

Ten Furlongs Magazine's

# HH AMIRS SWORD CUP

COMMEMORATIVE  
SOUVENIR 2023



## FEATURING

Interviews With Leading Qatari Racing Powerhouses  
Interviews With Top International Trainers  
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# Editor's Note

**HH Amir's Sword Festival  
Commemorative Souvenir (2023)**

February 2023

Group 1 PA winners Ebraz In the 2021 HH  
Amirs Sword Cup//QREC

Dear Reader,

You will agree when I say, that racing has indeed brought the region closer. The nominations from the GCC alone, for the prestigious HH The Amir Sword Festival – one of the eagerly-awaited events on Qatar's sports calendar – were staggering and no doubt make the weekend more exciting than ever.

The Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club (QREC) has announced increased prize money of US\$10m. Of which, this year the HH The Amir Sword (Gr1 PA) and the HH The Amir Trophy (Gr1 TB) alone will carry a prestigious purse of US\$2.5m each. The prize money which is the highest ever in the history of the festival has attracted the world's best horses and trainers from 24 countries known for their racing prowess.



Doha city panorama//Alwadi Hotel Doha MGallery



The QERC team has also organised an elevated festival atmosphere for families and their children.

Our issue this year, features not only a mix of exciting stories from Al Shahania Racing's Dean Lavy as well as leading Qatar-based trainer Alban De Mieulle. We also feature interviews with 3 international trainers, Ado Mc Guinness, Caspar Fownes and Michael Stidham.

The Ten Furlongs team and I hope you enjoy the festival and this Souvenir.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'P Shevade'.

Pallavi Shevade  
Editor-In-Chief



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H. H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Dean Lavy and Kelly



# “It Just Takes That One Special One, And They’re Hard To come By, But That’s All It Takes,” Says Al Shahania’s Dean Lavy

## Legacy And Historic

Dean Lavy understands what the Arabian breed means to not only racing but also the heritage of Qatar that is bred and nurtured at Al Shahania Stud.

He is the manager of the stud and spoke to us from their base in Doha.

“I get to do a little bit of everything.” I think I probably have one of the better jobs because I can sit in my office, but then I can walk downstairs and go outside and see the horses too.

“It’s a full round for me with everything here, but the horse is always at the core of that.”

## Distant Beginnings

Growing up in Michigan, he would move with his family to the mecca of horse racing in the United States, Kentucky, and it was here that his passion for horses really began.

“That goes back a few years anyway, into the late 70s and early 80s. When I was actually in high school, we moved from the northern state of Michigan to Kentucky, which, as you know, is horse country.

“At the time, a lot of my friends were working part-time with the horses, and I’ve always had a love for animals, so I started doing it as a summer job.”

“And you know you get hooked!” I’ve worked with quarter horses, ponies, standardbreds, saddlebreds, and then I got into thoroughbreds straight out of school.

“Growing up in Michigan, I always had a love for the outdoors, animals, hunting, fishing, and this kind of thing.

“I got introduced to horses when I was in Kentucky, and, you know, you fall in love with them and it turns into a passion.”

“That passion for horses really came when I began working with them. They’re such magnificent creatures.

”They all have their own personalities, a lot more personality than a lot of people



3YO Saint Cloud

give them credit for because they don't deal with horses."

Once he embraced his passion as a potential career, it really took shape, as Lavy said.

### Royal Connections

"It all began back in the early 80s when I started working full time with thoroughbreds, and I then was with a local farm in Kentucky for five years before taking a job with the Maktoum family, the Royal family of Dubai, at Gainsborough Stud in Kentucky.

"I was there for 26 years, and then I came from there to Qatar, and I've been in Doha now for 10 years."

The move marked more than a change of destination for Lavy; it also marked his introduction to Arabian horses.

"I made the switch to Arabians, you know. We have thoroughbreds, Arabians, show horses, and endurance horses; it's a mixed discipline here in Doha.

"But I've really enjoyed the transition to the Arabian horses."

The time he spent working for the Maktoum family over the course of close to three decades is an experience that Lavy reflects on as helping set him up for his current role.

"Obviously, it had some influence on it." My dealings with the Arab culture for that length of time were attractive to the guys here in Qatar.

"Like I said, I was there for 26 years with the Maktoums. The first twenty years were spent with Maktoum Al Maktoum, followed by six years with Mohammed bin Rashid. Then I took a break after things changed a little bit logistically for me there. We were left on, and I was very grateful to be a part of it, but some of the perks that I had I lost, which is fair enough when you transition from owners.

### Changing Things Around

"So I took a year off and went into electrical contracting, traveled, and



Dean Lavy with Kelly



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project managed some jobs; I also like construction and that sort of thing; then I started looking again, and they contacted me from Doha.

“I had a big interest.” It was definitely my background in Dubai that attracted them. Culturally, it helps if you have been with the people for a long time. “It’s a different world, and they’re fantastic people.”

### The Move To Qatar

Arabian horses are embedded in the culture of Qatar, and it was the country’s heritage from which Al Shahania Stud was created by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Thani.

Regarded as a visionary, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed has over the years transformed the stud into one of the most prestigious equine properties in the Middle East and a leader in Arabian breeding and racing.

“I’ve really enjoyed it here and have been very lucky to be here with Sheikh Mohammed.” His passion for the game

and his drive “He’s very involved day to day here with the breeding and the racing, and I’m very actively involved with him on the phone almost every day,” Lavy adds.

“His passion pushes you as well, and we’ve been very fortunate obviously; it takes some skill, but he also has the right horses, and we’ve got the right facility, which we’ve improved a lot, but you have to keep up with the times.”

Based in the heart of Qatar, the prestigious stud property is an oasis in the desert, irrigated solely with groundwater, and the property now boasts over 240 stables, 125 paddocks spread over 100 acres of grassland, an equine swimming pool, its own private 2000-meter training track, and much more.

The stud has also recently invested in a second property based in the world-renowned breeding lands of Normandy, France.

“I’m involved with the breeding as well as the race placement and the training. We

have a farm in France, and so I am very involved with that farm as well. Doha is the hub, and everything comes through here.

“It’s been a fun ride, and I’m proud of this place; we’ve put a lot of effort into it.” We have spas, walkers, a swimming pool, new stables, and lots of paddocks. “We put in a new 2000-meter grass track, and Sheikh Mohammed has been very gracious in allowing us to improve the property as well.”

### Greatness At Al Shahania

With leading facilities, the stud has had great success and is now regarded as one of the world’s leading Arabian horse racing operations, having bred and raced multiple Group 1 winners.

The first horse to achieve Group One level was Hermival, who came in 3rd in the 2000 Guineas in Newmarket and then finished 2nd in the St. James’s Palace Stakes in Ascot. Then a few months later, Flotilla went on to win the first Group 1 for H.H. Sheikh Mohammed by bringing



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Samlla at Derby 1600m Chantilly Gr2

home the 2012 Breeders' Cup Juvenile Fillies Turf. She then also became the first classic winner for the stable by winning the 2013 French Guineas.

Since then, their major wins and champion horses have been plentiful, as Lavy said.

"Well, I mean, there have been numerous great horses for us: Assy, Gazwan, and Ebraz, and then you have fillies like Djainka Des Forges, Monia, McKeefa, and Areej.

"I've been very lucky to be around them all, but obviously Ebraz is one of the top ones since I've been involved, winning the Triple Crown, and what a champion he was." We are really looking forward to his next career as a stallion.

"I've been extremely lucky to be around a lot of top Arabian horses, some of the best in the world." "It's been quite the experience."

#### **The Similarities**

Having experienced some of the best Arabians ever to race, Lavy told me that although they had a lot in common with thoroughbreds, they were very different.

"There are a lot of similarities between the Arabian and the thoroughbreds, but just a speed difference." The mentalities are a little bit different, but it's been interesting.

"The thoroughbreds seem to have more of a workhorse mentality." You know they just go, go, go, and you can push them and get more out of them.

"The Arabs sometimes are too smart, and they don't want to go to work every day, and the more you push them, the further they back up on you."

"Even if they are the best ones, Ebraz, for example, is obviously one of the best horses in the world, but you would have never picked him in the morning. He hated to go to work in the morning, but he showed up when it was time to run. We've discovered that many of the good ones we're dealing with now are just a little bit trickier.

The stud started with a mare called Akie Croix Noir and a stallion called Djendel, both from the most prestigious and historic French Arabian bloodlines. The breeding programme has expanded to

boast one of the world's best broodmare bands and nine stallions at stud.

Lavy commented on the importance of pedigree as well as ensuring the bloodline stays rich and continues through generations into the future.

