

O'Shea Equals Hills' Record With Three Weeks To Go in the UAE Season

10 March 2019, Abu Dhabi, UAE ~ Racing at the Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club on Sunday, 10 March 2019 featured the best of the Purebred Arabian action in a 2200m handicap where Khalid Al Nabooda and Ernst Oertel were celebrating victory with Brett Doyle aboard AF Yatroq, fresh from his Super Saturday Al Bastakiya victory on Godolphin's Divine Image.

Well beaten on his latest start, over 2000m on the Al Ain dirt, the 6-year-old by AF Al Buraq clearly relished the return to turf to record a fourth career victory and second, this season, over course and distance having landed a similar contest at the very first Abu Dhabi meeting of the season in November when ridden by O'Shea. The winning time was 2:3:78.

Doyle said: *"It has been a fair while since I rode an Abu Dhabi winner, so it is nice to get back in the winner's enclosure here in the capital."*

Oertel added: *"We have enjoyed a fantastic season and the horses have performed very well throughout, but I am indebted to Mr Al Nabooda for the opportunity to train these horses."*

The racing was opened with a 1600m maiden, restricted to those horses foaled locally, and provided the perfect opportunity for O'Shea to move level with Richard Hills' record with 503 local winners. In this race aboard **AF Al Moreeb**, a 4-year-old homebred colt by AF AL Buraq, it was the team of owner Khalid Khalifa Al Naboda, jockey O'Shea and trainer Ernst Oertel.

O'Shea said: *"This horse has taken a while to learn what is required and for whatever reason, he did not take too well to Al Ain and the dirt the last day, but was much happier back here on the turf. His two Abu Dhabi runs were good ones before that and he has bounced back to that level of performance. Now he has a win to his name, hopefully it will do his confidence the power of good."*

Owner and trainer wasted no time completing a rapid double with **AF Makerah** from the same stallion in the following 1600m handicap with Adrie de Vries the man in the saddle on this occasion. Attempting a carbon copy of the first race, O'Shea went straight to the front on **AF Alnwha**, but De Vries was traveling strongly in his slipstream, driving his mount to the front with about 300m remaining holding off challengers giving chase.

Al Nabooda said: *"I have a great trainer in Ernst Oertel who keeps producing the goods and we can use the best jockeys which gives us a big chance all the time. We are making a concerted effort to promote the local Purebred Arabians and have enjoyed some great results in recent seasons, so long may it continues."*

De Vries added: *"You always know when riding for these connections you have some kind of chance and that has proved the case again."*

O'Shea was then denied a double, Oertel and Al Nabooda a treble, when their **AF Kafu** was collared 250m from home in a 2200m handicap by **Hazeme** (Bibi De Carrere), and although he tried gallantly to fight back, he could not regain the initiative. Settled in midfield by Mullen, the pair made smooth progress leaving the back straight before producing their decisive challenge in the final 175m. Previously a maiden after 14 starts, but just three in the UAE, the 6-year-old is trained by Jean de Roualle for Yas Horse Racing Management and was ridden by Richard Mullen, partnering winner number 459 locally, taking him one clear of Willie Supple in the overall list and into a clear third.

De Roualle said: *"He is just a young, inexperienced horse who was still very green there and can only improve with time and experience."*

Mullen added: *"Jean does so well with these inexperienced horses and is so patient he deserves wins like this. Now he has won, hopefully, he can progress into a nice horse."*

Only horses in private ownership were eligible for the 1400m handicap and trainer Helal Al Alawi continued his fine run of recent form by saddling **Nawwaf KB** (AF ALBAHAR) to land the spoils with Pat Cosgrave riding in the colors of Byerley Team. A 6-year-old, he was doubling his career tally having only, after 15 previous starts, won a 1400m Al Ain maiden in November 2017, but always looked in control here. Settled just behind the pace in about fifth, he was traveling well and, once driven to the front by Cosgrave early in the straight, never appeared in danger of being caught.

"The trainer and connections were pretty confident and they were proved right," **Cosgrave** said. *"I just wanted to keep things simple, so tracked the speed and he then quickened nicely when I asked him to win comfortably."*

The only Thoroughbred race on the card, a 1600m handicap, was won stylishly by **Treasured Times**. This card will also be remembered as the meeting at which Tadhg O'Shea drew level with Richard Hills local wins at the top of the all-time UAE jockeys' statistics. Richard Hills, main jockey for HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, retired in 2012 after 33 years as a jockey where he broke all manner of records.

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