridden by Serena Brotherton set out to make it a test and had most of the field in trouble a long way from home, but the dynamic duo of Neil Mulholland and Harry Reed prevailed again with Nina's Field who got up close home to deny Christa Gilbert of training her first winner of the season. Mendacious Harpy, now a 10-year-old, but kept young by Alyson Malzard, was third.

It should be pointed out that all four of the Mulholland and Reed winners were provided by owner Mike Burbidge whose yellow and green colours have been regularly seen at Les Landes. Neil Mulholland has had cause to feel less than welcome on occasions with one or two local owners and trainers resenting his

raiders taking away the prize money. However, as Mike Burbidge pointed out, it's not as though he was bringing expensive, top class horses to compete; indeed, Nina's Field had cost just £800 as a yearling and multiple winner Molliana was almost as big a bargain at £1100. Mulholland has brought top class jockeys to Jersey including champion Brian Hughes, Noel Fehily, Sam Twiston-Davies and Tom Scudamore and was instrumental in Sir Anthony (AP) McCoy making a personal appearance here. It all adds to the richness of the local sport.

On this occasion, it was clear that locally trained horses were disadvantaged by not having had the opportunity to race for nearly two years, whilst the UK raiders were match fit. Overall Jersey racing would be much poorer without Neil Mulholland, Phil McEntee and others coming to race here. Increased competition raises the bar and should be welcomed.

For all this was a successful meeting with a predictably large crowd, it opened on a sad note as racegoers were asked to observe a minute's silence in memory of former Guernsey Race Club President and staunch supporter of Channel Islands racing Jim Jamouneau, who died recently.

The next fixture, which features the Jersey Guineas, will be another Friday evening meeting, in a fortnight's time on 9th July. By then, local horses will strip fitter and the raiders may not have it all their own way.