"We're seeing it change a lot." You talk about pedigree, and pedigree is changing a lot in the Arabian horses. You're starting to see a lot more speed in the Arabian, and I think this is becoming vitally important.

"Our families, in particular, are classic distance Arabians ranging from 2000 to 2400 meters. Now we're seeing so much speed getting injected into racing, especially in the Middle East. In Europe, we are still seeing them go pretty slowly until the end, in the last 400 metres they run.

"In the Middle East, racing is growing so huge with Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Oman, and now here in Qatar, and in the speed, you see such a difference." "Now it's speed as soon as the gate opens, and you're seeing this with the 2000-meter races and the 2400-meter races, so pedigrees are



Samlla

changing a bit, and we're starting to see more similarities between thoroughbred breeding and the Arabians, and trying to inject speed into the Arabians."

### 2023 GCC Campaign

The current crop of stars are being prepared to be unleashed on the Qatar Cup campaign leading into the World Cup Carnival in Dubai, as Lavy commented.

The colt Samlla returns to the track after winning two Group Ones last year in the Qatar International Stakes and Qatar International Cup, as well as the Group 2 French Arabian Breeders Challenge Sprint last September.

He is being prepared for the 2000-meter dirt race in Saudi Arabia and is continuing to show what he can do as a 5-year-old.

"Obviously, we're very pleased with him. He's homebred for us by Assy out of one of our own horses (Djakera Des Forges). The Forges family, which includes Djainka Des Forges, is a fantastic French producing line. The important thing is

that Assy always had a little bit of speed, and so that's what we are seeing the injection of.

"Samlla started off as more of a 1600-metre horse. He was a fantastic miler, and then we see now with his age that he's stretching out. He did win at 2000 metres early on, but now, speaking with Francois Rohaut (his trainer), his distance gets further and further, so we are much happier with him.

"His transition to dirt has been okay, and we think he's going to do well." He recently ran on the poly in Pau and was very impressive at 2000 metres wire-to-wire win like a morning workout.

"So we are excited to see him go, and I think he can run on multiple surfaces, so that's exciting, and maybe that then leads to the Kayhala Classic and things like this, and then I think in the future World Cup racing or Arc de Triomphe weekend is in his wheelhouse."

"I think the distance is going to be there, and even though he is five, we're excited."

These guys run until they're eight or nine, so we are excited about how he has transitioned.

"It's his first time on the dirt, but if he goes to Saudi and handles it well, we will want to look at the DWC for sure."

"He is based in France, so we can target more of the international programme with him."

The filly Image du Croate is being prepared for a turf campaign in Saudi Arabia.

Last season, she took out the Qatar Oaks, but in 2021, she took out the Group 3 Prix Nevada and the Group 1 Qatar Arabian Trophy in Saint-Cloud.

"Well, she is Munjiz's filly out of Beanie du Croate. She, as a three-year-old winning at Saint-Cloud, was extremely impressive, and she came back nicely, but then she had a little bit of a setback health-wise early in April of last year, and she didn't run.

"So we decided to give her a fresh look and bring her to Doha." We always



thought she'd enjoy the hard and fast, as well as a change of scenery. After that, we were happy with her. In her first run, she ran third, and then she came back and won the Oaks.

"So, she's going to go to Saudi for the 2100 metres on the turf, and she's training very well, and we are very pleased with her."

The Stud had been looking to campaign a group of their stars, with Amyr Du Soleil (GB), Dawi (FR), Hameed (FR), Hargan (FR), Image Du Croate (FR), Ragdan (FR) nominated for the Al Mneefah Cup, and Amyr Du Soleil (GB) and Divine Princess (FR) nominated for the Obaiya Arabian Classic.

However, plans change, and Lavy commented on future campaigns in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

"We will only run Samlla on the dirt and Image du Croate on the turf."

#### Different Strokes

"The problem with the Saudi Carnival is that it is a week after the Amir Sword here. So it's very difficult and strategic to do, and obviously, there is a lot of pride

in the race for Doha, and that's a huge weekend for us. This is our busiest weekend of the year.

"So, we have got to save some of our horses for that weekend. With horses like Hargan and Amyr Du Soleil, we want to target the Amir Sword with a couple of horses, but we also have the internationals, the GCC, and different distance racing. So, we have to have eight or ten animals to handle the racing in Doha for the Amir Sword weekend.

"We've chosen those two to go to Saudi because we want to go and experience it. "I think Saudi has done a fantastic job; it's booming right now, and we want to be a part of that."

With Hareeb, Hargan, Image Du Croate, Mual'em, and Saad all nominated for the Kahayla Classic, Lavy commented on possible travellers for the Dubai World Cup Carnival.

"Yeah, those guys are all target horses for that because we feel like they can handle the dirt." So they'll get a run Amir Sword week, putting us a month away from the Dubai World Cup.

"After their runs in Doha, we will make a decision." We have pre-entered those races, but we will base them on their runs here in two weeks. But we definitely want to target DWC with a couple of horses."

With a list of stars, Lavy admits that it was different with Arabians when it came to younger stars.

"We take our time with the Arabians, you know; they're typically a little bit slower."

"You know we had such big stars in the past. Methgal is still on the table. He's probably going to make an appearance this summer in Europe again. We've given him some nice time off and given him a break, but we've got a target in mind. For his career, he could go to Goodwood or something similar. He could eventually become a stallion for us.

"Mon'nia, she has gone to the breeding shed." She's a past Amir Sword winner for us. We also have Divine Princess, sister to Lady Princess, who has just gone back into training. She had a setback last year; she's run a couple of times for us, which has been a little bit disappointing so far, but she's going to run back again.



Samlla at Al Rayyan Cup Gr1 Deauville

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Dean Lavy with Kelly

“We have a lot of three-year-olds who just turned four and who, you know, we don’t push so we can have a little bit of a run. Our season ends at the end of April this year in Doha, so maybe we will let them run once or twice here before the end of the season, and then we will put them away and bring them back as three-year-olds turning four and four-year-olds turning five.”

“We have a lot of promising young ones but don’t really have anything to mention yet, but we always have something coming.”

“We also have about 45 in training in France that are either racing or training.” For training, we use Mrs. Bernard and Tomas Fourcey, and we use Francois Rohaut mainly in France.

“It just takes that one special one, and they’re hard to come by, but that’s all it takes.”

Having won multiple Group Ones, the goals do not change much when it comes to continued success internationally.

“We’ve won races at the World Cup a couple of times; on Arc weekend, we’ve won the World Cup there five times, and we’ve won the Amir Sword sixteen times.”

“We ran in Abu Dhabi for the first time last year with Hoggar De Lardus, and he ran second to Lady Princess.” We want to target Saudi Arabia and big races like Goodwood and part of the Triple Crown in Doha.

#### **Growth Of The Regional Racing Industry**

“I believe the Middle East has a lot of racing.” Not just for Arabians but for thoroughbreds as well. Between Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Saudi Arabia, and hopefully Bahrain in the future. I think Bahrain has done a fantastic job with the carnival they have now. There’s a lot of good racing in the Middle East.

“I think we are going to see a lot of Europeans transition here.” “Because in the winter there isn’t a lot in Europe, and the money is huge here now.”

From a 15-year-old boy discovering horses for the first time through his current position as manager of one of the leading Arabian studs in the world, Lavy has learned invaluable lessons, as you added.

“Horses are very humbling animals. The horse business in general is a very small world, as massive as it may seem. That’s what makes it so cool; I think it is one of the very unique industries where I can come to Australia, Hong Kong, China, France, and England and I’m always going to see people I know.

“I think it’s a big family, and as much as we want to compete against each other, we still wish everybody the best at the end of the day.” We want our horses and jockeys to be safe, and I think it’s a pretty cool industry as a whole. The people in this part of the world are very genuine and love their horses.

“We all want to compete and win. It’s a fantastic industry.”

*All photos courtesy of Mr. Dean Lavy and QREC*

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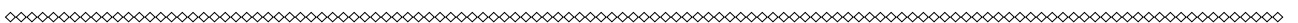
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Alban De Mieulle being interviewed in the parade ring//Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia//Neville Hopwood





# Qatar’s Leading Trainer De Mieulle’s Vibrant And Unique Plan For Regional Success

When it comes to training Arabians Alban de Mieulle is at the top of the pack, top ten in the world.

He has a reputation as a leading trainer in Qatar, one which gives de Mieulle great pride.

“Like we say in France it’s better to be king in small countries than nothing in big countries.

“I am lucky to be in Qatar and have great horses and owners with me.”

## French Beginnings

Having followed in his father’s footsteps the French trainer began with thoroughbreds in his native France only beginning with Arabians on his arrival in Qatar.

