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‘SUPERSTAR’ ONE MAN BAND RETIRED



It was almost a fairy tale comeback for 2016 Godolphin Mile (G2) winner **One Man Band** in December. Off 999 days, he returned to the racetrack looking and performing as if he had not missed a beat. Leading all the way until the last jump of the Dubai Creek Mile (Listed), he was nipped by aptly named stablemate **Stunned**.

Said effort followed an extensive layoff that tested the patience of his connections, but ultimately reminded fans why he was one of the fastest and toughest horses to race in the UAE. In the end, though, what looked like a new beginning quickly turned into a last hurrah, as an old tendon injury resurfaced and trainer Doug Watson retired the Sheikh Saeed bin Mohammed Al Maktoum-owned 8-year-old horse.

“He was our first (Dubai) World Cup night winner and he was a superstar,” Watson said. “I think, at one point, he held or was just off the track record for every Meydan distance from 1400m to 1900m. He was just so big for us.

“The year after he won the Godolphin Mile, he came out and we had been cantering for two days starting back the next season and he ended up with a tendon issue. We had to put him away for the year and brought him back the next year and we were going to run him seven furlongs up the hill in a conditions race (at Jebel Ali). His other tendon got a small lesion in it, so we had to stop there. We basically thought he was retired and I didn’t want to train such a nice horse with two bowed tendons. They weren’t bad, but they were there.

“I started the horses back this year in August and I happened to be down talking to the foreman and walked by his stall and he was whinnying. I thought, well, he’s just sitting here, let’s just get him started and see how it goes. If something happens a little bit, if the tendon goes, we’ll stop. We were able to get him to that race and just missed winning with him after almost a 1,000 days layoff. He actually came out of it fine, but just about a week later, (the tendon issue) reappeared. We scanned it and, you know, I wasn’t going to push him anymore. He had done enough for us. He has done the world for us. He got us on the map.”

Stud plans have not yet been determined for the son of super-sire Pivotal out of Group 1-placed Cape Cross mare Musicanna. The Irish-bred \$129,523 Goffs November 2011 purchase retires with eight wins from 17 starts and earnings just shy of \$1 million. Previously in the care of Charlie Appleby for his first two starts in August and September of 2013, he raced under Watson’s care for the remainder of his career.

NORTH AMERICA, COSMO CHARLIE COLLIDE



Dubai Racing Club | Erika Rasmussen

It is hard to imagine North America being more impressive than he was four weeks ago in the 1600m Group 2 \$350,000 Al Maktoum Challenge Round 1, but he has apparently exited said effort in top shape and will get a chance to stretch out to what many believe is an even better distance for him in this Thursday’s Group 2 \$450,000 Al Maktoum Challenge Round 2 over 1900m. A massive son of Dubawi, the Satish Seemar-trained gelding is an overwhelming favourite as he hopes to further materialise the Dubai World Cup dreams of his connections.

“He got the six draw today and it’s a small field of seven, so I don’t think that’s too bad,” Seemar said. “I maybe would have preferred a bit lower, but in this field, we are fine. There’s one speed horse outside of him, but hopefully we jump (well) out of the gate. If he does that, I am not worried.

“I haven’t spoken to the owner about what his other horse’s plans are,” Seemar continued. “I’m just doing what’s best for our horse and going to run in the race that suits him. The horse is doing really well and the last two seasons he has proven that he’s a better horse. Right now I think he’s the best ever been. He has finished his works very strong.”

The other horse is the referenced **Cosmo Charlie**, who races for the same owner, Ramzan Kadyrov, but is trained by Doug Watson. Adding intrigue is that Cosmo Charlie has proven that he is best when on the lead and is drawn to the immediate outside of North America, whose famously terrible break in the 2018 Dubai World Cup cost him the race and handed winner **Thunder Snow** an easy lead.

Cosmo Charlie has been a project for his conditioner. Long well-regarded, the son of Travers (G1) winner Stay Thirsty has taken a while to come to hand because of his high-spirited nature. A sharp winner of the 2017 Al Bastakiya (Listed) over this trip, he had an overall subpar 4-year-old season, but ended it with sharp return to form when finally allowed to stretch his speed to 2000m in The Entisar (Listed) last out on Dec. 20. Freshened since that 7¼-length romp, he has had his form franked when fellow Round 2 entrant **New Trails** manhandled a handicap field by 10 lengths last month.

“North America broke so well last time in the Round 1 and we actually don’t usually break too great, so that’s a concern,” Watson said. “Charlie just has that kind of natural speed once he gets into gear. We might have to sit off him, if North America breaks like that again. We are going to break to go forward and leave it to (jockey) Pat (Dobbs) and his judgment.

“One thing is he’s not a fan of kick-back,” Watson continued. “It’s going to be a smaller field, so if he can break and North America goes and we can sit off him, that might work, too. I will say that Charlie is a different horse since being gelded this year.”

VAZIRABAD SEEKS GOLD CUP GRAND SLAM



Few horses can inspire the kind of ovation from the Meydan crowd that **Vazirabad** has galvanised for three consecutive victorious editions of the Dubai Gold Cup (G2)—especially in 2018, when the Alain de Royer-Dupre-trained son of Manduro inhaled most of the field in the final straight of the 3200m affair en route to a brilliant hat trick. The stone grey pride of the Aga Khan operation is preparing for a possible ‘grand slam’ in the marathon \$1.5 million race, but instead of spending the winter in Dubai as he has the past two seasons, he is bypassing a local prep and preparing in France.

“He’s doing very well,” de Royer-Dupre said. “Physically, he’s okay, but we have to be careful with his legs. He had an injury at Ascot, where the ground was a little too hard and terrible for him. He was out of training for six months and now is back with me.”

