

## **DRAFTED, GLADIATOR KING TOP G3 DUBAWI; G1 WINNER SUEDOIS THE CLASS OF MEYDAN CHALLENGE; PABLO ESCOBARR CLASHES WITH GODOLPHIN QUINTET IN DRC CLASSIC**

**DUBAI (January 1, 2020)**—The 2020 Dubai World Cup Carnival commences Thursday with a flourish of top-class horses from around the globe. A total of \$960,000 in prize money will be up for grabs and Dubai World Cup implications will be aplenty, including the featured the Dubawi Stakes (G3) for Dubai Golden Shaheen sponsored by Gulf News (G1) aspirants. A pair of Listed turf affairs, the Meydan Challenge over 1400m and Dubai Racing Club Classic over 2410m, have attracted serious European interest, while the 3-year-old fillies will audition for the classics in the 1400m UAE 1000 Guineas Trial. A pair of salty handicaps complete the sextet—over 1900m on dirt and down the turf chute going 1000m—creating what will surely be an enthralling card. The evening is sponsored by pillar partner Emirates NBD and kicks off at 6:30 p.m.

### **GROUP 3 \$200,000 DUBAWI STAKES (1200m)**

This looks a strong renewal of the Dubawi Stakes, a race first contested in 2010 and in which Satish Seemar has a fantastic record, having saddled half of the previous nine winners (including the Reynalduthewizard, who landed four). The master of Zabeel Stables also took the prize last year with Raven's Corner and has two chances this time: homegrown talent **Lavaspin** and new recruit **Gladiator King**. Both must take on the king of UAE sprinters from last season, **Drafted**, as he makes his belated seasonal bow.

A 6-year-old gelded son of Hard Spun, Lavaspin has only ever raced in the UAE with just eight career starts on his resume, half of them victorious. The three most recent victories were in handicaps over this 1200m dirt course and distance. Only once has he tipped his hoof into Stakes company when a bitterly disappointing last of ten in Super Saturday's Mahab Al Shimaal (G3) astern Drafted. Gladiator King, the mount of Mickael Barzalona, is having his first start in the colours of Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi. He was previously in the care of USA conditioner Jaime Mejia, for whom he won five times, highlighted by the Hutcheson Stakes (G3) over 1400m last March.

"We are really looking forward to running them both," Seemar said. "Gladiator King arrived at a good time in the summer, has acclimatised well and settled into our routine. Lavaspin is a horse we have always really liked, but has not always been straightforward to train. We think he is worthy of his place in this company and hope he can prove it on Thursday."

Also doubly represented is the UAE season's leading handler thus far, Doug Watson, who saddles both Drafted and **Waady**. The latter is one of nine runners owned by HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum in action Thursday evening. Red Stables rider Pat Dobbs will be aboard Drafted, second in this last year, a late-running type who has won half of his ten starts for current connections, including the aforementioned 2019 Mahaab Al Shimaal and Al Shindagha Sprint (G3). Waady, to be ridden by Dane O'Neill, was an explosive sprinter in Britain for John Gosden, but not an instant hit in the UAE. However, he seems to be back on song as he displayed with a comfortable handicap victory over this 1200m before chasing home the same owner's **Ibn Malik** in the Garhoud Sprint (Listed) last month.

"Drafted is amazing in that he really powers home in these sprint races on the Meydan dirt, which so few horses do," Watson said. "We decided to wait for this to get him started. Waady is very fast and goes there in good form. I hope both can run big races."

Jim Crowley, first rider for Sheikh Hamdan, has opted to partner Ibn Malik in the Shadwell blue and white, seeking to give the son of Speightstown back-to-back wins after his dominant Garhoud glory on

Dec. 6.

France will be represented by **Tour to Paris**, a fascinating 11-time winner from 15 starts from the yard of Pia Brandt who began his career a perfect 8-for-8 in Hungary. A multi-surface specialist, he will be tested against quality dirt sprinters in his Dubai debut for a conditioner who won last season's UAE 1000 Guineas (Listed) with Silva.

Mahab Al Shimaal runner-up **Nine Below Zero**, UAE 2000 Guineas Trial victor **Walking Thunder** and G2-placed **Neverland Rock** complete the line-up.