“I would say I was born with horses, it is in my blood. My father trained horses all of his life so I was meant to do this.

“I began in France working on the farm with my father. I would do my military service as required. After that, I began

to train some horses for the small owner before moving to the west of France.

“I trained for a further nine years in France before moving to Qatar.

“I only ever had trained thoroughbreds, both jump and flat thoroughbreds.”

## A Lifetime In Qatar

Taking over at the helm of Umm Qarn Racing de Mieulle would leave France to take up the new position in Qatar.



King Shalaa after winning Barzan Cup QA Gr 3 on 17/11/2022 at Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club in Doha

Although he had never trained Arabs before he was used to seeing them race, as they are commonly on the same card as thoroughbreds in his native France.

Before heading to Qatar de Mieulle had no knowledge about the geographic location of Qatar or who his new employer Sheikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al Thani was.

He would become the head trainer for Umm Qarn owned by the Sheikh who was the Gulf state's former prime minister.

It is regarded as the heartbeat of many of the winners in the region with stallions at stud who include race champions in Amer, Nizam, Majd Al Arab, and General to name a few.

On arrival, de Mieulle started with his first horse, a colt by Tidjani, and out of Gosse de Bearn, named Sarki D'Espies.

As the trainer tells it if not for that first performance is as great as it was the story could have been completely different.

“The morning before my first race, Sheikh Abdulla called me and asked me



King Shalaa at finishing point



Alban De Mieulle with whole team after receiving the winner's trophies





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Trainer Mr. Alban de Mieulle receives the trophy from QREC Racing



Alban De Mieulle trained First Classes Wins The Al Mneefah Cup//Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia//Neville Hopwood





Alban De Mieulle with Team



Alban De Mieulle trained King Shalaa during morning track work in Riyadh//Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia//Mahmoud Khaled



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what I thought about this race. ‘I don’t know,’ I replied, ‘but if this horse does not win, I should get back on a plane.’ He replied, ‘okay’”.

The colt would win by a massive ten lengths, a memory that puts a great smile on the trainer’s face.

His time in Qatar has seen him achieve victories that he will remember including Umm Qarn’s victories during the 2013 Qatar International Race Days.

Over the three days of racing at the Qatar Equestrian Club in Doha, the team won 6 out of the 10 Arabian races.

On the last day of racing the training talents of de Mieulle were once again

showcased winning the coveted Gr.1 HH The Emir’s Sword with Umm Qarn’s rising star, Tabarak, making it six in a row for the 5YO grey entire.

**The Horses That Did Him Proud**

De Mieulle went on to detail horses that have been influential throughout his career, the one that brings him the most joy is a filly that brought him great success over a great career of her own.

“Al Dahma was a fantastic filly. She won 28 races and 18 Group One races – I won everywhere with this filly Europe, Turkey, and Dubai.

“The story of this filly is a great one. She won six races before they found a

small fracture in her bones. We were forced to stop her from racing for a year but she came back and won 20 races after that.”

The recalling of this filly’s story means a lot to de Mieulle not only because two of those wins were in back-to-back HH The Emirs Sword but because veterinarians had said that there was a high chance she would ever race again.

**The Regional Campaign**

The team has a troop of stablemates set for the Saudi and Dubai World Cup campaigns including eleven for the Dubai World Cup Carnival and four for Saudi.

However, de Mieuille is upfront in saying it all will come down to the performances put in at Qatar.

“Some of them may not get an invitation because of ratings so we will have to wait and see what they do in Qatar.

“For Saudi, I have two for the thoroughbred race and one in on the grass.”

For now, his hopes for Qatar are two runners in the Amir Trophy but he understands the level of the task at hand.

“It is going to be a tough race with a lot of horses coming in.”

For the Amir Sword, he prepares two of his Arabians to contest as he said including his star Abbes.

The Tm Fred Texas x Raqiyah 6YO is already a Group One winner having

claimed the spoils in The UAE President Cup in Doncaster during the 2021 season.

“This horse has won some great races in Europe but unfortunately he does not like the soft ground. He is a good horse and now he has to prove that he can be one of the best.”

With years of experience with Arabians he like other Arabian trainers admits there are great differences between them and their thoroughbred opponents.

“For me, thoroughbreds are like a machine. When you teach them, you tell them what you want to give them and get out of them.

“I will say this Arabians are very intelligent but you have to respect them.

“You have to ask them and challenge them nicely.”

The stable currently boasts 65 horses which include a mix of both thoroughbreds and Arabians. From the younger crop

“We have some very nice pure Arab horses in training but they are very new and it is far too easy for us to say.

“They are new to us so we need time to see what we will do with them in the future.

“We will probably send the three top horses to Europe to train maybe in Chantilly or something like that but not sure about that yet. We have to take everything step by step.

“If you have a chance to race a horse all over the world I would love to do that in some different places.

“It’s a new track and a new challenge so that’s always great also.”







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**The World Looks At The GCC**

As the profile of money increases along with the prize money de Mieuille admits that it poses a great opportunity for trainers no matter where they are based.

“It is becoming a great challenge to be competitive in Saudi, Dubai, and the Middle East altogether. Qatar is starting to pick back up again also.”

Last year he trained First Class to win the \$1 million Al Mneefah Cup after he had won the Qatar International Derby for four-year-olds two months prior.

A prime example of the Qatari-based trainer’s hunger to take his stable to the surrounding regions.

“I must admit it was a lot easier to win in Qatar 25 years ago than today, the challenge is very different now.”

“It is a great opportunity for any trainer, whether based in the Middle East or internationally such as Europe, to bring horses here to race.”

**The Meaning Of Success**

Throughout his career, he has learned a lot but the biggest lesson for de Mieuille

begins at the base with the people around him.

“Success is easy when you have great horses, great owners, and most importantly a good team around you.

“In Qatar, we are very lucky to have a good team but it takes time to make a good team, it is not easy.

“You can have a good horse but don’t have a good team around you it will not matter what you have in your hand.”

*All photo credited to Mr. Alban De Mieuille and QREC*



First Class trained by Alban De Mieuille, wins The Al Mneefah Cup//Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia//Mahmoud Khaled



Alban De Mieuille wins 2020 Aahil Gulf Cup//Qatar Racing and Equestrian Club



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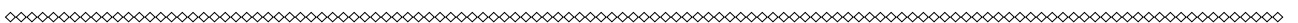
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Ado McGuinness





# Irish Trainer Ado McGuinness On Aspirations In The Middle East

“If you’re addicted to horses as a career, I don’t think there’s any therapy for it.”

Ado McGuinness speaks wisely having been to the bottom and back again for the love of the horse and the hunger to succeed.

Born in North County Dublin, Ireland he came from a vegetable farming background but having animals around helped his passion grow around horses.

“I come from a vegetable farming background; Ireland is an all-vegetable country.

“My dad always had a couple of ponies at home on the farm and he had some livestock as well but it was mainly vegetables.

“We always had ponies and I had a first cousin of my dad’s not too far over the road. He bred a few horses as well.

“We were with him as I used to go over to him and help him sometimes and just be at home riding the ponies and it developed that interest.”

He has always known where home is, in fact, the yard he trains from is very close to where he was born and bred.

“I’m still here in this very same place where I was born and bred. I never left.”

“Probably only a few 100 yards away from where I’ve lived all my life.”

Reflecting on when the desire to train began McGuinness cannot pinpoint a moment but rather a series of events.



“I don’t know actually. My sister opened up an equestrian center for 20 years and we ran that at that stage in my early twenties.

“I was doing a lot of teaching kids showjumping as well where we represented teams all across Europe as well – that used to give me great satisfaction doing that.

“I always had a passion for races and I loved races like in Cheltenham where I would go to the meetings and watch them race.

“I loved that!”

### **Being A Jockey Not An Option**

McGuinness knew however, he was never going to pursue a career in the saddle but knew he wanted a career around horses.

“I was too heavy to be a jockey, so I used to get a great thrill out of riding them out and cross-country riding. I knew somebody who came to me one day and said he was going to buy a racehorse.

“He asked if I would train it and so I said I would.”

With that one request a career training horses would begin as McGuinness said.

“That’s where it started and I never worked anywhere else in my life. Only on the farm at home here and I’ve done a bit of probably just watching people train them and made plenty of mistakes along the way.

“But we trainers only make a mistake once and I don’t think there’s anybody in racing that hasn’t made a mistake.”

He would begin with this one horse and with a win came the belief that the career was to be a lot easier than he could have ever imagined.