Vazirabad, who has long been seen as one of the top-rated stayers in the world, had a chance to prove such in June in Royal Ascot’s prestigious Ascot Gold Cup (G1). The most important staying race in the northern hemisphere, the 4000m contest often features a salty field, which was evident by the presence of the top-rated stayer in Europe, **Stradivarius**, as well as co-favourite and defending champion Order of St George being present. Sent away as the 9-2 third choice in the wagering behind said pair, Vazirabad gave them all they could handle, beating all but the former to the wire and losing by a less than a length.

“He will go to Deauville in 10 days,” de Royer-Dupre said. “If you change the place, with an older horse, they start to know they’re getting ready to race again and that the competition is coming back. Then he will have a gallop with some good horses at Saint-Cloud three weeks out from the race and then stay in Deauville, where we will have him prepare to see if he is able to come. If it goes well, he will return to Dubai.

“I can’t have a preparation race for him because it’s too early (coming back from injury),” he continued. “The first time he won (the Dubai Gold Cup in 2016), he did not have a prep race. He’s a horse I have had for a long time and you know when he’s well and when he’s not well. Hopefully he will show that he is ready.”

Vazirabad won the last two Dubai Gold Cups after a runner-up effort in the 2810m Nad Al Sheba Trophy (G3). He enters his fifth year of racing with a remarkable record of 15 wins and six seconds from 23 starts, three Group 1 wins and having finished first or second in his last 13 runs. A true specialist, at the two-mile/3200m trip, he is undefeated from three starts and at distances from 3000-3200m he is 13-for-15.

IMPERIAL HINT BEGINS SHAHEEN PREP



Dubai Racing Club | Mathea Kelley

Imperial Hint, one of the top dirt sprinters in the world, is taking aim on Dubai and a chance at redemption on multiple levels. Two years ago, the son of Imperialism ventured across the world for the Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1), but was scratched the week of the race with a fever. He also has a budding rivalry with two-time champion U.S. sprinter **Roy H.** Both of those itches can be scratched if the Luis Carvajal Jr. trainee succeeds in his second chance at a first Meydan impression on Mar. 30.

“Right now he’s doing extremely well,” said trainer Luis Carvajal Jr. of the Raymond Mamone-owned 6-year-old. “If all goes well with his preparation, he will run on the 16th here at Tampa (Bay Downs in Florida). I have had to space out his works a little bit because he’s ready to run and wants to go way too fast. I can’t wait to run him here in Tampa. I’m more pleased to be here in the winter than last time when he prepped in the cold weather (in 2017).

“Dubai is our main goal and I hope we get there,” he continued. “It will be good because I think he will love the track and weather there. He does really likes hot weather, which is another reason we have him preparing in Florida. He really likes to train. We wanted to give him more time off after (finishing third in the Breeders’ Cup Sprint on Nov. 3), but it’s not easy to do that and I wanted to keep an eye on him.”

The 12-time winner from 19 starts returned to the work tab on Jan. 3 and has had a trio of quick works in total, including a sparkling 1000m work in 59 seconds flat on Jan. 26. He is slated to run in Tampa's \$100,000 Pelican Stakes, a race that has attracted nominations from the likes of Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint (G1)-placed **World of Trouble**, two-time Dubai Golden Shaheen runner-up **XY Jet** and Tampa Bay Derby (G2) winner **Quip**.

In the Breeders' Cup Sprint in November, he was the favourite over Roy H, but was unable to catch his rival, thus losing the race and his chance at a championship. In the preceding months, he won four races, including the Vosburgh (G1) and Alfred G. Vanderbilt Handicap (G1) amid a season that immediately followed a tough runner-up loss in the Breeders' Cup Sprint of 2017 behind the same foe.

"The work was very impressive," Carvajal said. "I just wanted to see what he would do and if he had slowed down a bit, but he was full of run. He wanted to do something and the jockey tried to hold him a little bit, but he really ran. When the jockey came back, he had a big smile.

"Sometimes you want to have an easy spot, but he's doing so good right now and I'd like to see him run against good horses like X Y Jet or World of Trouble before we head to Dubai. We want to beat the best of the best and hopefully we get a chance to run against Roy H again in Dubai. He's a nice horse and our horse is a nice horse. I'd like to get a chance to beat him."

MOSHAHER LOOKING TO RAIN ON THUNDER'S PARADE



The electricity of the Group 3 \$250,000 UAE 2000 Guineas rightfully circulates around 3-for-3 **Walking Thunder**, but one who is looking to shine despite said storm is H and B's Doug Watson-trained **Moshafer**. In a season hypothetically without Walking Thunder, this son of freshman sire Goldencents would be the local horse to beat, thanks to his brilliant debut win on Jan. 5, and the bay colt has been impressing onlookers since.

Breaking alertly on debut, the mid-sized charge was always engaged, toying with his rivals and ultimately hitting the wire of the 1600m affair as much the best. He now heads to the same-distance Guineas as one of the main threats to Phoenix Ladies Syndicate's aforementioned favourite and could mix it up with him earlier, rather than later, in the running.

“It was his first race ever and (jockey) Pat (Dobbs) thought he was kind of a little too much on it, but in a smaller field this Thursday, I think we will want to go forward and just see where the pace lies, keeping him in contention that way,” Watson said. “I wouldn’t trade him with anybody at the moment. These are all really good horses, it’s the second race of his life and is a big ask for him, but I think he’s up to it.”

Out of a Valiant Nature mare with a deep and classy Winchell Thoroughbreds female side to his pedigree, Moshaher has shown his conditioner that he has progressed since his win. Two years ago, Watson was second in the classic with subsequent G1 winner **Bee Jersey**.

“His work has been better and better and he’s moving very well,” Watson concluded. “He’s probably one of the least experienced ones in there, but hopefully he’s as good as we think he is.”

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