

## Season Opener at Les Landes

By Bobsbest – Racing Correspondent for the Jersey Evening Post

The met man did his stuff and fine weather together with a really good programme of racing drew a bumper crowd to The CoinShares Racecourse at Les Landes on Monday. Queues were the order of the day at the tote, the bookies and the beer tent, all of which did brisk business. If such an attendance could be replicated throughout the season The Race Club would have few financial concerns and would perhaps have the resources to modernise the tote, which at time struggled to cope with the volume of business. In times past local racing would attract two or three bookies from the UK and an extra couple of pitches would have helped to minimise the long waits to have a flutter. For at least two of the races some punters were disappointed when the race began before they could place a bet. These issues however are symptoms of Jersey's most popular spectator sport attracting bigger attendances.

The principal race was the MySugarWatch Spring Cup in which ten runners faced the barrier at the 7 furlongs start. It should have been eleven, but Joe the Beau, late into the ring and misbehaving, was withdrawn. This part of the course never provides the easiest of starts, being downhill and close to the horseboxes, but apart from Cool Dandy, which was very slowly away, the rest broke reasonably well with Relaxed Boy quickly at the head of affairs. That is where he stayed, making all the running under Fred Tett to hold off Evening Song and Zuhair. Relaxed Boy was demonstrating how one has to be patient with racehorses; he's 9 years old and had previously only one win at Les Landes and after some modest performances last season he had plummeted in the weights and was well supported in the market to give Alyson Malzard her first winner of the season. The main eyecatcher though was Zuhair, a classy newcomer now with Karl Kukk. His third under top weight was the perfect sighter for the Jersey Guineas at the next meeting. Lower down the weights, Deverell was noted running a personal best and he can be placed to win a handicap.

The meeting started much as last year's opening fixture with a raider from Neil Mulholland's yard winning the opening Koka Fast Hurdle. No Worries with Mark Quinlan aboard didn't jump particularly well, but had far too many guns in the last quarter mile for the consistent Bal Amie. The winner looked outstanding in the parade ring and was backed as though defeat was the remotest of possibilities. There to present the prizes was Joan Lowery whose alter ego, 'Mrs Koka Fast' sponsored the race.

The second race, The Bookmakers' Handicap, also fell to Mulholland and Mike Burbidge's Company, Dajam Limited, in the shape of their runner

Nina's Field. She had won early last season before seeming to lose her way, but she had to be brave and Mark Quinlan had to be strong to hold a determined late challenge from the veteran Mendacious Harpy galvanised in the last furlong by Elisha Whittington. The race was delayed because N Over J unshipped Serena Brotherton as they came onto the racecourse and the gelding galloped a full circuit before being caught. None the worse for the adventure he was allowed to race, but not surprisingly had little left to give at the business end of the contest.

The Mulholland/Dajam team were two handed in the La Verte Rue Handicap with Man of the Sea and the ten times course winner Molliana. The former's winning form in Jersey has been at shorter trips and he set off at a decent pace under mark Quinlan and kept going, but late on he was passed by the heavily backed Molliana only for Island Song and Fred Tett to conjure a powerful late run which caught the favourite in the shadow of the winning post. So, doubles for Neil Mulholland and Alyson Malzard who will be vying for the champion trainers' title again this season. In an unusual incident Rubeus came down at the bend into the home straight and for a while his jockey Victoria Malzard lay prone and it was a relief to see her get to her feet when attended by paramedics who were quickly on the scene. Rubeus galloped away apparently unscathed.

The President's Easter Handicap brought the curtain down on a good afternoon's racing with the grey Ormskirk giving his Grand National winning jockey Ryan Mania a first success at Les Landes. Karl Kuk's versatile stayer and reigning champion hurdler defied top weight staying on just strongly enough to resist Kenoughty's late challenge.

With well backed horses winning three of the four races in the jackpot, perhaps it's surprising that no punter managed to get past the third leg, but that means a carryover of more than £785 to the next meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> May.