

Al Rayyan, Doha, Qatar

26 February, 2015

Double delight for H.E Sheikh Joaan

SHEIKH Joaan bin Hamad Al Thani watched his new Arabian racing star Al Mourtazez and Qatar's champion thoroughbred Dubday as they brought the large crowd to their feet by winning the season's two richest races, the HH the Emir's Sword and the HH the Emir's Trophy, both with Group 1 status over 2400m, in contrasting styles at Al Rayyan racecourse on Thursday 26 February 2015.

Al Mourtazez, trained in France by Thomas Fourcy, marked his first appearance in Qatar with an all-the-way success, while Dubday, whose trainer Jassim Al Ghazali saddled five winners on the card, got to the front in the final six strides, when they lit up the night sky on the final session of the meeting staged under the patronage of HH Sheikh Tamin bin Hamad Al Thani as part of the eight-day HH the Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival.

Both Al Mourtazez and Dubday represent Sheikh Joaan's Al Shaqab Racing operation, which also won the Group 1 Qatar International Trophy on Wednesday with Mister Ginoux for trainer Fourcy and jockey Julien Auge.

Al Shaqab's representative Harry Herbert was almost lost for words, exclaiming "What a double. This is a special moment for Sheikh Joaan. Not only is he here but these are the two races above all that he wanted to win in Qatar."

Herbert revealed that Al Mourtazez, who hurt his back after easily winning the Group 1 Doha Cup last August and returned to win a Group 3 event at Toulouse in late-October, had a tough trip from France. He added: "But each day he moved forward, and to win here is great credit to Thomas Fourcy and his team."

Auge set out to make the running at a steady pace on Al Mourtazez, which appeared not to suit some of the other runners, and he increased the tempo before the final turn.

Djainka Des Forges, the 2013 Qatar Derby winner, who brought the highest official rating into the race, gave chase and although she emerged best of three runners for HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Thani and trainer Julian Smart, the leader stayed on too stoutly, taking the handsome first prize and trophy by a length and a half, with Al Maj'Hour, a stablemate of Djainka Des Forges, three lengths away in third place.

Dubday maintained his unbeaten record in six races in Doha with a second successive victory in the Emir's Trophy, but as ever, he made it hard for himself, striking the front only in the very late stages for a neck victory over the habitual runner-up Ponfeigh, after Frankie Dettori had got him out of a pocket early in the straight and galvanised his challenge.

For Al Shaqab, Harry Herbert said: "That was heart-stopping," while Dettori, who has ridden Dubday to his last three wins, added: "Thank goodness he knows where the winning post is."

Herbert went to say: "This continues a fantastic start to the year for Al Shaqab. Dubday always takes your breath away, because he comes late, and it was even more difficult today from the widest draw of all."

Dettori had little alternative but to drop into mid-division on Dubday as Al Busayyir and Peter Anders cut out the running, but he had been shuffled back into fourth-last place 600m from the finish. Once in the straight, though, as Ponfeigh challenged for the lead, Dubday finally got into overdrive, and inching his way towards the leaders, he battled to the front to beat Poinfeigh by a neck, with Peter Anders staying on stoutly for third place, half a length behind, and Right To Dream a further threequarters of a length away in fourth.

Dubday, who provided trainer Al Ghazali with his 11th win over the three-day meeting, leapfrogged Roman Legend and Taraf as Qatar's highest prize-money earner of the season, with a tally of 2.280 million riyals.

Dubday's next race will be at Meydan in Dubai, where last year he had unfortunate run in the Sheema Classic, being knocked out of his stride in the early stages. He will attempt to put the record straight in the Dubai Gold Cup over 1600m next month.

Ponfeigh, trained by Debbie Mountain for Eng Hassan Ali Abdulmalik, now has the unenviable record of four second placings in top-grade races, never being beaten by more than half a length, twice by Triple Crown winner Roman Legend and twice by Dubday, since arriving in Qatar from Ireland.

Ponfeigh's jockey Liam Jones said: "It's simply the case that Dubday has a better turn of foot than my horse, but he will win a big race one day."

Ghazali and champion jockey Harry Bentley made a flying start to the big day when Rock Up took the opening sprint, the 1000m thoroughbred handicap, to register his first win on the Doha turf circuit, after being in the first two throughout and racing clear 200m from the finish. Rock Up held on to beat his late-closing stablemate Jazz by half a length, with Nawarah the same margin away third.