“I thought it was very easy for us because the very first race I had I was second in what was National Hunt at the time and he was second in a bumper. After that, I said God this is going to be easy, but I’ll tell you, I soon learned that it wasn’t.”

### **A Training Career In Ireland**

Getting his training licence in 1999 he began with the bare minimum.

“We had very few horses then, only one or two horses actually.

“We had ten horses eventually; we were just a very small operation.

“Then he quit and sold the lot so I was basically left in the 2000s with practically two or three horses in the stable.”

He had hit the bottom of the barrel only a few years in and McGuinness will be the first to admit that the thought of ending the pursuit was a common one.

“I did struggle and contemplated two or three times whether to just draw the line and move away from it and that I no longer could be doing this.

“It was very hard and it was tough.

“We had the passion and I worked very, very hard at this game. I had to think about the number of hours we had put into it.

“Some people said what are you doing this for? You have no days off and you know it’s crazy. But we did it.”

His stable is a family affair and has grown into a family business, something McGuinness admits was never planned but he is proud of.







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“My wife was working in medical devices in the early 2000s and for a long time in the medical profession.

“Probably if she was not doing that then and with a family of young kids, we would have really struggled. I don’t think I would have been able to nearly afford to keep going at the time. Well, it would have been very, very tough.

“Then a few years back she finished up and she jumped on board. I mean she does all the accounting and you know different angles of racing as well.

“But my kids were then involved as well.”

### **Growing Pains**

The stable has now grown to include 40 horses currently but their growth is in the near future with facility upgrades, as he commented.

“We would like to upgrade but we actually are in the process of building new barns and new buildings. We’re not moving out of the farm but we’re just going to a different part of the farm and it’ll be right beside the gallops on top of a hill so it’s quite airy and cold.

“But that’s what we love up here – there will be plenty of airflows and that’s a very important part here in Ireland and when you’re training horses to have very good fresh air. I’m really looking forward to it hopefully in the next three or four months.”

### **Reflected On Highlights**

“I thought I was dreaming last year when we came across a horse called A Case Of You. He took me out to Paris and was second in his very first Group One (at Curragh in September 2021). When I walked out of the car that day, I said God it might never happen again and that would be the closest we’ll ever get to a Group One.”

That race was the Group One Qatar Prix de l’Abbaye de Longchamp Longines and on that day the then 3YO in the last start for the season in Europe would

reign supreme beating Air De Valse by a shorthead.

The victory put him on track to run in the Breeder’s Cup which he did finishing fifth but his trainer had greater plans for his star.

Last year he would beat home Happy Romance to win the Al Quoz Sprint in a moment McGuinness will never forget.

“I thought I was dreaming after Dubai World Cup night, the whole race and the whole week. We had a fabulous experience of it all.

“Being a small stable coming from Ireland with just one horse over there at that time. To do that on that stage and the money the horse won. It was just unbelievable.”

The career of A Case Of You while with McGuinness is one of imagination having at one time been deemed unable to pass a health clearance as he said.

“He was sold to Hong Kong and there was a problem with an X-ray or something that they weren’t happy with it.

“We went back and we looked at the horse and really liked him and we x-rayed him and got him all done and he passed it, we could find no fault with him.

“He had little nodules that were solid growth things on his knees and after we bought him about six, seven weeks after he’d been x-rayed for America and we couldn’t believe it. He said I can’t find the source. After that, he never took a lame step and we never had a problem.

“He was super hard to train and then he went on to you know, achieve what he’s achieved. He is actually down in Australia now.

“I think Mick Kent has him and he is there to attend the spring carnival this year.”

A Case Of You is only one example of horses that may have previously carried an ailment or niggle but as McGuinness says the Irish air breathes new life into them.

“Current Option is a horse that won Group Three and Listed class races and he had a problem with an X-ray, we bought





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**JUDDMONTE**



Ado McGuinness trained Saltonstall during morning track work in Riyadh//Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia / Melissa Ziarno

him out of the Newmarket trade sales and he has just won three big handicaps and at Galway as well. I think his earnings are over 450,000 euros - which is a huge amount for horses in Ireland.

“Saltonstall was another horse that bled badly and we bought him I think for 44,000 euros and he’s won two Galway miles and has won a Listed race. He’s eight years old now but he’s a super horse.

“We have a good way with bleeders here where we are especially during the summer, it just suits we keep them in open bounds and that then leads to a huge tournament. We’re beside the beach as well and it’s a huge help we can often take the horses instead of going to the gallops we’d head down to the beach for a day or two days.

“I have a horse called Boweman and he lost his way a little bit but it ran very well two weeks ago and we practically spent four days on the beach with him between the races.

“So it’s all about getting into the mind and the type of horses and we seem to have a way with that type of horses and we go that way because, at the yearling

market, we could end up with very little although we’ve been lucky with yearlings as well.

“We do buy a few yearlings every year and we are real sellers in that way. If we do get a horse that we feel can make up some money he is going to sell, we have been very good at selling to America.

“We had a very good filly that won a Group Two during the Kentucky Derby week three years ago and her winnings are over \$1.5 million in America.

“You need to be selling a few horses every year to make the bill and keep this whole thing afloat. In this country, we are real sellers.”

#### **Doha Is On The Plan**

This year the stable prepares the 6YO gelded son of Sidestep for Qatar. Previously trained by the Harrington team he has won a Group Three and Group Two in Leopardstown during the 2021 season.

“He is a horse that we picked out from Jessica Harrington’s last October at the horses and train sale.

“He’s a very high-class horse but he just lost his way a little bit and just wasn’t typically our type of horse and we decided that you know if we could get him at the proper money we would be interested.

“He has put in the work and he’s a Group Three winner and a Group Two winner here in Ireland, which you have to be quite a smart horse to you know win that type of race.

“I spoke to Shane Foley and I’m not too far away from our all-weather track, it’s only a 15-minute drive down the road. I remember bringing him down there one day for a piece of work just after Christmas and he just floated around and he won down there on his pre-run before Doha a few weeks back.

“He looked very impressive and he’s in very, very good form.

“We were in Doha last year and the year before we won there and last year we were second there. We just felt this horse was the ideal candidate for the race and fingers crossed he’ll put in a huge performance there for us.”

The plan and program for Real Appeal is fluid as McGuinness added.

“We have nominated him in Dubai as well for Super Saturday but if he runs really well in Qatar we might bring him back as there’s a couple of Group races in Ireland.

“In Ireland, if you win a Group race you carry a penalty for 12 months. He didn’t compete in any of those races last year so this year coming in for the season he won’t have to carry any penalty so we will campaign him for those types of races.

“We will also look at a Royal Ascot program for him and then probably look to travel again later on in the year.”

Another one planned to fly the flag for the stable is the 8YO gelding by Exceed and Excel, Harry’s Bar, who McGuinness said has a decent program potentially in line for him also. He is pencilled in for a Saudi campaign with the Riyadh dirt sprint as a key target.





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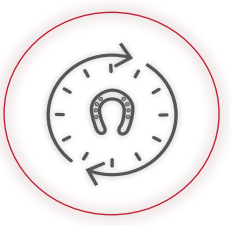
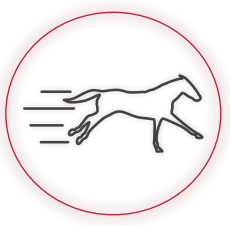
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“He’s reserved at the moment but I don’t know whether we’re going to get into it at the moment. He’s a very high-class horse on grass.

“I think when you are going to run a horse on dirt you need to practice on dirt. It takes a couple of runs for them to familiarize themselves and get used to it and that’s a problem.

“Harry’s Bar has two different marks as well. He’s very low on the grass in Ireland so I think there’s a very big race, a good handicap in him in Ireland on the grass as well. So, we’ll try him at one of them later on the year.”

### **Making The Case For Meydan**

Beyond Qatar and Saudi meeting, the trainer has plans for Dubai over the World Cup Carnival with Real Appeal also nominated for the Dubai Turf and the Group Two Godolphin Mile while Harry’s Bar is nominated for the Dubai Golden Sheehan.

He has now been taking horses to the UAE for several years and credits the success they are having while the profile of racing in the region booms.

“I was in Dubai back since the first or second carnival and it was a great experience.

“Not only Dubai but I went to Saudi the year we couldn’t travel to Dubai due to COVID and I couldn’t believe the facilities there - it was just phenomenal.

“The same with Qatar. The prize money these people put up, they look after you with supplements for going out there and so it’s a no-brainer if you have a horse that’s good enough to compete then that is a great experience. My owners love travelling out.

