

Local Boy Makes Good in \$1,000,000 Dubai Kahayla Classic

30 March 2019, Dubai, UAE ~ The 2019 edition of the US\$ 1 million Dubai Kahayla Classic sponsored by Mubadala will go down as one of the most thrilling in the history of the Group 1 PA race. Neck to neck the locally bred and trained AF Maher and the Polish raider Fazza Al Khalediah battled it to the line of the 2000m race that is run on dirt. With 300m to go, AF Maher lost his advantage that he had held since the gates opened, but he fought back and slowly but surely got his head in front once more to pass the winning post as the new victor of this Purebred Arabian classic.

"I had such a willing partner out there today."

"You need courage and that is what he has," said his jubilant jockey Tadhg O'Shea, who had the choice between the 6-year-old son of AF Al Buraq and AF Raad and the other Ernst Oertel-trained runner AF Al Sajanjle. "I had such a willing partner out there today. The runner-up came and gave us a bump and many horses would have downed tools but he battled right to the line," he continued. Only a few hours before the race, he said he was hoping to have made the right choice after AF Maher had impressively disposed of Ziyadd in his prep race, which statistically has not been the greatest pointer towards the Kahayla Classic.

O'Shea won this race on Mizzna ten years ago

"Statistics and records are there to be broken," he continued. "I have had great belief in this horse and already told Ernst (Oertel) a long time ago that I thought he was very good. He was still very unexposed and it was always the plan to take him to the front and set the pace. It's been ten years since I won this race on the mighty Mizzna and it's just absolutely amazing to win it again."

This was the first win by UAE Khalid Khalifa Al Nabooda as owner in this race, but his second as breeder, having bred AF Mathmoon (AF Albahar), winner of the 2016 Kahayla Classic under owner, SH Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. It was, however, the first win for trainer Ernst Oertel in this competition, and the proud trainer said: "This is what Arabians do. They battle. I'm so happy and I'm lost for words. I am just so proud."

With such a strong pace from the start, last year's winner **Tallaab Al Khalediah** was not able to dictate the pace from draw number 12. He travelled on the outside and when AF Maher and Fazza Al Khaledia quickened coming out of the bend, he was quickly outpaced. In the end, it was **Goshawke** who finished ten and a quarter lengths behind the leading pair in third, while Tallaab Al Khalediah had to accept the first defeat in his career and finished fourth.

Winner: AF Maher (AE)

Owner: Mr. Khalid Khalifa Al Nabooda

Trainer: Earnest Oertel

Jockey: Tadhg O'Shea

Official Time: 2.15.67 (2000m, Track Record: 2:13.68 – Tallaab Al Khalediah, 2018)

Margin of Victory: Nose

QUOTES

Tadhg O'Shea, Jockey, AF MAHER (1st)—“ "The horse got a great reception coming back in. My wife Debbie and my two boys are at home watching on the couch. They rang before the race to say good luck and there would have no-one cheering louder than them. I had such a willing partner out there today. The runner-up came and gave us a bump and many horses would have downed tools but he battled right to the line."

Michael Borkowski, Trainer, FAZZA AL KHALEDIAH(2nd)— “The plan was to be close up from the start but the race went against us. Still, when he led in the straight, I thought we would win but the other horse was just better at the finish. We were second in Abu Dhabi in November, second in Saudi Arabia, and now second here. One day he will be first.”

Pierantonio Convertino, Jockey — “He missed the break and we lost too much ground in the first half of the race, so I wasn't able to give him a breather. I thought he might hang on but he still did amazingly well, given what happened in the first part of the race.”

Fabrice Veron, Jockey, AMWAJ (3rd)—““The pace was very fast, they went too quickly for her early on. She also needed experience at Meydan although the kickback was OK. I think next year she'll be a better mare.”

Fernando Jara, Jockey, GOSHAWKE (4th)—"I had a good trip. It might sound crazy but I would rather have had an outside post. In the first three jumps we were a little bit slow. He likes to run closer because he's a one-pace horse. But I'm happy. He ran a good race."

Juan Ospina, Jockey, TALLAAB AL KHALEDIAH (5th)—“He was up there on the pace but when I asked him at the 1000 metres to keep up, the main horses got away on us and he was just staying on at the same pace."

Mickael Barzalona, Jockey, CHADDAD (6th)—“: "He was just off the bridle the whole way and never going."

Richard Mullen, Jockey, ZIYADD (7th)—“I was never at the races. I broke and was happy enough sitting sixth, five or six (lengths) off them, but I was never able to get into the race. I was just sitting on my horse hoping they would come back to me. He just doesn't seem to be the horse he was last year. He's not racing with the enthusiasm he had last year.”

Sam Hitchcott, Jockey, BARNAMAJ (10th)—“I had a good trip around. My horse was coming back second run after a layoff and he got a bit tired.”

Pat Cosgrave, Jockey, MAWAHIB (11th)— “It was a hot race, I was in mid- division but it was hard to make up any ground.”

Julien Auge, Jockey, AL SHAMOOS (12th)— “She ran a good race but I don’t think she liked the dirt.”

Olivier Doleuze, Jockey, DARIUS DU PAON (13th)—“He is a different horse on turf. He just doesn't act on dirt. We were under pressure from the off.”

Antonio Fresu, Jockey, AF AL SAJANJLE (14th)—“I finished last, so it wasn’t very good. Not our day today.”

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