

ROAD TO DUBAI WORLD CUP 2019 – VOL. 3

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DWC CARNIVAL UPDATE VOL. 26 | NEWS, NOTES AND FEATURES

DUBAI | MARCH 14, 2019
MICHAEL.ADOLPHSON@MEYDAN.AE

- **DUBAI WORLD CUP: Dabster In, Gift Box Out**
- **DUBAI TURF: Almond Eye Sharpens Focus**
- **DUBAI GOLDEN SHAHEEN: Promises Fulfilled into the Fray**
- **AL QUOZ SPRINT: Brave Smash a Serious Player**

DUBAI WORLD CUP: DABSTER IN, GIFT BOX OUT



Dubai Racing Club | Ernie Belmonte

With shipping protocols and other such logistics coming into play, the world's richest race continues to take shape with haste. In as much, the \$12 million Dubai World Cup sponsored by Emirate Airline (G1) appears to have a nice balance of familiar faces and new players, in both equine and human form.

One such candidate who has arguably the most enviable connections of any is **Dabster**, whose trainer Bob Baffert has three victories in the 2000m race and was second last year with market favourite **West Coast**. Owned by Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum, the son of Curlin carries the same yellow and blue silks as no less than three Dubai World Cup runner-ups—**Mubtaahij**, **Lizard's Desire** and **Asiatic Boy**—the last of whom was coincidentally second to his sire in 2008. The \$1 million Fasig-Tipton purchase was nearly joined by stablemate **McKinzie** as Dubai-bound, but his conditioner decided against it after they worked on Sunday.

“Dabster is definitely going to the Dubai World Cup,” Baffert said. “McKinzie was on the fence. I think they're going to re-card the (Santa Anita Handicap). Everything went really smooth (with the works). The track was in pristine shape.”

A consistent performer, Dabster is similar in style to another Baffert pupil who took home a nice chunk of the sizable pot a few years ago, **Hoppertunity** (third in 2016). Dabster, though, has even more to prove. He has not won a graded race, but has two stakes wins to his credit against lesser company. Facing stiff

class in recent months, he has held his own, including a head loss to Breeders' Cup winner **Battle of Midway**, who was expected to be one of the favourites in the Dubai World Cup before his untimely demise.

In 13 starts, the versatile charge has five victories and has proven effective from 1400m to 2800m, including a runner-up at the latter extreme in the Marathon (G2) last fall. Two starts ago, he was a fine third, between 1¼ lengths, in the San Antonio (G2) behind **Gift Box** and Battle of Midway. The former, trained by John Sadler, was being pointed to the Dubai World Cup until this week.

“He just needs more time,” Sadler said. “When I ship out, I ship to win, so I wasn’t going to go just to go. His training was interrupted by the weather, so, unfortunately, we won’t make it to Dubai.”

Following the Al Maktoum Challenge Round 3 (G1) on *Super Saturday* at Meydan, the local horses are now sorted for the big day, topped by defending champion **Thunder Snow**—a respectable runner-up—and runaway winner **Capezzano**, whose dominance draped the recently completed 2019 Dubai World Cup Carnival.

They were followed home by South Korean invader **Dolkong**, whose performance was doubly impressive, as it came only nine days after a romp in the Curlin Handicap (Listed) over the same 2000m. Still, all paths lead through the behemoth that is **North America**, who skipped Round 3—a race he dominated in 2018—to come into Mar. 30 a fresh horse. Fringe players who would likely hope to get into the big dance are **New Trails** and **Gronkowski** (both unplaced in Round 3), who ran fairly well, but must improve.

The proverbial x-factor may be **Muntazah**, who was originally possible for Round 3, but chose to contest the Burj Nahaar (G3) on Super Saturday, dismantling his foes by 10 lengths and setting a track record (1:34.99) for 1600m. The Doug Watson trainee is now more likely for the Godolphin Mile (G2), a race in which he was second last year. Still, if he reverses course, he has the tactical speed and overall class to be a serious threat to all involved.

While invitations have not been confirmed, it is good to keep a watch on possible runners. Below are some possibles and a list that is ultimately pure guess-work until official invitations are announced and a field of probables takes shape.

DWC Watch: Thunder Snow, North America, Capezzano, Muntazah, Audible, Yoshida, Gunnevera, K T Brave, Seeking the Soul and Dabster.