“It’s just the experience of the whole thing and you know you just get looked after so well and then you meet people. I’ve met a lot of people in the last 12-14 months from travelling and you go to the sales you might meet them and you can meet them anywhere after and it’s great. The more people you meet in this game the better.”

All plans will be dictated by how the pair perform and they will set the pace and tone for their upcoming programs off the back of Qatar and Saudi.

“There is a big program at home as well. When you’re competing in Ireland you are looking at competing with the bigger studs also such as Coolmore.

“They have a phenomenal team of horses and it’s very hard here to compete against those guys and when you get a horse like these two it’s great.

“But it’s far from simple because it is so competitive.”

With the stable boasting 40 members currently he detailed the other stars or those with potential asking to be unleashed on the track.

“Current Option has been so consistent for us over the last few years. We have a very strong team of horses for this year, I think we’ve got about seven or eight horses over 100 and over 90, who will be premier handicap plus horses.

“The more you have in these races the better chance you have if your fancy horse goes and lets you down, your backup could win these races and they are worth a lot of money.

### **Syndicates Are The Way Forward**

McGuinness is proud to be the home of Shamrock Thoroughbreds, a successful syndicate who owns Real Appeal.

He sees syndication in horse ownership as vital for not only the success but ensuring that more people can be involved in the adrenaline-filled ride that is horse racing.

“With cheap horses, you could have a bunch of lads who would invest a small amount into it you know. You put ten lads into having a bit of fun, they go to the local tracks and go out and enjoy their day at the races.

“Then you move up to the higher level and it’s different responsibility. You have the owners of Real Appeal who run on

the Shamrock and there are three owners on him which is great. These guys have a big part to play you know. There’s a big investment there and they have a big say in the horse and they have a great chance.”

Having sent horses, to Qatar, Saudi, Dubai and elsewhere McGuinness was quick to answer the race he would love to have the right horse in and take the spoils.

“I won the Al Quoz Sprint (with A Case of You) and the experience I had that night I will never forget. You are treated like a rock star when you win something like that out there.

“I don’t know if is there any better place in heaven, but that’s the way I feel.

“The experience of World Cup night and the experience in that whole setup and the atmosphere of the whole thing, between the opening of the event and the closing of the event, it is just surreal, unbelievable and I would love to do that again.”

Over his time training horses, he has learnt many lessons but the biggest for him came down to finding the right horse and the ability to do so.

“I think it’s like any sport, the more capital you have the greater chance you have of finding that next great horse.

“A Case of You was sold for 3000 euros as a yearling. I could go out and buy horses like that at that price for the next six or seven years and I couldn’t find a horse like him.

“You can dream and all of a sudden, the dream can become a reality, but like the best football teams in England they have the best managers and the capital to get great players. It’s very hard to compete.”

“It is all about capital and you need good horses to train.

“As I’ve said before Michael Schumacher never won a Grand Prix in a mini”

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# What Joint Problems Mean To You And Your Horse

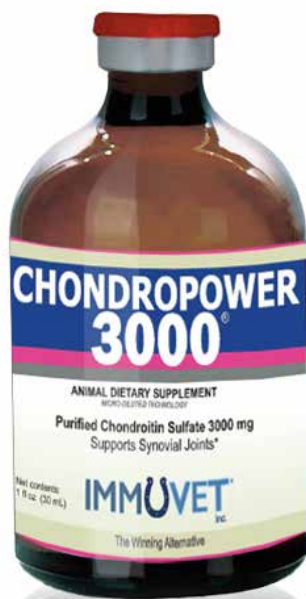
While dogs are seen as man's best friend, it wouldn't be a stretch to say that horses are a close second. For over 6,000 years, mankind has depended on horses for many things. Horses have been, and continue to be, vital to travel, work, sports, and many other work-related activities. In addition, humans have used horses for pleasure and hobbies such as dressage, riding, and other fun activities. Unfortunately, all of these rigorous tasks can make the horses more susceptible to health problems that could affect the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, or respiratory systems. With this in mind, the owners and trainers must look after their horses' health and ensure that they are adequately treated if or when they experience any problems.

In performance horses, musculoskeletal injuries are widespread because of the stress they are put through. Some examples include repetitive strain injuries, repetitive motion injuries, cumulative trauma disorders, and work-related upper limb disorders. Of these, soft tissue injuries are the most common. These injuries pose a significant threat to them as they can cause permanent damage and end a horse's performance career. These soft tissue injuries always result in inflammation, and the best prevention strategy is to maintain the health of the ligaments and tendons.

Supplements are a great way to improve the strength of the tendons and ligaments. They can improve their recovery rate if/when they are injured. There is strong evidence that omega-3 fatty acids are very effective at combating inflammation and speeding up recovery from soft tissue injuries. In addition, some vitamins and mineral supplements target the joints, ligaments, cartilage, and tendons and improve their strength. Research has shown that unsaponifiables are extremely helpful in supporting cartilage production and typically help the body's ability to fight off articular cartilage breakdown. Unsaponifiables are a

group of lipids that don't break down into glycerols and free fatty acids in alkaline solutions. They can be found in things such as avocados and soy.

Hyaluronic acid, typically found in epithelial, neural tissues, and synovial fluid (which makes a covering of the joint), is highly involved in reducing friction between the cartilage. Hence, this hyaluronic acid is essential to the maintenance of joint health. There are specific sources of hyaluronic acid, like cetyl myristoleate or



methylsulfonylmethane. These sources have proved to be beneficial for the reduction of inflammation and the increase in chondrocyte production. Another essential mineral supplement is silicon, typically required for synthesizing tendons, ligaments, cartilage, and bone. These are all nutrients available in the form of supplements, and they bring back joint health in a short time. As stated by Dr. Hill, "Vitamins and minerals play a bigger role in the healing process than we realize. Thus, providing adequate nutrition like omega-3 fatty acids and mainly targeting that inflammation can

benefit the healing process and the whole horse in general."

For a horse owner and trainer, the sound health of their athlete or performance horse is essential. Without good health, it becomes hard for a person to establish a good connection with their horse and to prepare them for their exercises and tasks. Any physical problem will cut off the pleasure that a rider and a horse enjoy when they are on performance. This supports the fact that the healthiness of the horse's joints is essential for their career and well-being.

Arthritis and osteoarthritis are forms of joint disease that are, unfortunately, very common in horses. Many forms of joint disease occur due to inflammation that affects the horse's bones and joints. Sometimes, in severe conditions of inflammation, cells and tissues are damaged, making their condition worse. Horse joints contain a thick fluid that protects the health of the joints by nourishing the cartilage, hydrostatic stabilization, waste elimination, and lubrication. Treating the degeneration of bones involves reducing the inflammation in joints by either going for particular treatments or using supplements.

Most horses that face arthritis, or simply joint pain, are old. Joint problems are common in horses who usually run a lot, cover long distances, cross hurdles, do strenuous exercises, and perform. There are a few reasons why horses suffer from joint problems. Due to excessive work or old age, the cartilage that prevents joints from rubbing each other starts breaking down and does not build up effectively. The condition worsens as time passes, and the horse's joints may feel stiff or inflamed. The horse will start showing discomfort due to joint pain. Two other reasons behind joint pain and cartilage breakdown are extreme stress and compression. Injury can lead to joint pain in horses as well. Arthritis usually occurs in the hocks, fetlocks, and knees.



If a horse is observed not performing well, the first thing that should be done is to diagnose the problem and its location. In the treatment of arthritis, a veterinarian works to give relief from inflammation and severe pain in joints as well as prevent the breakdown of cartilage. It is the responsibility of the horse's owner to pay attention to the horse's actions, mood, and feelings. If a horse is seen to be experiencing discomfort for a short or long time, the owner or trainer should make it a priority to call a veterinarian for an examination. The possibility of picking up on the disease and starting the procedure for treatment sooner is much better than waiting. This is because the condition can worsen if the cartilage of joints is entirely gone, and it becomes tough to repair. A veterinarian should examine the horse, as they will be able to determine whether the problem is with one joint or if multiple joints are involved. They will check the horse's health history and his movements as well.

If the horse suffers from joint inflammation, the vet will set two objectives depending on the condition. The first is to reduce the pain symptoms in the horse's joints, and the other is to stop the disease. In worse situations, the veterinarian will have to give them injections. However, there is the possibility that this may lead to kidney damage. Local treatment is the most optimal option because a joint injection works best the better the condition for a specific period. A common misconception about joint injections is that they worsen the situation, but this is not true. Joint injections help reduce joint pain and also protect the joints against inflammation to prevent damage. Another treatment is a systematic treatment that helps treat multiple joints at the same time. However, if the arthritis is diagnosed at the beginning, it can be treated by giving the horse some drugs, medicines, or supplements. A veterinarian may ask for a physical examination to check the severity of the pain. They will ask about the previous history of the horse's workload. They may recommend an x-ray, ultrasound, MRI, and bone scan to check where the pain is or determine whether it is chronic or acute.

