

SAFETY FIRST AS RACING RETURNS TO MEYDAN

Meydan Racecourse is to host the first of a total of 19 race meetings for the 2020-21 season, including 11 Racing at Meydan (RAM) fixtures where the primary focus is on local horses and trainers.

The aim is to welcome racing back to the iconic venue, with a firm focus on the UAE Government's health and safety regulations. Thorough sanitisation, thermal screening of attendees and social distancing will be a part of measures undertaken by Dubai Racing Club.

The first Racing at Meydan meeting will be held this Thursday and includes a six racecard sponsored by Emirates, featuring a 1400m conditions race, the Emirates Airline, for 3-year-olds. Thursday's aforementioned feature has attracted a select field of seven and appears wide open with a case to be made for each of the septet.

Doug Watson saddled a Jebel Ali treble last Friday and relies on **Rio Angie**, the only filly in the race and the mount of Pat Dobbs. A daughter of Honor Code, she made a winning debut in a 1400m fillies' maiden almost exactly a year ago, before finishing third in the UAE 1000 Guineas Trial over the same course and distance. Then, over 1600m, she was fourth in the Listed UAE 1000 Guineas itself.

Watson said: "She is in great shape at home and working very well. She had some wind surgery after her last season and that seems to have helped her.

On the competition Watson added: “Obviously she is taking on the colts for the first time, but we think she will go well from a nice draw in an open race.”

Erwan Charpy saddles **Spirit Of Light**, one of two maidens in the field. The mount of Fabrice Veron, the Dark Angel gelding ran four times for Charpy at Meydan last season, having had one start in Britain for Charlie Appleby and Godolphin. Fourth in the 1600m UAE 2000 Guineas Trial, he was then fifth in both the Group UAE 2000 Guineas, also over 1600m, and Listed Al Bastakiya, stepped up to 1900m.

Charpy said: “He ran some good races last season and we think dropping to 1400m is going to suit him, especially first time back this campaign. We are very happy with him in training and we will have to see how he goes in a good little race.”

The other maiden is **Lake Causeway**, one of three in the race for Satish Seemar and seemingly the choice of Richard Mullen. A gelded son of Creative Cause, he finished runner-up on his first two outings, over 1200m and 1600m in Meydan maidens. He followed those outings with a good fourth in the 1600m Group 3 UAE 2000 Guineas before a crack at the ultra-valuable Saudi Derby, finishing well beaten.

Tadhg O’Shea partners stable companion **Commanding**, victorious in the UAE 2000 Guineas Trial, well beaten when eighth in the Classic itself and fourth in the Al Bastakiya. He was second on debut, behind **Al Modayar**, who then chased him home in the trial, as well as finishing behind his old adversary in the UAE 2000 Guineas and Al Bastakiya. Connor Beasley rides for Ali Rashid Al Rayhi.

The value of the UAE 2000 Guineas form could be advertised in the opening 1900m maiden, the Emirates Holidays, in which Salem bin Ghadayer saddles **Zabardast** for Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohd Al Maktoum with Royston Ffrench in the saddle. The same connections enjoyed a Jebel Ali treble last weekend and this 3-year-old Carpe Diem colt was runner-up to American raider Fore Left in the colts' Classic before struggling in the Al Bastakiya having previously been third in the trial for that race over the same 1900m.

Six juveniles have been declared for the Arabian Adventures, a maiden for 2-year-olds, with **Shamran** looking the main hope for Seemar as the choice of Mullen. Similarly, Beasley appears to prefer **Zhou Storm** of an Al Rayhi duo while Ffrench and Bin Ghadayer combine with **Rare Ninja**, a first UAE runner to sport the silks of Ecurie Ama Zingteam.

Racing fans have the opportunity to purchase tickets for the Winner's Circle Restaurant by contacting the Ticket Sales Office at +971 (4) 327 2110 or ticketoffice@dubairacingclub.com. The three-course set menu starts from AED 275 per person, and offers stunning views of the racing action, along with the very best culinary fare.

Dubai Racing Club extend a warm welcome back to their main sponsors, Emirates Airline, Longines, DP World, Gulf News, Emirates NBD, Azizi Developments, Al Tayer Motors, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum City – District One and Mubadala.

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