



Louise wears clothes supplied by *Bernard Boutique*, Esher. Hats by *Gina Foster*. Pictures by *Graham Flack*



Luck be a lady

Coral Eclipse Day is the jewel in *Sandown Park's* racing crown. But it's footballer's wife Louise Owen who will be dazzling the crowds this year



What does a day at the races mean for you? Pulsating action on the track? The thrill of placing a bet and walking away with big bucks?

Perhaps. But for ladies, it's also about the action in the paddocks, the marquees and the stands. In short, the fashion. And when it comes to the style stakes, *The Coral Eclipse Meeting* at *Sandown Park* (Jul 3-4) is rarely short of a thoroughbred or two.

This year, as usual, the meeting boasts one of the best flat racing cards of the season. The principle race, the *Group 1 Coral Eclipse* itself – worth an impressive £500,000 to the winner – is one of the oldest in Britain, dating back to 1886.

And it's lovely Louise Owen – whose husband Michael, England's seemingly forgotten striker, is himself no slouch over the turf – who is the official face of the meeting this year.

A keen racegoer, Louise fell in love with all things equestrian at an early age, and she was just 14 when she became the owner of her first pony, *Rolo*. But in 2004, she was thrown from a horse whilst riding at the North Wales home that she shares with Michael and their three young children. In the horrific fall, she broke her back in two places and her hip and pelvis in five, as her steed *Isobelle* – a Belgian Warmblood – fell on top of her.

Fearing that she may never walk again – let alone ride – Louise endured a long and anxious stay in hospital. Incredibly, however, she made a full recovery and has since returned to the saddle.

Even so, the incident gave her pause for thought. Feeling lucky to be alive, and seeking a practical outlet for her gratitude, Louise became patron of Lancashire charity the *Thoroughbred Rehabilitation Centre*, dedicated to the restoration, retraining and rehoming of ex-racehorses.

At *Sandown*, as female racegoers flaunt their fashions on *Coral Eclipse Day* (Jul 4) – which doubles up as the glamorous *Ladies Day* – Louise will judge the *Best Dressed Ladies* competition, while the popular *Style Stable* offers manicures, massages and complimentary make-up retouches.

What more could one desire? Attending *Coral Eclipse Day* is just about the safest bet of the year.

■ *Coral Eclipse Day (and Ladies Day)* is at *Sandown Park, Esher* on Jul 4. First race 2.05pm, *Coral Eclipse* 3.20pm. Tickets start at £24 for Grandstand, £37 for Premier. Tel: (01372) 470047 or visit: www.sandown.co.uk

Reader offer: *The Kingston and Elmbridge Lifestyle Magazines* have two pairs of Grandstand tickets to give away for *Coral Eclipse Day* (Jul 4). To enter send all contact details to *Coral Eclipse Day Offer*, Sheengate Publishing, Unit A4, Kingsway Business Park, Oldfield Road, Hampton, Middx TW12 2HD. Alternatively, you can enter online at www.elmbridgemagazine.co.uk (go to 'competitions'). Closing date: Jun 30