In addition, when a horse is experiencing pain, it is vital to feel for the horse and give them some relaxation. Besides the



veterinarian's treatment for arthritis, reduce their daily workout routine, especially traveling long distances, jumping, and all other activities which put pressure on the joints. Please refrain from taking them to a competition. As recommended by a veterinarian, the horse may be able to partake in light exercise so the joints remain flexible.

Most veterinarians agree that giving horses the necessary supplements can prevent them from experiencing joint pain or arthritis. Supplements include chondroitin sulfate, glucosamine, hyaluronic acid, and other organic molecules which help a horse maintain healthy tissue and joints. The best time to choose a supplement for a horse is when they are not showing any signs of arthritis. These supplements are designed according to their bodily needs.

Many different products are developed to target joint pain in today's market. One of the best and most recommended products is Immuvet Inc.'s ChondroPower 3000<sup>®</sup>. ChondroPower 3000<sup>®</sup> is an all-natural, unique chondroprotective formula that helps reduce cartilage degeneration and

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It is known that a horse's athleticism and overall performance are directly related to the animal's mobility and how well its joints function. Exercise, among other factors, is necessary to strengthen a horse, but training and competition exert tremendous amounts of strain that affects the joint cartilage. ChondroPower 3000<sup>®</sup> helps prevent the inflammation and degeneration of cartilage, delay the degeneration process, stabilize the joint by increasing the cartilage strength, ligaments, and tendons, repair the joint after an injury, and reverse lesions of the articular cartilage and subchondral bone. ChondroPower 3000<sup>®</sup> is very easy to use as it only needs to be administered once a week. Veterinarians, trainers, and owners have been using ChondroPower 3000<sup>®</sup> with excellent results.

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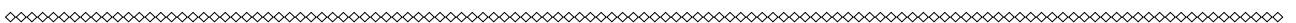
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Caspar Fownes with his sons Ronan and Ryan





# Caspar Fownes Stands Firmly At Centre Stage With Senor Toba Poised For Doha Debut

The leading Hong Kong-based trainer casts a confident, vibrant shadow at every opportunity and a better symbol of the fresh hungry blood through the sport of kings would be very hard to find.

Born in Calcutta, India he would move to Hong Kong at thirteen years of age.

The son of a multiple champion trainer, the Fownes name has become synonymous with Hong Kong racing and that legacy drives Caspar in his pursuit of greater success.

He is training up his son in hopes of extending that bloodline entrenched in racing.

“I’m very happy that my son’s are following in my footsteps. It means a lot that we give them the best opportunities to be successful trainers in the future.”

## **The Father and Son Duo**

“From an early age, I used to always enjoy going to the stable with my father when he was training in India. It was always great to follow him around and interact with horses, and you just get a lovely feel for the animal and how wonderful they are and how much joy they can bring into your life.

“It just gave us the opportunity, obviously I was a kid when I left India but once I came into Hong Kong it was just great to be able to follow my dad and start to really get into the actual part of the training aspect which really opens your eyes.”

He would assist his late father Lawrie for several seasons before gaining his licence in 2003 beginning a career filled with achievements.

In his rookie year, he recorded 44 wins, before going on to be named Hong Kong Champion Trainer four times (2006/07, 2008/09, 2013/14 & 2020/21).

His CV glitters with notable wins which include Hong Kong Mile (2006 The Duke), two times Hong Kong Sprint (2011 Lucky Nine, 2021 Sky Field), two times Hong Kong Derby (2010 Super Satin, 2021 Sky Darci), Three times Singapore international sprint And two times Singapore international Mile and most recently back-to-back Group 3 Centenary Vase (2022 Zebrowski, 2023 Senor Toba).

## **Training Challenges In The Vertical City**

Through all of the success, Fownes admits it’s a far harder task in Hong Kong than it may seem.

“It’s really rewarding when you can get the job done.

“In Hong Kong, it’s such a tough system because it’s a handicap system and you’re restricted to the number of horses you have in your stable. It’s not like other countries where you can go for the soft kill at a smaller track and we only race twice a week.

“So we really do enjoy every winner whether it’s class five all the way to Group Ones.”

When he reflects on his memorable highlights to date, they come both at home and abroad.

“Being the most successful winning trainer ever at Happy Valley in the history of Hong Kong Racing is something I treasure.”

Fownes is known for his fine record at Happy Valley where he has notched 535 career wins – more than any other active Hong Kong-based trainer as well as becoming only the fourth horseman in Hong Kong racing history to saddle 1,000 winners in April last year.

“But you know it’s so tough in Hong Kong, like I said to you before you just appreciate everything. So just fingers crossed we can continue to be successful.



Sky Darci at HK Derby 2021



Caspar and his late father Lawrie, a great trainer in his own right

“I’m going to continue to try to keep churning out the winners for somebody else to come and challenge once my career is over.”

**A Career Glittering With Success**

The vibrant 55-year-old Fownes is proud of the records, and achievements but remains excited for what is to come and laughs along when talk of potential retirement is thrown into the conversation.

“Well, I am getting on a bit, I am 55, but you’re right I mean you know it’s a sport that does keep you young when you’re getting results you know.

“However, it also can age you when you are getting frustrated or the horses are not performing the way you want them to be.

“So, it’s a lovely balance where you have to take the good with the bad and you appreciate the good times and then you have the bad times you knuckle down and say right, let’s look forward to some better times.



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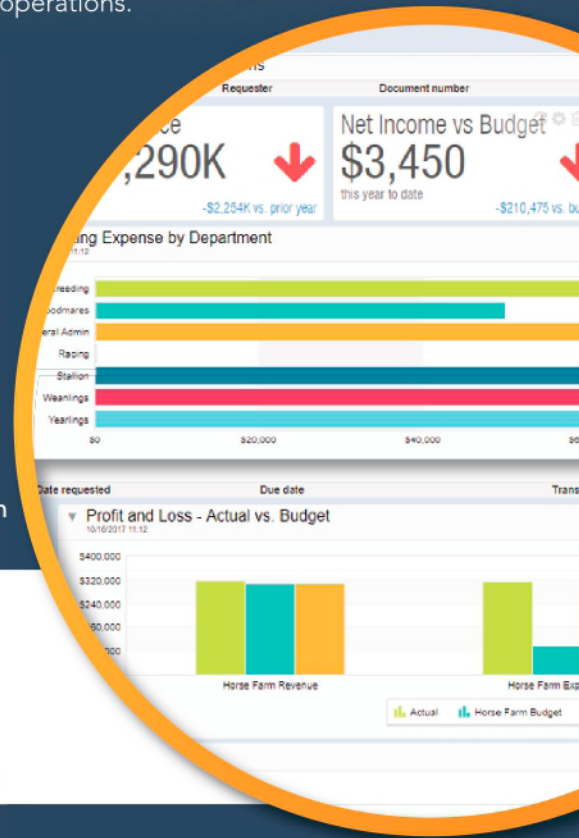


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“You know that’s the great thing about our sport no one is above it. No one is better than it and it really sorts you out and keeps you levelled.”

### **Globe Trotting Toba**

The horse of the moment flying the flag for Fownes is the 5YO gelded son of Toronado, Senor Toba.

He has three Group Threes to his name, a pair of those in Sha Tin while the third was achieved in Australia while trained by one of their best in Chris Waller.

Senor Toba had been on Fownes’ radar and it came down to a case of destiny it seems with him joining the stable in Hong Kong.

“He was a horse that was on my radar, and actually my wife’s brother, Clint Hutchison, a form analyst in Australia actually contacted me and told me about him originally.

“He said listen I think you should try and buy this horse, I think he is pretty smart. So, I had a look at him and I liked what I saw.

“Then I looked at the ownership and realized he was owned by some people that are based up in Hong Kong. So I contacted them and said I’d love to be able to train him in HK

“I think we have a lot of potential to go forward here and mould a horse that could really be quite special for us in years to come.

“When he got to us you could see that he was still quite green, Chris (Waller) had done a great job with him and got a great result with him. But he’s still improving.

“I think we will see the best of him at the age of six. He has a lot more to offer and the best is yet to come from him.’

### **The Doha Debut**

The admission from Fownes around Senor Toba puts his opponents on further notice even after showing he can match them in Group company. He now prepares for Qatar in what is only the first

step for his Middle East campaign, as the trainer said.

“Hopefully we can be very competitive there and then five days later we plan to take him across to Dubai.