#### **LISTED \$175,000 MEYDAN CHALLENGE (1400mT)**

The Meydan Challenge sponsored by Emirates NBD Asset Management, formerly a standard handicap, has attracted a competitive field of 11 headed by international warrior **Suedois**. Trained by David O'Meara for George Turner & Clipper Logistics, the dark bay charge counts the 2017 Shadwell Turf Mile Stakes (G1) at Keeneland among his five career victories. He returns to his preferred trip of 1400m in this spot and has been eye-catching during morning track work.

O'Meara said: "He likes seven furlongs to a mile. This is the obvious start point and then we will look at those good handicaps for him. Later on, we'll look at a race like the Group 2 Zabeel Mile. He'll likely have three races between January and February. He will be ready. He's an older horse and I wanted to keep him going through the winter. He fits well into the races in Dubai."

Chief opposition includes Fawzi Nass-trained Listed winner **Legendary Lunch**, making his seasonal debut, G2 winner **Championship** and promising Saeed bin Suroor trainee **Dubai Legacy**, a last-out Newmarket winner for Godolphin.

Nass said: "This has been the plan," Nass said. "(We wanted) to get him back on the track and we hope he will run well in a competitive contest."

#### **LISTED \$175,000 DUBAI RACING CLUB CLASSIC (2410mT)**

Also upgraded this year, the Dubai Racing Club Classic sponsored by Emirates NBD Wholesale Banking will be contested by 12 runners, including **Mountain Hunter**, winner of the equivalent race last year. Saeed bin Suroor and Christophe Soumillon team up again with the last-out Listed winner at Newmarket.

"We are excited to be back at Meydan for the Dubai World Cup Carnival and looking forward to the next few months," Bin Suroor said. "Mountain Hunter is in good form and we obviously know the conditions suit him."

His top rival will be William Haggas trainee **Pablo Escobarr**, who gamely defeated Loxley last out in the Kempton's Wild Flower Stakes (Listed). Loxley was also second in Mountain Hunter's most recent effort and victory.

Four others from Godolphin all figure well, including the Charlie Appleby-trained pair of **Zaman**, who is proven over this oval, and **Lucius Tiberius**. Bin Suroor goes three deep with the added pair of **Dubai Horizon** and **Gifts of Gold**. Not to be overlooked in the sea of blue is Mick Channon-conditioned **Koeman**, who enters off a victory in September at Newbury.

#### **\$100,000 UAE 1000 GUINEAS TRIAL**

The young fillies clash in a maximum field of 16, where post position and racing luck will make as much difference as any level of talent. Kicking off the six-race card, the 1400m affair is topped by UAE's top-rated juvenile thus far, Doug Watson-trained **Rio Angie**, super-impressive local winner (just two weeks

ago on Dec. 21) **Down on Da Bayou**, hard-trying Simon Crisford pupil **Last Surprise** and Royal Ascot-placed Godolphin colour-bearer **Final Song**.

**\$175,000 1900M DIRT HANDICAP (90+)**

Dubai World Cup sponsored by Emirates Airline (G1) alumnus **New Trails** tops the field for the 1900m handicap, but must pass front-running G1 winner **Saltarin Dubai** and G2 UAE Derby-placed **Manguzi** in order to get it done this time. Patrick Wahl-trained Swedish import **Red Hot Chili** seeks his 10<sup>th</sup> victory from 37 starts, while trainer Doug Watson sends out the capable duo of **Grand Argentier** and **Tried and True**.

**\$135,000 1000M TURF HANDICAP (90-105)**

Phoenix Thoroughbreds' **Pocket Dynamo** dips in class after facing the likes of Calyx and Battaash last season and shares top weight with Hot Scot Racing and Mike Quinn's gritty sprinter **Riflescope**, who appears primed for a top effort for Satish Seemar. At age 11, G2 winner **Caspian Prince** represents UK-based runners in the race along with well-intended **A Momentofmadness**. Sweden's **Ambiance** and Spain's **Blueberry** also have claims in what is a global dash down the Meydan chute.

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