

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
VOL. 20 | NEWS, NOTES AND FEATURES

DUBAI | JANUARY 30, 2019
CONTACT: MICHAEL.ADOLPHSON@MEYDAN.AE

- Seeking the Soul Sets Sights on Dubai
- Asmussen High on Switzerland
- Al Hayette Expected to Improve
- Secret Ambition, Behavioral Bias Impress; Yulong Warrior Returning
- Roy H Readies for Dubai Return
- Almond Eye, Rey de Oro Confirmed

SEEKING THE SOUL SETS SIGHTS ON DUBAI

Dubai Racing Club | Mathea Kelley



In 2018, multiple Grade 1-winning American trainer Dallas Stewart made his first visit to Dubai with bright eyes and no lack of confidence, thanks to **Forever Unbridled**, a Charles Fipke homebred champion mare who was riding high on a Breeders' Cup Distaff (G1) victory and appeared to be one of the horses to beat in the Dubai World Cup (G1). Subsequent happenings did not go to plan for the late-running mare, as the pace scenario and wide trip worked against her, but she still closed determinedly to be fifth behind a loose-on-the-lead **Thunder Snow**, champion **West Coast** and Grade 1 winners **Mubtaahij** and **Pavel**.

One year later, Stewart is planning to head back with another serious Dubai World Cup candidate in Grade 1 winner **Seeking the Soul**. Wearing the same white, blue and yellow silks, the Fipke homebred exits a hard-charging second (behind **City of Light**) after substantial traffic issues in the \$9 million Pegasus World Cup Invitational (G1) last Saturday, an effort that justified the long-standing faith his connections have had in the son of Perfect Soul.

"He really ran terrific and he did it against the best," Stewart said. "He fought on great and (jockey) Johnny (Velazquez) did a great job of getting him out of trouble that cost him a few lengths on the turn. I'm very proud of him. He's really on his game right now. As long as he's doing well, he has a big chance in Dubai."

Seeking the Soul has been a work in progress, but it has been evident since the beginning that Stewart believed him worthy of the big stage. The great-grandson of undefeated legend Personal Ensign ran in the 2016 Belmont Stakes (G1) in just his fourth lifetime start and first after breaking his maiden. In typical Stewart style, he processed the defeat as a sign to take things patiently with the highly regarded charge,

gaining his confidence with 11 runs over the next 16 months, including a slew of allowance races and a pair of Grade 3 placings.

In the final of those 11, he woke up in a big way, setting a 1700m track record at Keeneland with a blistering time of 1:41.36. One race later, he validated the effort by winning his first graded stakes in the Grade 1 Clarke Handicap over 1800m. Left in his wake that day were Grade 1 winners **Hoppertunity** and **Diversify**, as well as multiple Grade 2 winner **Good Samaritan**.

Seeking the Soul would go on to finish fifth in the 2018 Pegasus behind **Gun Runner**, commencing a season that ultimately revealed him to be a genuine Grade 1 horse. Said efforts included a second in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) behind City of Light, third in a defence attempt of the Clark Handicap and decisive win the Ack Ack Stakes (G3). His only black mark was a dull effort in Saratoga's Woodward (G1) in early September.

"He's a really tough horse who enjoys his job," Stewart said. "He seems to be at his peak right now and has improved with age. I still don't know what happened in the Woodward. Maybe he was sick or something, but we got him back to Louisville and he won the Ack Ack and were using that as a prep for the Breeders' Cup. We actually really wanted to run him in the (Breeders' Cup) Classic, but somehow he wound up number 15 for qualifying points (only 14 horses able to run). That left a bad taste in our mouths, to be honest, because he was ready to run. Then, in the Dirt Mile, he had traffic trouble and ran into a world-beater in City of Light."

This time around, Stewart is even more enthused to take on the challenge of Dubai after his dry run with Forever Unbridled. A winner of 6-of-24, Seeking the Soul has placed in 18 of his career starts and seems to reflect the same tenacity for which Stewart has long been known and respected.

"I feel like the second time around is even a little more exciting and I know Chuck (Fipke) is excited to come, too," he said. "We won't do things too differently. They do a great job of getting you there and giving you enough time to train your horse and they take really good care of you and the whole crew."

"In the meantime, we'll get him back to New Orleans to train at the Fair Grounds," Stewart concluded. "I wouldn't expect to train as hard for this race as the last race because he's very fit. We will marginalise his works and keep him in top form."

ASMUSSEN HIGH ON SWITZERLAND



Trainer Steve Asmussen is confident that **Switzerland** will represent his powerful stable well on Thursday at Meydan. In what is the conditioner's second start of the 2019 Dubai World Cup Carnival, following the off-the-board finish of **Tone Broke** in last week's Al Bastakiya Trial, he brings an accomplished and impeccably swift sprinter into the \$200,000 Al Shindagha Sprint (G3).