“The plan is to campaign him in Dubai and maybe if he gets invited then we’ll just go straight to the race on the big day but if not we may still give him a run in the lead-up on Super Saturday.”

Following on from his Middle Eastern assignments he will return home to Hong Kong where two races await him.

“In Hong Kong, there are two very nice races left for him at the end of the season. One is a handicap, the Queen Mother’s Cup, over 2400, which is a distance he eats up.

“Then it’s the Champions and Chater which is also a 2400m Group One. It’s a US \$1.5 million-dollar race so 12 million Hong Kong.

“So it’s a nice race that will be high up on our list at the end of his campaign. It’s good money and that’s the reason we want to take these horses overseas because there is a lot of money on offer at the end of the day it’s expensive to keep horses and you have to try and get a result wherever you go.

“If we travel into the success that opens the doors up for the future for us to be able to look at the program worldwide and see if we can campaign him to our advantage while trying to make some funds for the owner.”

### **The Jockey Challenge**

When it comes to the jockeys onboard Senor Toba has had great Australian jockey Hugh Bowman on board for two of his Group Threes while successful Brazilian hoop Joao Moreira has partnered him for the third feature victory.

With Bowman and Moreira both engaged in Hong Kong and Japan during the Qatar Cup campaign riding duties will be taken on Brit Harry Bentley, as Fownes explained.

“I’ve opted to go with Harry Bentley as a six-time champion in Qatar and he has won this race twice. So I think there is no better person to have on the horse who knows the track

He is owned by the Willie May syndicate who Fownes is passionate about working with.

“They’ve got a big stud in Australia and they had a horse called The Autumn Sun who was a great horse who had nine starts for eight wins and is a top stallion. They



Senor Toba



A Family Affair-Caspar with his sons Ryan and Ronan and wife Alix

owned him and they have a bit of a breeding game going on where they breed a few and buy a few, and this horse came up on our radar as I said."

### The Fownes Stable

The stable currently boasts a maximum number of 72 with 70 in training currently with another star bound for the Dubai sprints along with some up-and-coming younger crop.

"We've got Sky Field who is an international Group One winner and I am campaigning for him to go to the Al Quoz Sprint in Dubai.

"He's a very honest and very consistent horse and he'd be certainly making his presence felt in a Group One like that.

"We've got a couple of really nice horses coming through the system.

"We have a horse called Viva Chaleur who is just starting to adjust to Hong Kong. He's taken a few races to come to himself and he's a chance to go into triple figures on his next prep.

"I've got some young horses that are lightly raced like Daring Pursuit who won his last race. He could be quite progressive and

get certainly into class three two I would say easily.

"There's also a few more that appear to be it's like anything you just have to keep them sound and hope that they can strike when you've got them in good form."

With a crop gradually coming through hungry to show what they can do on the track Fownes does not downplay the importance of patience in this sport.

"It's so important that we have a client that can trust us and just let us do our job. If they let me do my job they will get results. If they are on your back and pushy it simply doesn't work with the horse. You are dealing with animals and some horses can come to hand very quickly while some horses can take a while.

"We come onto surfaces here where everything is firm and these horses from Europe, they're not used to that. Sometimes the good ones can adjust straight away and get through it and some will just take that season, season and a half to get the result."

As the team prepares for the Qatar campaign it is the bigger picture for Fownes and his horses having taken them to Dubai over years past.

"We've never been to Qatar but we have been to Dubai a few times. I've run second there twice, then a few thirds and a lot of fourths so we have been around the money without winning.

His bucket list for future campaigns and races to target includes a few as he commented.

"I've been to Japan and got agonizingly close twice with shorthed defeats with good horses. So that's a challenge I want to go to Japan and snag a really big race there.

### The Way Ahead

"Obviously I am married to an Aussie girl so I want to go to Australia.

"I would love to come down to Australia and have a little bit of fun down there and try to win a couple of good races.

"If you get the right horse, you're a chance to be competitive.

"So, I hope one day I get that superstar and I wouldn't be afraid to travel around the world and take on the best."

*All Photos are provided By Caspar Fownes*



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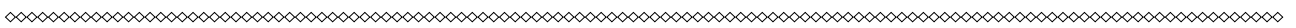
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Michael Stidham





# Dubai World Cup Winner Michael Stidham Talks Possibilities

Not many can say that following in their father's footsteps could lead to training the winner of one of the world's most prestigious races like Michael Stidham can.

Born in New Jersey into a family that is embedded in horse racing his father, George, was a jockey riding along the East Coast as well as a business manager and agent to Bill Hartack.

"So I got into horse racing because my father was a jockey. And so, when I was born he was riding on the East Coast of the United States.

"My mother was from New Jersey. So that's where I was born but then I grew up in Miami.

"It had beautiful weather in Miami and was a big change from New Jersey, warm weather by the water. I had a great childhood; my childhood home was only three miles from the Hialeah racetrack, back in the 70s.

"It was a highly regarded racetrack at the time, one of the premier tracks where the winter racing was the best in the country at that time. So it was a great childhood to be able to grow up around a racetrack where the top horses were running trained by the top trainers, and where the jockeys were good friends with my father.

"My father worked with United States' premier jockey, Bill Hartack, who won five Kentucky Derbys and I grew up around him."

Relationships and connections like this set Stidham on a path to pursue his dreams.

His father set up his own training operation in the seventies and his son

could be found around the stables every spare minute outside of his schooling.

## The Dream Realised

Stidham has gone on to surpass his father's achievements in the sport over a nearly four-decade-long career as one

of North America's most successful and respected horse trainers.

"Those kinds of things were the things that really got me interested in the horse racing industry. And being a trainer was something that I always dreamed about doing.



Proxy//Michael Stidham



Mystic Guide



L-R Michael Stidham with his daughter Camille, himself, daughter Samantha, daughter Stephanie



L to R – Michael Stidham with his daughter Camille, himself, Kim Stidham, daughter Samantha, son in law Parker, daughter Stephanie, Son in law Matt

“My father warned me that it was very difficult and that only maybe the top ten percent of the trainers were the ones that became the elite type trainers.

“He said if you fall into the lower category it’s tough to make a living. He said that it was a very tough business and he really

warned me to be careful getting into the industry. “

Stidham would spend a couple of years at college in preparation to become a veterinarian. But the lure of the track continued to call and eventually he left college to assist his father at his barn at Gulfstream park in South Florida.

Then, at the tender age of twenty-one and armed with a small string of cast-offs from his father, Stidham took out his own trainer’s license and headed to the Gulf Coast.

Success came quickly having his first winner in 1979, while only a year later, he sent out his first Stakes winner in Me Good Man in the Independence Stakes at Louisiana Downs in 1980.

That same year Stidham headed west to California to train for Elmendorf Farm which was owned by Max Gluck. He then two years in California before being head-hunted by the LaCroix family’s Meadowbrook Farm to work as their private trainer, back in Florida.

“Things went really well for a few years but then I saw the part that my dad was talking about where I lost some horses, I lost some clients and things weren’t going well. It was at that point I said to myself “This is what my dad was talking about, I’m in trouble and I have to do something to reinvent myself.”

**The Big Move**

This decision led to a change of scenery as Stidham moved from California to the Midwest.





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“That was New Orleans, Kentucky and Chicago, which was Arlington Park at the time. It got things going and I was able to slowly start getting things moving again. I started winning at a good percentage and people started sending me better horses and it evolved into eventually getting to train for Godolphin.”

Being able to train for the international racing powerhouse flying the royal blue flag was an opportunity that came over time but one that Stidham will always cherish.

“That was something that happened over a long period of time because one of the most important people in my career was a man named John Adger. He managed horses for Bob and Janice McNair who owned Stonerside Stable. because of John whom I knew from my early days’ training in Texas, started sending me horses for the McNairs.

“Then eventually Sheikh Mohammed bought Stonerside out and because I was a trainer there already, Godolphin got me involved.

“John Adger stayed involved with Godolphin advising them with the new Stonerside horses and he kept putting my name in there hopefully to allow me to continue training for Godolphin.

“So, I got lucky. I won a Grade Two Stakes race on Kentucky Derby Day with a filly named Tizaqueena. From there I eventually got that phone call from Dan Pride and Jimmy Bell asking if I could take more horses for Godolphin.

“It was a dream come true. It is something that any trainer would want to happen. Such an amazing opportunity to work for a great operation that always puts the horses first and allows the trainers to do their job.

#### **After Godolphin Happened**

In 2020 he trained Mystic Guide to a Group Two The Jim Dandy Stakes before campaigning in the UAE taking out the Group One Dubai World Cup, taking victories across continents in the journey.

