

AL Zahir Triumphant in Abu Dhabi Group 1 HH The President Cup

11 February 2018, Abu Dhabi, UAE ~ With a prize fund of AED 2,500,000 and a distance over 2200m, the Group 1 HH The President Cup was the highlight at Abu Dhabi on Sunday evening, 11 February 2018. Contested by 16 runners, it was Al Zahir under Jim Crowley that emerged the winner.

Settled in fourth on the inside, soon Jim Crowley sent **Al Zahir** (MADJANI (FR) x Petite Class (FR) by Barour De Cardonne) to the lead, quickly putting daylight between themselves and Ziyadd, racing in third. By the finish **Ziyadd** had pulled into second with his stable companion, **Dahham**, running on to take third.

Top rated runners finished in mid-pack with 2017 Champion, Loraa, finishing in 9th position.

Trained by Ali Rashid Al Rayhi for HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crowley's main employer, Al Zahir made a winning local debut over this 2200m course and distance in March 2017 in the Arabian Triple Crown R2. He promptly followed up in the 2400m Arabian Triple Crown R3 a fortnight later, his final start of last season. This was his first win for 2018.

Al Rayhi, who was completing a double on the card, said: *"We have always thought this horse had a big prize in him and he has proved us right tonight. His last two runs were on the dirt at Meydan and he ran well enough, without really enjoying the kickback, but these conditions at Abu Dhabi, on the turf, really suit him. I am very proud to win this race for Sheikh Hamdan and congratulate him, as well as Jim Crowley who gave the horse a very good ride. He has actually won on him all three times he has ridden him. I am very grateful to His Highness for his continued support and very lucky to train some very good horses for him."*

FINISH:

The main support race, rescheduled having been due to be contested two weeks ago, the 1200m **Group 3 Al Ruwais**, was won by **Rmmas** (Mahabb (AE) x Shamayl (FR) by Kesberoy), a second winner on the evening saddled by **Jean de Rouale** for **Yas Horse Racing Management**. Settled in the middle of the field, taking the shortest route on the inside under Richard Mullen, when a gap appeared 300m out they shot through, winning their race in a matter of strides.

Rmmas has now won two of his three local starts and is clearly held in some regard by his trainer, who said: *"As I said when he won at Al Ain, he is a nice, young, horse who we really like. He is versatile regarding conditions, both underfoot and distance so, hopefully, we have a few options*

with him.”

Restricted to 4-year-olds, the **1600m Listed Arabian Triple Crown R1** looked competitive with a field of 11, but only one horse matter in the end, **Es Ajeeb**, racing within himself under Sam Hitchcott in front and proving with his win he was much the best.

Es Ajeeb (BIG EASY (US) x BENT AL ASAYL (AE) by Djebel Lotois) is trained by Ibrahim Aseel, who said: *“To win a race like this on such a big day is brilliant for a small yard like ours. He is a very smart horse, we saw that at Sharjah on his second start and again today. It is exciting for all of us involved with the horse.”*

The opening 1200m handicap was won fairly comfortably by **Es Fatek**. Trained by Al Rayhi, **Es Fatek** (BIG EASY (US) x BADEERAH (AE) by Bibi De Carrere) has now won three of his nine starts and was gaining compensation for a defeat last week, when he and jockey Harry Bentley were caught close to home over the same course and distance.

“I rode him last Sunday and he was probably unlucky,” Bentley said. “He took me there easily today and picked up nicely when I asked him.”

Bentley later completed a double, this time combining with Helal Al Alawi, when producing **Dassan Da** (MAJD AL ARAB (GB) x Froda DA (BE) by Altis Del Sol) to lead close home in the **Wathba Stallion Cup** 1600m handicap. Opening his local account on the sixth attempt, it was a second career win for the horse coming from Europe.

The Englishman was then back in the winner's enclosure, just 30 minutes later, after landing the only Thoroughbred race, a 1600m handicap on Tadween, owned and trained by Fawzi Nass.

There may have only been six runners in the first of the two 1600m handicaps, but it produced a thrilling finish with four of the sextet separated by less than a length throughout the final 100m. Xavier Ziani had gone straight to the front on the Munjiz colt **Qader**, and the pair opened up what proved to be a decisive advantage leaving the home turn.

Winning trainer **De Roualle** said: *“Xavier has given him a very good ride and we were quite hopeful of a big run; he has only had two previous starts this season and improved from his run last week when a good third over 1400m. This is the trip he won over twice for us last season but then he had a setback and missed most of the second half of the campaign. It is nice to see him win again and, hopefully, he can do so again as he has not had that much racing so could still progress.”*

~ end