

BBM in the Middle East - Qatar, Bahrain and Dubai

24 February - 5 March 2009

Anna Pinnington (AP), on behalf of BBM, was present in Qatar for the International Racing Festival (24-25 Feb), went racing in Bahrain (26-28 Feb), and was in attendance at the Emirates Racing Authority Sale together with racing on Super Thursday in Dubai (1-5 March).



As expected, there was a large French contingent in Qatar for the International Equestrian Festival (25-26 February). It consisted of Louis Romanet (President of the International Federation of Horseracing Authorities), Hubert Monzat (CEO of France Galop), Jean Pierre de Gaste (President of the French Arabian Horseracing Association), Gerard Larrieu (Peak Bloodstock), Paul Nataf (Bloodstock Agent) and Jean Pierre Deroubaix (French Bloodstock Agency) who was the consultant for the construction of the new grandstand and race track in Qatar.

Amidst the dominance of the French were Alistair Donald (Managing Director of the International Racing Bureau), Jason Singh (Marketing Manager of Tattersalls), Evan Arkwright (Commercial Manager of The Curragh Racecourse), Rogers Beasley, (Director of Racing, Keeneland), Geoffrey Russell, (Director of Sales, Keeneland) and AP. We were made to feel very welcome by Sami Al Boenain (President of Qatar Racing Authority), Michael Fenton (CEO of Qatar Racing Authority) and the Chief Handicapper, Conrad Allen.



The Qatar International Cup, the richest race in Qatar worth 500,000.00 USD in prizemoney, was won by Godolphin's Age of Reason and Saeed bin Suroor

The International Festival was a well organised race meeting and a good occasion to meet the leading owners and trainers. The Qatar International Cup,

was present for the occasion. There were noticeably fewer international runners in the race this year and this was due mainly to quarantine issues. The wealthiest Arabian race at the moment is 1 million USD and there is talk of working towards the thoroughbred race becoming equally lucrative.



Following the International Equestrian Festival in Qatar AP and Jason Singh flew to Bahrain. The Kingdom of Bahrain Equestrian and Horseracing Club intend to internationalise their racing and a five year investment project in the racecourse is due to commence in June 2009. The investment project will be funded by Kuwait Finance House and run by International Racecourse Management who are charged with the management of the racing and the racecourse.



It was evident that there is an inherent passion for racing in Bahrain highlighted by the size of the crowd at the track. Bahrain was one of the first countries in the Gulf to have a race-track and it has not been refurbished since its construction over 30 years ago. It is an ambitious project but one which everyone is very excited and enthusiastic about. Fawzi Nass was sponsoring the feature race of the card, which was won by Tattersalls graduate Reformist trained by Ramzi Abdull Sahbb.

The final leg of the trip was Dubai for the Emirate Racing Authority Sale and the World Cup trials on Thursday. Todd Watt and John O'Kelly auctioneered the sale and Jason Singh, David Anderson and AP were there for the sale and racing.

During the first session of the sale on Tuesday evening there were a total of 26 horses sold for an aggregate of 2,299,000 AED (c. £ 442,450) and an average of 88,423 AED (c. £ 17,000) with 21 horses withdrawn and 5 not sold. 11 were bought for Dubai, Syria (6), Bahrain (5), Kuwait (2) and South Africa (1).

The second day's trade concluded with 66 horses sold for 2,063,000 AED (c. £ 397,233) at an average of 31,257 AED (c. £ 6,000). There were 26 lots withdrawn and 8 lots not sold. There were 30 sold to Dubai, Libya (3), Kuwait (3), Syria (7), Bahrain (12), Oman (7) and Qatar (2). Gerard Bush from Emirates Racing Authority, who was organising the sale, was pleased with the turnover and clearance rate.

Super Thursday hosted a very International meeting with countries represented including Ireland, England, France, Germany, Qatar, Bahrain, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Australia. Todd Watt, John O'Kelly, Jason Singh and AP were invited to give the best turned out prize to the grooms in each race.

Despite the feeling that no cranes or building activity were flourishing in the centre of Dubai during our stay, Meydan is definitely a priority, with builders working around the clock to have the project finished. The hotel, run by the Banyan Tree Group, is due to be complete by the World Cup 2009 and the next 2010 World Cup will be hosted on the new Meydan track. The Meydan City itself is to be built over a four year period and the projects are quite impressively ambitious.

To conclude, it was a very worthwhile, thought provoking and diverse trip. It was great to attend the International meeting in Qatar, useful to visit Bahrain just before the new project gets underway, as well as very interesting to see the Meydan plans. It is encouraging to see that the Gulf countries that traditionally only raced Arabian horses are increasingly looking to Thoroughbreds, and recognise Thoroughbred Racing as a global sport.

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