“The thoughts of winning that race brighten my day always.

“I mean it was definitely a different experience with very few people there due to the COVID lockdown. And you know, everything the way it played out. I was a little worried about if things were going to be able to continue, but it went off without a hitch. So, it went well.”

Throughout his career, he had many highlights.

“Well, certainly all my Grade One wins have had special meaning for me. I’ve had five of them now and they have been very special moments for me.

“But winning the training title at the Fair Grounds Racetrack (New Orleans, Louisiana) was huge. I have been training there for 30 years of training it just meant so much not only to myself but to my staff as well.

“A lot of those people have been with me for 25-30 years. So, it was a big thing for us to be able to win at home and win that title.”

Stidham stable now houses a string of 70 horses that he races around the nation from his two major bases at Fair Grounds during the winter and Fair Hill Training Centre in Maryland in the summer.

#### **Closing The Book On Pegasus**

One of his current stars is Proxy a 5YO son of Tapit who has been showing what he can do on the track.

Last year he ran second in the Group Two New Orleans Classic before taking the spoils in the Group One Clark Stakes at Churchill Downs. His last start was in the Group One Pegasus World Cup at



L-R Michael Stidham with his brother Steven, sister Cyndi, mother Anita, himself





Mystic Guide

Gulfstream Park, seeing him finish fifth. A race that Stidham is upfront about.

“He never really got a good chance coming into that race. The Pegasus is run on a speed-biased race track where he was shuffled back from all the kickback from the one post-position and then only got to really run the last three-sixteenths of a mile when he got clear. So, we just drew a line through that.

“He was the only horse that was really making up any good ground in the end.” When the mention of a potential tilt at a Dubai campaign for Proxy is made Stidham becomes excited about what may be.

“I would love that! That would be wonderful!

“Actually, the mile and a quarter of the World Cup would be very beneficial to Proxy.”

The plans for Proxy going forward are fluid but the different options are open for Stidham as he said.

“There is probably no necessity for a prep race. More than likely if we don’t come to Dubai we would be looking at places like possibly the Santa Anita Handicap or the New Orleans Classic that runs here where we’re stabled at the Fair Grounds.

“So those are alternative races that we would potentially use instead of the World Cup. We are in constant discussion with Michael Banahan and Dan Pride. Right now those are the races that are under consideration.”

#### Travelling To Dubai

To travel Proxy dependant on the races targeted he reflected on that of his Dubai World Cup winner, Mystic Guide.

“With Mystic Guide we came to Dubai two weeks ahead of time. So we will

probably look at similar arrangements where we could get an easy work into him (Proxy) as we did with Mystic Guide going into the race. A lot of it will have to do with how the Saudi Cup goes.”

Now having trained for the powerhouse Godolphin for eight years and having a Dubai World Cup to his name he admits the appeal of returning to conquering another Dubai World Cup is more than tempting.

#### The Allure Of Iconic Races

As a proud American, he is excited to take out the nation’s greatest and most prestigious races.

“I would love to hopefully have a chance to run a horse in the Kentucky Derby for Godolphin one day and a Breeders Cup race.”

*All Photos Are Provided By Michael Stidham*

# Luxurious Doha Hotel

Qatar, a country with a rich history, is known for its fascinating sights, sounds, and tastes. Doha, Qatar's capital, has earned a reputation as a "jewel" in the Middle East.

Hotels in Qatar is well-known for providing visitors with unrivalled levels of luxury through individualised service, an extensive selection of amenities, and elegant quarters.

Alwadi Hotel Doha MGallery, a refined oasis, is the gateway to the world's first sustainable downtown regeneration project, Msheireb Downtown Doha.

The new 5-star boutique hotel offers spacious luxurious rooms and suites, sumptuous restaurants, exceptional bars, a high-end equipped gym, a refreshing pool and soothing spa.

The hotel helps you immerse yourself in the essence of Qatari hospitality and discover cultured blend of Qatari heritage and contemporary design creating endless Memorable Moments.

A centuries-old market, iconic Souq Waqif, lies adjacent to the hotel and is easily accessible via a pedestrian underpass. Culture blends with contemporary design in each of Alwadi's 213 rooms and suites equipped with their unique cocoon MyBed concept.

The rich carpets that line the corridors throughout the hotel take inspiration from Henna patterns, a special touch mirroring the unique MGallery concept of Inspired by Her. A striking collaboration between modern design and Qatari warmth in an instantly inviting space.

The age-old generosity of the Qatari people is marked on the top of each room and suites door with a golden leaf to reflect the open in readiness to welcome visitors and treat them with authentic Qatari hospitality.

Alwadi Doha MGallery is intricately designed rooms features elements of the bespoke Mashrabiya, especially designed for this hotel.

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*Alwadi Hotel Doha MGallery*





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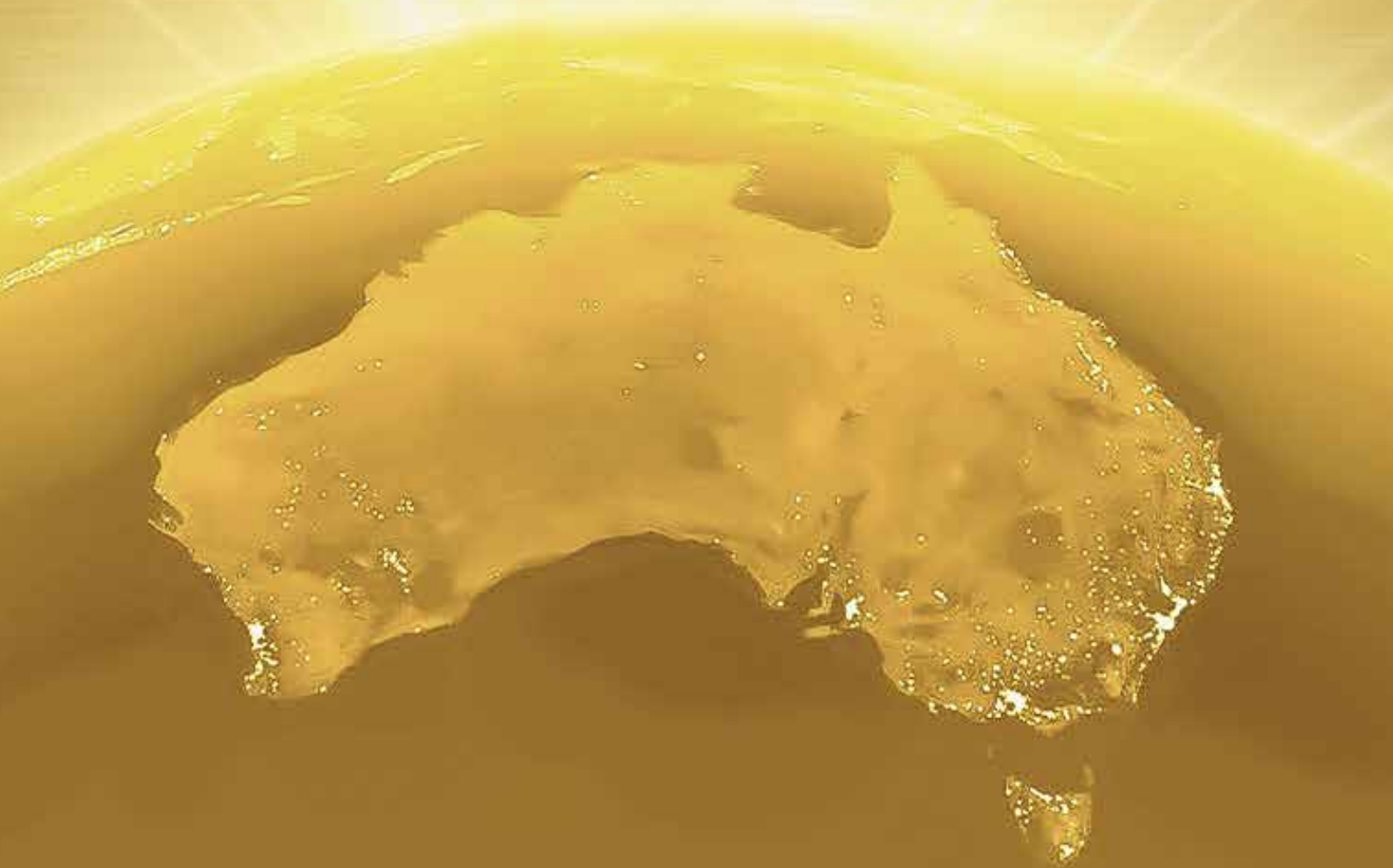
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