

Al Rayyan, Doha, Qatar

23 February, 2015

Racing takes centre stage as festival approaches finale

The focus turns to horseracing on Tuesday, 24 February at H.H The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival when Qatar's most prestigious race meeting gets underway following five days of major international horse shows staged under the patronage of H.H Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani Emir of the State of Qatar and hosted by Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club.

At a press conference held in Doha today Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club General Manager Sami Jassim Al Boenain welcomed local and international media and said, "We have had a great start to the H.H The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword festival which launched with a fabulous opening ceremony where I hope we have encouraged and inspired even more people to become involved and share our passion for horses.

"We have some very exciting racing to look forward to over the next three days and competition, especially in the especially in the international Thoroughbred races will be tough.

"We are very grateful to our sponsors who support our events here in Qatar and France and also around the world, the partnerships we have formed with them are very important to us."

The first of three spectacular days racing which boast a combined prize money offer in excess of QR 25 million (EU 6 million) is highlighted by the Gulf Cup, a 1600M race on Turf for GCC Bred Arabians (Gulf Corporation Council) aged four-years and over and worth QR 285,000 to the winner (EU 430,000).

British-based trainer Marco Botti is set to have his first runner in Qatar when Golden Steps lines up for the day's joint feature, the Group 3 Qatar 2022 Invitation Cup which also sees Al Shaqab principal jockey Frankie Dettori renew his partnership with Luca Cumani who sends out Mission Approved in the 1200M Turf event. Cumani could also be represented in the following day's Group 2 Qatar International Cup in which Ayaar is among four reserves.

Botti who attended the press conference together with Dettori and Qatari trainers Jassim Al Ghazali said, "I came to Qatar last year just to look and I am delighted to be having a runner this year. Golden Steps is in very good form. Most of his campaign last year was on the straight, but he ran well to finish fourth in a Listed race at Lingfield last time and handled the bend well and we have a good jockey in Marco Monteriso so deserves to take his chance. The owner (Mr Matar Bin Abdullah Al Mannai) was very keen for us to race in Qatar and I hope he will run well.

Dettori who also rides Dubday, bidding for back-to-back victories in Thursday's H.H The Emir's Trophy said, "Racing in Qatar is very competitive. It's a sharp track and the straight is only 400 metres so getting a good position early on is very important. Dubday is unbeaten in Qatar, he and I have every confidence that Jassim (Al Ghazali) has got him spot on but it will be a competitive race."

Qatar International Day, day two of the meeting, is dedicated mostly to Thoroughbreds who will contest six of the nine races and provides an exciting preface for the festival finale on Thursday which features two Group 1 contests, the H.H. The Emir's Trophy for Thoroughbreds and the H.H The Emir's Sword for Purebred Arabians in which trainer Julian Smart is looking for his fourth victory in five years.

Tariq Al Siddiqi, Deputy General Manager of Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club and Director of Racing said, "The track is in very good condition and we are looking forward to welcoming many of the highest rated horses. There is prize money of QR 2 million for the Group 1 Thoroughbred and QR 3 million for the H.H The Emir's Sword and we are expecting some very competitive racing."

Breakfast with the Stars

Domestic and International media and VIP guests will have an opportunity to mingle with many of the personalities involved in the race meeting at 'Breakfast with the Stars', an informal event held at the racecourse on Wednesday morning.

Leading trainers and jockeys will be on hand to talk about their chances in the feature races and provide a fascinating insight into racing in Qatar, the first country in the Gulf region to introduce racing under rules.

Style and glamour

Fashion features highly at The H.H The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival.

Celebrated French milliner Laurence Bossion will be providing a sneak preview of her latest collection which takes its inspiration from the day and night sky, ahead of its official launch during Paris Fashion Week next month. Laurence will also be out among the crowds to seek out the meeting's most elegantly dressed ladies who will be invited to take part in the 'Competition of Elegance'. Ten finalists will join Longines in the stylish garden area adjacent to the main grandstand where one lucky winner will be presented with a Longines watch.

Commercial partners

Total, the world's fifth-ranked international oil and gas company is among the globally recognised brands to renew their support for H.H The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival. Total is a major supporter of Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club events in Qatar and abroad.

Longines, one of the world's most famous watchmakers whose association with the Group 1 H.H The Emir's Trophy continues will again extend its support to include the prize for the Competition of Elegance.

One of Qatar's leading real estate companies, Al Emadi Enterprises, has also renewed its support for the event together with **NBK (Nasser Bin Khaled)** whose wide range of business interest include automotive, construction and health care.

Qatar Petroleum, the national company responsible for all oil and gas industry processes in Qatar and abroad who joined with their support for the first time in 2014 also return as major supporters of the festival.

Comprehensive coverage of the three-day race meeting will be provided by **Al-Kass**, the dedicated sports channel which operates under the umbrella of Qatar Media Corporation.

Picture caption: Sami Jassim Al Boenain (second left), Tariq Al Siddiqi, Marco Botti, Jassim Al Ghazali, Frankie Dettori and Julian Smart are joined by sponsors of H.H The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival.

For enquiries about media accreditation during the H.H. The Emir 24th International Equestrian Sword Festival please contact the Press Office:

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To download a copy of the official event media guide click [here](#).

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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 launches 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 (ECHAHO).

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.