

AL Ain Mile Nose to Nose Finish and Won by a Nostril

1 March 2019, UAE ~ Al Ain staged the biggest race of their season, the 1600m Listed Al Ain Mile, on Friday, 1 March 2019, in the AED300,000 feature where Amwaj landed a thriller by a flared nostril to provide His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Eric Lemartinel a third consecutive winner on the card, completing a double for jockey Fabrice Veron in the process.

<https://youtu.be/BFZ8GIIA0Vo>

The race started to unfold at the top of the straight when **AF Mahshoum**, eventually landing in fourth, took up the running. She lost that initiative to **Sauternes Al Maury** with **Mirna** looming as a big danger wider on the track. That effort petered out with 100m to run when the race looked destined for Sauternes Al Maury, only for Veron to conjure one last effort from **Amwaj** (ABU ALEMARAT x Sylphide Al Maury by Dormane) with her head in front right on the line. A 6-year-old mare, she has now won three wins out of the last four outings, the sole defeat coming at Meydan and two victories at Al Ain.

Veron said: *“All fairness to the mare because I thought we were beaten but she just found that extra effort right at the end to get back up on the line. Eric told me to take my time on her and try and challenge in the straight, so that is what I did and it has worked. She obviously loves it here at Al Ain and that was a very brave effort.”*

The 2000m maiden for horses foaled locally was won stylishly by **Mustajeeb** (Calin Du Loup), opening his account at the fifth attempt and clearly appreciating the longest trip he has tackled under **Veron**, who riding for Sheikh Khalifa and Lemartinel, was hard at work on the home turn. However, with those who had helped force what looked a very strong pace tiring in the straight, Veron’s mount was able to gain the initiative with about 250m remaining and the pair won going away from toiling rivals.

“They went very fast early on and I was pushing to keep up,” Veron said. “But in the straight he has shown he has plenty of stamina and with those in front tiring was able to get to them quite comfortably in the end.”

Owner and trainer then completed a quick double with Olivier Doleuze this time the main in the saddle aboard **Faheeda** landing the following 2000m handicap in dogged fashion. After hitting the front almost 400m from home, the 5-year-old mare started wandering about in the wide home straight, seemingly giving every chance to AF Al Baher, that she had passed to gain the lead, and eventual runner-up, **Men Alemarat**, but they could not get by. A course and distance winner last November, it was a third career success for **Faheeda** (Burning Sand), on her twelfth start, all at Al

Ain having also landed a 1600m maiden last January.

“She is hard work and you have to keep asking, but she will respond,” Doleuze said. “I probably hit the front too early to be honest, but when they challenged, one either side, she really fought for me to keep them at bay.”

Having combined to land the three previous races, Sheikh Khalifa and Lemartinel added the penultimate event to their haul, a 1600m handicap, also providing the runner-up for good measure with Veron denied a treble aboard **Bashayer** by stable companion **Al Jazi** (AL NASR) partnered by Polish apprentice Joanna Grzybowska. Horse and jockey had combined to win over course and distance four weeks ago, a first UAE success for the apprentice, but the 7-year-old mare, under different riders, had been beaten at both Abu Dhabi and Sharjah subsequently, but appeared to relish the return to Al Ain to record a fifth career victory and third on this course.

Grzybowska said: *“The last time we were very quickly from the stalls and always led, but today the race was run at a much quicker pace, so we challenged later on, but she seemed to know what to do and where the line was!”*

The opening 1400m handicap, restricted to horses in private ownership, was won in determined fashion by **SS Jalmod** (JINAD) never headed under Omani apprentice Abdul Aziz Al Balushi, riding his first UAE winner at just the sixth attempt. Kicked clear about 450m from home, the 4-year-old colt, wandered violently across the track halfway up the straight, but once finding the standside rail, ran on strongly to gain a brave success. Having just his fourth career start, but first at Al Ain, he had twice finished second previously, both times at Sharjah and seemingly did not relish the Abu Dhabi turf on his second outing. He is trained by Younis Al Kalbani for Ahmad Saeed Al Mazrouei and he looks the type to keep on improving with experience.

The only Thoroughbred contest, a 1000m handicap, was won comfortably by Midlander, owned by the ever popular Ali Haddad and always held in high regard by Satish Seemar and his team at Zabeel Stables, but finally opening his local account on UAE start 16. Six times a winner in Britain for Mark Johnston and His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, the 7-year-old Shamardal gelding made his first start for new connections in October 2016, but prior to this victory, finishing fourth on four occasions was the closest he had come to victory.

Trained in Al Ain at The National Stables by Helal Al Alawi, **Margham Dubai** did well to make it third time lucky to open his account in the concluding 1600m maiden having seemingly stumbled as he exited the stalls. However, given to find his stride by Antonio Fresu, sporting the silks of Saleh Omar Ali bin Haidar, the 4-year-old Munjiz colt was soon in contention before making relentless progress in the final 300m to hit the front in the final 100m.

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