"It's a good spot for him," Asmussen said. "I hope he handles the circumstances of the race and runs well. That's what we're expecting. I'm very pleased with how he shipped over there and Carlos (Rosas, assistant and exercise rider) thought he worked great over the racetrack.

"It all came together," he continued. "He's the right kind of horse to send to Dubai. I think international racing is the direction all horseracing is going and we're glad to be a part of it.

"I don't think Tone Broke ran his race the other day. We'll have to figure that out."

Switzerland has a pair of Grade 3 wins going the same 1200m dirt distance of Thursday's race, including a dominant win in the DeFrancis Dash at Laurel Park in the fall and equally as smart victory in the Maryland Sprint in the spring. Owned by Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi, he enters off two losses, including a third last out on Nov. 22 in Fair Grounds' Thanksgiving Handicap as the top weight. To be successful on Thursday, he must best two other speedsters in defending champ **My Catch** and dual Argentine G2 winner **Tato Key**, while also overcoming a bad habit of being slowly from the stalls. He must also hold off well-regarded Garhoud Sprint (Listed) winner **Drafted**.

Asmussen, who has a win (**Curlin**) and a second (**Gun Runner**) in the Dubai World Cup among his local accomplishments, nominated 10 horses to the Dubai World Cup card on Mar. 30.

"They have dates before then, but hopefully they put it all together in order to send some to Dubai," he said.

His nominations include Grade 2-winning Winchell Thoroughbreds colour-bearers **Copper Bullet** and classic-placed **Tenfold**, who are both nominated to the Dubai World Cup (G1), while the former is also nominated to the Godolphin Mile (G2). Switzerland, **Mitole** and **New York Central** are nominated to the Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1), with New York Central also nominated to the Godolphin Mile and Al Quoz Sprint (G1). Other nominations include **Snapper Sinclair** in the Godolphin Mile and **For the Top**, **Comedian** and **Tikhvin Flew** joining Tone Broke among the UAE Derby (G2).

AL HAYETTE EXPECTED TO IMPROVE



It is easy to hear in his voice that **Al Hayette** is the pride and joy of the Ismail Mohammed yard and the conditioner is hoping that she can keep bringing him both of those sentiments when she competes in Thursday's \$250,000 UAE 1000 Guineas (Listed). The daughter of Belmont Stakes (G1) winner Union Rags is the favourite for said 1600m affair, but must overcome the outside barrier draw of 15 as she makes her fourth start of the UAE season and seventh lifetime.

"She's improving every race," Mohammed said. "She's done very well since her last run and her last work was very good. I wasn't worried about the short break between (her last race and previous effort), because the plan was always that race, then the Trial and then the Guineas before the Oaks. We gave her some freshening since and she has had four weeks to this race. She will get even better when she goes the 1900m in the Oaks, I think.

"I think she has a very good chance in the Guineas," he continued. "If she runs like she does at home, she should run well. She's becoming more relaxed and we are doing our best to keep her quiet, as she was very hot in the UK."

Prior to coming to Dubai, Al Hayette ran three times in England, hitting the board twice. Bred distinctly for dirt, she excelled when allowed to try the surface at Meydan and rides a two-race win streak into the race, including a dominant victory in the aforementioned 1000 Guineas Trial over 1400m on opening night of the Dubai World Cup Carnival, Jan. 3. If all goes well with her run on Thursday, the ultimate goal is the \$250,000 UAE Oaks (G3), a race Mohammed won in 2007 with **Folk**, who also won the Guineas.

"It is a dream of mine to win the Oaks in my colours," he said. "I've won the race before as a trainer, but I've waited 12 years to have it in my colours. She's a really good filly and has a very good turn-of-foot and she will tell us on Thursday if she can do it."

SECRET AMBITION, BEHAVIORAL BIAS IMPRESS; YULONG WARRIOR RETURNING



Trainer Satish Seemar was over the moon with the performances of a pair of his top dirt milers on Friday at Jebel Ali, but for very different reasons. His winner, **Secret Ambition** (pictured left), proved in the Jebel Ali Mile (G3) that he had corrected his previously perplexing form. Meanwhile, new acquisition and former U.S.-based **Behavioral Bias** (centre) overcame significant hurdles to be a game third in the same 1600m affair. Both are now flush with options during the Dubai World Cup Carnival as they set their ultimate sights on a possible run in the Godolphin Mile (G2) on Dubai World Cup day.

“Secret Ambition was very impressive and Behavioral Bias is a heck of a horse,” Seemar said. “If I had him a couple weeks or a month before we got him, I think I would have been very bullish about him winning the Jebel Ali Mile, to be honest. He is quite a cool horse. He had never raced around that tight, right turn or up the hill and he did both very well. I am hoping to divide them and we don’t run them together on purpose, they just both fit the races they’re in. From here, we will look at the Firebreak (Stakes) and other options during the Carnival.”