DUBAI TURF: ALMOND EYE SHARPENS FOCUS



Japanese filly Triple Crown victress **Almond Eye** has been successfully clocking faster work since having returned to Miho Training Centre on Feb. 22 in preparation of her Dubai quest. The Japanese champion will be lining up in the \$6 million Dubai Turf sponsored by DP World (G1) on Dubai World Cup night, Mar. 30, and she was on the work tab on Mar. 6, stretching a comfortable 1000m in 67.0 seconds, with closing splits of 51.3 (800m), 37.6 (600m) and 12.5 for the final 200m.

The multiple Group 1 winner was back at it again on Mar. 13, tightening the proverbial screws for owner Silk Racing Co. by going 1200m in 1:20.40, closing her final 600m (three furlongs) in 31 flat and her final 200m in 12.3 seconds over the wood chip surface. From seven lifetime starts, she has won all but her debut, including her last four at the top level.

The Japanese princess also owns a world record (2:20.60) over 2400m on turf, making her a perfect candidate for the Longines Dubai Sheema Classic (G1) over 2410m. However, trainer Sakae Kunieda has instead opted to target the 1800m Dubai Turf (G1). Said distance still may well be within her wheelhouse, as she also owns three 1600m victories, including the Group 1 Oka Sho (Japanese 1000 Guineas) in stakes record time (1:33.10).

“She is training great,” said Kunieda. “Her weight is up to 493kg. As we push her more in training and after her trip to Dubai, she should be at her best. She goes into quarantine for her departure on the 20th. With the big sweeping one turn, I think the 1800m (Dubai) Turf is a suitable easy distance for her first start of the year.”

The Dubai Turf could be the beginning of an ambitious 2019 for the bay filly, as she also has the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe (G1) on her schedule in October.

Others who appear poised to take her on include fellow females from her homeland, **Vivlos** (winner in 2017) and **Deirdre** (third last year). The local team, which won last year with Godolphin's **Benbatl**, has another from the same owner-trainer team in Saeed bin Suroor-conditioned **Dream Castle**, who once again manhandled his local foes with a victory in the Jebel Hatta (G1) on Super Saturday.

In Ireland, **I Can Fly** won her 1400m all-weather prep at Dundalk with flying colours for Aidan O'Brien, hinting that she could be approaching the form that saw her a fine second in the Queen Elizabeth II (G1) last October. Fellow Europeans **Without Parole** and **Century Dream** (unplaced in the Jebel Hatta) continue on to the Dubai Turf, while Hong Kong representative **Southern Legend** was committed to the event and brings solid Group 1 form.

While invitations have not been confirmed, it is good to keep a watch on possible runners. Below are some possibles and a list that is ultimately pure guess-work until official invitations are announced and a field of probables takes shape.

*DT Watch: Almond Eye, Dream Castle, Without Parole, I Can Fly, **Wootton**, Century Dream, Vivlos, Southern Legend and Deirdre.*

DUBAI GOLDEN SHAHEEN: PROMISED FULFILLED INTO THE FRAY

Dubai Racing Club | Penelope Miller



Trainer Dale Romans does not like to overcomplicate things.

While pondering when and where his Grade 1-winning charge **Promises Fulfilled** would make his seasonal bow, he keeps coming back to the obvious: he has a colt with controlling speed who runs well fresh. It just so happens there is \$2.5 million race on the table that would play to the chestnut runner's best assets. So while a final commitment is still being weighed, a trip to Meydan for the Group 1 Dubai Golden Shaheen on Mar. 30 has been tabbed as the most likely spot for Promises Fulfilled to make his 4-year-old debut.

"There are \$2.5 million reasons to come back in that race," Romans said of a potential Golden Shaheen outing.

Since cutting back to sprint distances following a disappointing run in the 2018 Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (G1), Robert Baron's Promises Fulfilled has developed into one of the most formidable members of a depth-laden division in North America. The son of Shackleford won three of his last four starts of his sophomore campaign, including a victory in the H. Allen Jerkens Stakes (G1) at Saratoga last August 25. When he won the six-furlong Stoll Keenon Ogden Phoenix Stakes (G2) at Keeneland in October, he became the only member of last year's 3-year-old male dirt division to defeat older horses in a graded stakes.

