

Doug Watson-Trained Foaad Shows Talent for Al Ain Track

1 February 2019, Al Ain, UAE ~ Racing at Al Ain on the first day of February 2019, was highlighted by a 2000m conditions race, restricted to horses that had not won two races. The race was landed in decisive fashion by Amwaj confidently ridden to the close by Pat Cosgrave, doubling her career tally in the process.

A homebred of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan and trained by Eric Lemartinel, the 6-year-old mare made a winning debut over 1600m at Al Ain in November 2016 and had run plenty of good races before missing last season. On this, her third start of the current campaign, she was traveling well under Cosgrave, tracking the pace set by local debutant **Mujahid** keeping on gamely for second. **Amwaj** (ABU ALEMARAT x Sylphide Al Maury by Dormane) took up the real running fully 600m from home and with 300m remaining, shot clear with the race in safe keeping.

Cosgrave said: *"She has done that nicely and I was pretty confident throughout the race because she was always traveling well and then quickened nicely. It was a good performance."*

"We were pretty hopeful coming here because she is a nice mare with plenty of ability and everything went smoothly today," **Lemartinel** added.

It looked unlikely at halfway but **ES Almas**(BIG EASY x HYRA by Djel Bon) ultimately recorded a fairly comfortable victory in the opening 1400m Wathba Stallions Cup handicap, restricted to horses in private ownership. The mare surged home under Richard Mullen, the pair having had only three of their 14 rivals behind them entering the straight. However, they made relentless progress over the final 400m, hitting the front inside the concluding 100m to deny **Ubu Al Mels**, trained on the Al Ain track by Mohamed Ramadan. Saddled by Khalifa Al Neyadi for Al Awda Stables, the 7-year-old was recording a second career victory having, on her final outing for Ibrahim Aseel, won a 1200m handicap at Sharjah on seasonal debut in November.

"She was a long way back early on, but always traveling nicely enough," **Mullen** said. *"Halfway up the straight I was pretty confident but the runner-up, Ubu Al Mels, proved hard to pass but my mare picked up nicely to be it front where it mattered. In fairness, the trainer was pretty confident and has certainly been proved right."*

Musabbeh Al Mheiri dominated the only Thoroughbred contest, a 1600m handicap, saddling both the first and second with stable jockey, Ben Curtis and **Initial** denying stablemate **Jintshi**, the mount of Fabrice Veron with **Strong Chemistry**, bursting clear leaving the home turn, a close third.

Out of luck in the Thoroughbred race, Pinheiro was in the winner's enclosure after a 1800m

maiden restricted to those foaled in the UAE when mount **Al Yamamah Mleeh** (Calin Du Loup (FR) x RS Kashifa (AE) by Bibi De Carrere) came out on top following a titanic struggle throughout the final 400m with **Maktoob**, seeking to complete a rapid double for the Sheikh Khalifa, Lemartinel and Cosgrave team. With both horses giving their all and pulling well clear, **Maktoob** appeared to be getting the better of the battle, only for Pinheiro's mount to grab the initiative in the final strides, completing a double for trainer Al Neyadi.

Sheikh Khalifa and Lemartinel did not have to wait long for their second winner on the card, **Al Jazi**, as well as runner-up, **Faheeda**, the mount of Olivier Doleuze, in the following 1800m handicap.

Having just her tenth UAE mount, Polish apprentice Joanna Grzybowska took **Al Jazi** straight to the head of affairs and they stayed there, with the 7-year-old mare recording a fourth career success and second this season, having also won a 1700m Sharjah handicap in November.

"As you know, it was my first winner in the UAE, so I am delighted and very pleased," Grzybowska said. "Obviously I have to thank the connections for this opportunity and, during the race, I was always pretty hopeful because she seemed to be enjoying himself out in front. When challenged, she has really knuckled down and stayed on strongly for me, so I am really pleased."

A second and stronger 1800m handicap followed and was won in straightforward fashion by **Foad** with Dane O'Neill riding for his main employer, His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, diving the Doug Watson runner to lead close home, denying **Hazeme** on whom Mullen was looking to complete a double on the day. Raced 11 times in Europe, winning once in a 2000m conditions race on turf at Newbury in July 2016, this was seventh outing since joining Watson and first foray into handicap company on a dirt surface having, on the whole, kept good company since arriving in the UAE. Well beaten on his previous start in a turf handicap at Abu Dhabi, this, his fourth dirt outing, was a first visit to Al Ain for the Shadwell-bred 6-year-old son of Madjani.

Foad Win Video at Al Ain (no sound)

https://youtu.be/vDV_shqiKHU

O'Neill said: "Fair play to Doug and his team; they have put the visor on today which has really helped and they found the ideal race for him. Hopefully the win will do his confidence the power of good because he is a decent enough horse."

The 15 runners in the finale, a 1400m maiden, included ten making their debut and it was one of them, **Fertile Du Croate** (DAHES (GB) c Salsa Du Croate (FR) by Kerbella), running on strongly to lead close home and deny the joint most experienced runner, **Nader W'Rsan**, trying gallantly but to no avail to make all on this his third racecourse appearance.

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Royston Ffrench rode the winner, saddled by Ibrahim Aseel for Ziad Galadari and it was an excellent first effort from the striking 4-year-old grey colt.

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