The \$200,000 Firebreak Stakes (G3) is slated for Feb. 14 over 1600m and is a natural stepping stone to both the \$350,000 Burj Nahaar (G3) over the same distance on Super Saturday, Mar. 9, as well as the Godolphin Mile, Mar. 30. Other options include a 1400m handicap on Feb. 21 and 1600m handicap on Feb. 28. In 2016, One Man Band used the former en route to victory in the Godolphin Mile.

Behavioral Bias was formerly trained in Louisiana and Kentucky by Al Stall Jr. and owned by Brittlyn Stables. Consistent, he has placed in 11 of 14 tries and his only other try in Group/Graded company was when fourth in last April’s Commonwealth Stakes (G3) over 1400m at Keeneland behind **Warrior’s Club**.

Seemar also reported that 2018 Al Bastakiya (Listed) winner **Yulong Warrior** is scheduled to arrive back in Dubai to prepare for the latter half of the DWC Carnival.

“I’ve been keeping tabs on his training in the quarantine over there and getting videos,” Seemar said. “He arrives on the 11th and the plan is to run him during the Carnival. We will make sure everything is okay with him and that he’s on form, accordingly. Hopefully he comes around.”

Yulong Warrior was sent to the California-based stable of Godolphin Mile-winning conditioner Doug O’Neill last summer, begetting one victory in minor stakes company from four starts. Last out, he was

seventh in the San Antonio Stakes (G2) behind the Dubai World Cup-nominated trio of **Gift Box**, **Battle of Midway** and **Dabster**.

ROY H READIES FOR DUBAI RETURN



Rockingham Ranch and David Bernsen's two-time American sprint champion **Roy H** made a statement last weekend when he trounced his foes in the Palos Verdes (G2) at Santa Anita Park. The 7-year-old Peter Miller-trained gelding, fresh off his second Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1) win in November, laughed at multiple graded stakes winners, finishing up the 1200m in 1:08.89 and winning by four lengths at the wire. The beaten favourite in last year's Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1), he will now return as an arguably better horse, hoping to make up for his third last year behind **Mind Your Biscuits** and Rockingham co-owned **X Y Jet**.

"Last year Roy broke flat out of the gate," said Brian Trump, racing manager. "He just didn't seem to have the same kick as he's always had. A few things happened, but we aren't looking to make excuses. When Pete got him back, re-evaluated everything and got him into a training program, he saw that Roy got complacent and needed to be challenged a little bit more. We mixed up the scenery and it made all the difference in the world."

Jorge Navarro-conditioned X Y Jet—also the 2016 Dubai Golden Shaheen runner-up—has had two races since, an impressive win in June's Smile Sprint (G3) and a lacklustre run two weeks ago in the Sunshine Millions Sprint.

"Right now, the plan is still to send X Y Jet back to Dubai," Trump reported. "He is absolutely healthy and 100%. We will touch base with Jorge in the next week to strategise and make a final decision."

Trump also reported that Rockingham, who also finished second last year with Bernsen co-owned **Stormy Liberal** in the Al Quoz Sprint (G1), is pondering sending horses at Meydan during the Dubai World Cup Carnival in the future.

"We absolutely would consider running horses in the Carnival," he concluded. "We have been trying to figure out the logistics of it or a few years now, as in who will go and stay with the horses, which of our horses are the right fit, etc."

Stormy Liberal is confirmed as pointing toward this year's Al Quoz Sprint.

ALMOND EYE, REY DE ORO CONFIRMED



Japanese racing superstars **Almond Eye** and **Rey de Oro** have both been confirmed for Dubai, according to Japanese racing authorities and their connections. The former, the top-rated darling of Japanese racing, exits a resounding victory in the Japan Cup (G1) and won the filly Triple Crown in her native land. Rey de Oro was fourth in last year's Longines Dubai Sheema Classic (G1), was champion 3-year-old of 2017 in Japan and finished second in both the 2017 Japan Cup (G1) and 2018 Arima Kinen (G1).

At the end of season JRA Award Ceremony in Tokyo, Masashi Yonemoto of Silk Racing (owner) confirmed that Almond Eye will go for the \$6 million Dubai Turf over 1800m, while Hiroaki Akita of U Carrot Farm (owner) confirmed that Rey de Oro will get another shot at the \$6 million Longines Dubai Sheema Classic. It was also confirmed that France's Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (G1) is a major international target for Almond Eye.

"I spoke with her trainer (Sakae) Kunieda and her next run will be the Dubai Turf over 1,800 metres" Yonemoto said. "I think she (will improve) physically and mentally and expect amazing performances (in 2019)."

Akita said of Rey de Oro: "It is a Group 1 we could win last year, so I would like to have him run again and get revenge. He has grown up over the past year."

Jockey Christophe Lemaire, record-setting champion rider of Japan in 2018, will ride both Almond Eye and Rey de Oro in Dubai. "Almond Eye is a special horse for me," he added. "She is like (professional tennis player) Naomi Osaka, clever and powerful. If we go to the Arc, I want to win. I am French, you know, and I have not won (the Arc), so I really hope to."

All quotes translated from Japanese to English.

-END-

#DWCCarnival #DubaiWorldCup