

Meydan Preview: Carnival Worthy Turf Handicap Undoubted Saturday Highlight at Meydan

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Racing at Meydan on Saturday, sponsored by Pillar Partner Longines, is undoubtedly highlighted by a crackerjack 1800m turf handicap which would be well worth Dubai World Cup Carnival status, such is the quality of the field.

In fact, of the 16 likely runners, all bar three actually have the magic qualification official rating of 90, with the weights headed by a pair of Doug Watson contenders who own a lofty mark of 98.

Of these, **Mount Pelion** appeared unlucky when a close fourth in a 1600m carnival turf handicap, won by Godolphin's Bedouin's Story and also contested by stablemate **Mystique Moon**, just behind him in sixth.

Watson also saddles **Gabr**, one of four in the race set to carry the world famous blue and white silks of Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, but seemingly overlooked by the owner's retained jockeys.

Watson said: "Mystique Moon and Mount Pelion both ran very well in a competitive carnival handicap over 1600m, staying on well, so hopefully the extra 200m is in their favour.

“Gabr is working well, as are the other pair, and this looks a good opportunity to get him back on turf, but it looks a very good race with plenty of strength in depth.”

Sheikh Hamdan’s first jockey, Jim Crowley, has opted to partner **Al Salt** for Erwan Charpy and denied close home in a 1600m turf handicap a fortnight ago won by Mystery Land.

Dane O’Neill, also retained by the owner, is aboard **Moqtarreb**, trained by Ali Rashid Al Rayhi as is Sheikh Hamdan’s fourth contender, **Hakeem**.

In the capable hands of Helal Alalawi, the aforementioned **Mystery Land**, was actually making his turf debut in that race a fortnight ago, powering home under Pat Cosgrave, again in the saddle, over the final 300m in a manner suggesting the extra 200m on Saturday will be in his favour.

Alalawi said: “We had been keen to try him on turf and he was quite impressive under a great, confident, ride, from Pat Cosgrave who really gets on well with him.

“We expect the longer distance to suit, but it really does look a hot race.”

Adding further to allure the field is a Godolphin trio, all to be saddled by Charlie Appleby with stable jockey, William Buick, partnering **Al Maysan**, sixth in the Listed 2000m turf Zabeel Handicap a fortnight ago at the carnival.

Appleby's other pair, **Eastern World** and **Path Of Thunder**, the mounts of Royston Ffrench and Richard Mullen respectively, are both making their seasonal returns.

Well beaten in the aforementioned carnival 1600m turf handicap won by Bedouin's Story, **Mailshot** was previously fourth over this 1800m course and distance, staying on late. In the saddle on both occasions, Mickael Barzalona is again and the pair did land a 1600m 'Saturday turf handicap' in March 2018 for Salem bin Ghadayer.

The UAE bow of **Prompting** has been eagerly anticipated by many, but delayed after he was only a reserve in a 1600m turf handicap at the carnival in the last week of January. A 5-year-old Bated Breath gelding, he won four of nine starts in Britain, most recently three from four for David O'Meara. Those victories included a prestigious 1600m Glorious Goodwood handicap before he was far from disgraced in a virtually identical race at the York Ebor meeting.

The mount of Adrie de Vries, he has since joined Fawzi Nass who explained: "Obviously he was purchased with the carnival in mind, but we have not managed to get a run, so this looks a good opportunity.

"We have not given up on the 2021 carnival with him, so hopefully, he can run well here and advertise his claims."

The best of the action on the dirt track is a 1200m handicap, in which the weights are headed by **Dark Silver**, to be ridden by Fernando Jara for Ahmad bin Harmash and Mohd Khalifa Al

Basti. A 1200m Jebel Ali success on his dirt and local debut remains his only career victory to date, but he performed consistently in three defeats since, including his one Meydan appearance, over this 1200m, three starts ago, when a close second.

For Nass and De Vries, **Madkhal** looks a big danger as does the generally consistent **Dahawi**, Antonio Fresu aboard for Musabbah Al Mheiri.

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