

Bouthieb Initiative Takes a Natural Desert Course



28 November 2016, Bouthieb, UAE ~ Once again His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan has taken ground-breaking steps at his Bouthieb Endurance Village. The CEI* 80km seasonal opener which took place on 25 November, saw the first phase of plans to return to a maximum use of natural tracks through the desert, not seen in the UAE endurance for many years.

New tracks passing through the UAE's Natural Forestry Reserves

Friday's **Sheikh Hamdan and Sheikh Zayed bin Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Nahyan Cup** took riders 'off track' on a beautiful course created to naturally slow the speed and to challenge the skills of the riders. These new tracks cover approximately 30% of the course; water points were strategically placed and no cars were permitted in these areas. This provided a natural environment for riders to understand, appreciate and to respect the welfare of their horses, centre theme of the Bouthieb Initiative.

This latest development instigated by His Highness was very much appreciated by both horses and riders. It made a welcome change to the relentless flat race speed tracks that we have become accustomed to seeing in UAE endurance venues. A measure of the success of this most enjoyable

day was the **79% (122 riders) completion** rate and a clinic that was virtually empty.



The winner of the CEI* with an average speed of 19.247 kph was the cross-bred 9-year-old bay gelding, **SM Logo Entero**, ridden by **Ummed Singh Bhiv Singh**, trained by Mubarak Khalifa bin Shafya from Al Aasfa Endurance Stables and owned by Al Aasfa Ltd.

Taking **1st place** in **Best Endurance Challenge Award** was **ZT Bey**, ridden by **Ahmed Abdulla Al Huraiz** and trained by Hassan Ali from Hadaybit Asalem Endurance Stables owned by Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum.



Whilst speed is of importance, **The Bouthieb Initiative** considers welfare and all-round horsemanship are equally crucial in endurance riding. The scoring for the Best Endurance Challenge Award is designed to reflect this, with its tough recovery criteria – principally a heart rate of 56 bpm and 10 min. presentation time. The return to natural tracks brings a further dimension to the Challenge and on the evidence of last weekend we hope to see further progress for the rest of the season.

His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan intends to present two High Point Awards at the end of the season for the Rider and the Horse and Rider Partnership which have collected the most points in Best Endurance Challenge rides throughout the season.

For full CEI* results visit:- www.ATRM-systems.fr

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* photographs by Leigh Young