Rock On's previous two wins from 15 starts in Qatar had been on the dirt track, following a single Bath maiden win from 15 races for David Elsworth in Newmarket, after which he was bought at the Tattersalls sales in October 2013 for 20,000gns by owner Abdullah Mohammed Al Kuwari to race in the colours of his sons.

Ghazali followed up immediately with another one-two in the 1600m thoroughbred conditions race, with Bentley in the right place at the right time, driving Khalifa bin Sheail Al Kuwari's Botanica to the front 150m from the finish and having enough in reserve to overturn placings of earlier this month with City Zen by a neck.

The same owner-trainer-jockey combination were back in the winner's circle when Al Murabitoon extended his unbeaten sequence to four in the HH the Emir's Silver Sword for four-year-old purebred Arabians with a comfortable win by a length and a half from Ain Jalout.

Al Murabitoon had already gained the highest rating in the Silver Sword and justified the status, always being in a handy position before being asked to challenge on the outside of the leader Ain Jalout early in the straight.

Al Murabitoon gave his stablemate little room as he drifted to rail when taking the lead, but there was no doubt about his superiority as he led home three other Ghazali-trained runners in Ain Jalout, Bahia Du Bartha and the long-time leader Kimfalah.

Al Hareth had provided the third successive winner for Ghazali and Bentley, continuing his domination of races for local-bred thoroughbreds when tackling 2000m for the first time in the HH the Emir's Silver Shalfa Trophy.

He did not start racing until March 2014, but after finishing third on his debut, he has been brilliantly placed to win on eight of his nine outings for owner Mishal Bin Ali Al Attiya. His single defeat came by half a length at the hands of Footprintinthesands at the end of December over 1850m, the longest distance he had tackled until the Silver Shalfa Trophy, but that reverse has since been avenged, and here he had Footprintinthesands well behind, as he raced home a length and threequarters clear of Moaddie.

Majeed, who won the Qatar Derby for local-bred, purebred Arabians on only his third outing, took another step up the ladder to make his career record three wins from five runs with an impressive length win for owner Umm Qarn over Masnoon in the HH the Emir's Trophy over 2400m.

French jockey Olivier Peslier gave Majeed a patient ride, tracking pacemaker AJS Fath Elkheir, Tameh and Masnoon on the turn into the straight. Masnoon went to the front with about 150m to run, but Peslier was alive to the move and challenging even later, he drove Majeed to a length victory, with Ghizwan failing by a short head to catch Masnoon for second place.

This was trainer Alban de Mieulle's 12th winner of the race in the last 17 years, and Peslier's second in a row.

Crescent, trained by Ahmed Kobeissi, is gradually finding his feet in Qatar, having been sold privately by the Coolmore operation to Mohammed Kazim Al Ansari after winning a small race in Ireland last July, and he followed up his course win over 1600m earlier this month with a game success from the more highly-tried Irish-bred colt Itorio in the 1850m HH the Emir's Shalfa Trophy for three-year-old thoroughbreds.

The first two fought out a stirring finish, closely chased by Itorio's Ghazali stablemate Lieutenant Kaffee, but with the rail to keep Crescent straight and Gerald Avranche riding at his strongest, he prevailed by a short head from Itorio, with Lieutenant Kaffee half a length away in third place.

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Notes to Editors

About the H.H. The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival

Staged under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, the HH The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival officially launched on Thursday, 19th February.

The event is staged by the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club and comprises five days of International Arabian Horse Shows followed by three days of high quality racing for Purebred Arabians and Thoroughbreds with a total prize money value in excess of Euros 6 million.

More than 400 international visitors will attend the HH The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival including members of the International Federation of Arabian Horse Racing Authorities (IFAHR) and the European Conference of Arab Horse Organisations (ECHAQ).

About Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club

The Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club was established in 1975 and operates under the Chairmanship of H.E. Sheikh Mohamed Bin Faleh Al Thani. General Manager and Secretary General of the Board of Directors Sami Jassim Al Boenain is also Chairman of the International Federation of Arabian Horseracing Authorities (IFAHR).

Located in New Rayyan, Doha, it has the mission of developing Thoroughbred and Purebred Arabian horse racing events, organising Arabian horse shows and providing support to owners and breeders.

Due to its state-of-the-art facilities Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club is one of the most enviable horse training centres in the world. Racing events take place every Wednesday and Thursday from October to May with over 60 race meetings held annually.

Since 2008, Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club has been the official sponsor of Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe weekend, held at Longchamp, Paris during the first weekend of October; an agreement which extends until at least 2022.