Freshened since his fourth-place finish in the Nov. 3 Breeders' Cup Sprint (G1), Promises Fulfilled has proven he can fire a winning shot off a layoff. When he won the Fountain of Youth Stakes (G2) in March 2018, it was his first outing since running third in the Kentucky Jockey Club Stakes (G2) the previous November.

"He's a fast, fast horse, that's the bottom line, nothing else really matters," Romans said. "He came off the layoff and he ran huge in the Fountain of Youth last year. I thought about getting a prep into him (before the Golden Shaheen) and then I thought about that and I said we'll just train right into it if we're going to go."

Romans is no stranger to Dubai success having saddled 2005 Dubai World Cup winner **Roses in May**. Given that the Dubai Golden Shaheen has been dominated by American-based runners, Romans says the 1200m test was a no-brainer to put on Promises Fulfilled's likely agenda.

“I think the sprint is America’s race,” Romans said. “I think the Americans will be the horses to beat there and I think he’ll be one of the horses to beat.”

Another who appears poised to test the limits of their speed and class is local star **Drafted**, who narrowly ran down **Nine Below Zero** and **Tato Key** in the Mahab Al Shimaal (G3) on Super Saturday. He will likely take on the likes of **Roy H**, **Imperial Hint** and two-time Dubai Golden Shaheen runner-up **X Y Jet**. Japan’s **Matera Sky**, unplaced but respectably acquitted last year, as well as Hong Kong’s **Fight Hero** are also expected, according to their connections and local media.

While invitations have not been confirmed, it is good to keep a watch on possible runners. Below are some possibles and a list that is ultimately pure guess-work until official invitations are announced and a field of probables takes shape.

DGS Watch: Roy H, Imperial Hint, X Y Jet, Promises Fulfilled, Matera Sky, Drafted, Tato Key, Fight Hero and Nine Below Zero.

AL QUOZ SPRINT: BRAVE SMASH A SERIOUS PLAYER



All things going to plan, Australian Bloodstock’s speedster **Brave Smash** will be joining Down Under country-mate **Viddora** in the line-up for the \$2 million Al Quoz Sprint sponsored by Azizi Developments (G1) on Dubai World Cup night. The Japanese-bred was last seen finishing a strong third by a three-quarters of a length in the Group 1 Newmarket Handicap over the Flemington’s straight 1200m.

The Kris Lees-trained charge has matured nicely with age, winning the 2018 Group 1 Manikato Stakes over 1200m at Moonee Valley in October, after having already added the Group 1 Futurity Stakes over 1400m at Caulfield earlier that year. Earlier this winter, he moved from the yard of Darren Weir to that of well-respected conditioner Kris Lees.

“He’s a seasoned traveller,” Lees said. “I don’t think the trip away will concern him. The straight track and fast ground will also suit him, so there are a few pluses there. I’ve been watching (Blue Point) closely and he’ll be a very tough horse to beat, but we’re very comfortable with where Brave Smash is at the moment.

“He came out of his Newmarket run well,” Lees continued. “He’s better if he’s covered up and he was exposed a little sooner than he would have preferred. He can hold his own against the top sprinters in Australia and that normally makes you competitive against the best in the world.

“I’ve only had him a short period of time, but I think he has really held his form well as he’s aged. If he can maintain that form, he should do well. He leaves Sydney on Monday for Dubai.”

As the highest-rated son of Hokkaido-based sire Tosen Phantom, the tough sprinter has been secured to stand at Aquis Farm at the start of the Southern Hemisphere breeding season in September this year. The high-earner will bid to say farewell in spectacular fashion, with global tour possibilities including the sprint riches on offer in Hong Kong during their April Champions Day, as well as a Royal Ascot mid-summer tilt.

Hugh Bowman is set to ride.

Meanwhile, Blue Point continues to be the favourite, but his dominance has not scared off international challengers. **Sands of Mali** remains on course from the UK, while **Wishful Thinker** of Hong Kong has been announced by his connections as a prospect.

While invitations have not been confirmed, it is good to keep a watch on possible runners. Below are some possibles and a list that is ultimately pure guess-work until official invitations are announced and a field of probables takes shape.

*AQS Watch: Viddora, **Lost Treasure**, Wishful Thinker, **Stormy Liberal**, Ekhtihaar, **Mazzini**, **Faatinah**, Blue Point, Brave Smash and Sands of Mali.*

-END-

#DubaiWorldCup