

America's Dubai team features seven Grade 1 winners

By Michele MacDonald

Full Stride Communications

The American team of horses preparing to fly to the United Arab Emirates and race on the record \$26-million Dubai World Cup (G1) program on March 27 has swelled to include:

- Two-time Grade 1 winner Take the Points, who is aiming at the unprecedented \$10-million purse in the Dubai World Cup for his owners in the Starlight Partners group;
- Breeders' Cup Ladies Classic (G1) winner Life Is Sweet, who also will run in the World Cup in only her second career start against males, and
- Grade 1 winner The Usual Q. T., who will line up in the \$5-million Dubai Duty Free (G1), the 1,800-meter (about 1 1/8-mile) turf race that often is the most competitive on the World Cup program.

Overall, the American team of runners going to Dubai for the seven Thoroughbred events on World Cup night boasts seven Grade 1 victors.

The addition of Take the Points and Life Is Sweet to the world's richest race ever run will mean America will have a tough four-horse squadron in the World Cup consisting solely of Grade 1 winners. Last year's champion older male and turf male Gio Ponti and Pacific Classic Stakes (G1) winner Richard's Kid are the other two contenders.

Jack Wolf, managing partner of Starlight Partners, said Take the Points is stronger and more focused than he was last year when he won two Grade 1 races on turf as a three-year-old.

"(Trainer) Todd Pletcher and his team have really brought him around; he has matured and grown up into a real man of a horse," Wolf said. "Even watching him train, you can see that he is much more into it than he was in the past."

"Our horse is in his best form ever and he deserves a chance to compete against the best horses in the world," said Donald Lucarelli, another partner in the Starlight venture.

Take the Points has run over synthetic surfaces before and should have no problem with the Tapeta track at Meydan Racecourse, Wolf said. Regular rider Edgar Prado is set to be back aboard Take the Points in Dubai.

Meanwhile, trainer John Shirreffs said he was not concerned that Life Is Sweet has run against males only once previously, when she was third in the Hollywood Gold Cup (G1) last year, or that the five-year-

old daughter of Storm Cat has raced at the World Cup distance (2,000 meters or about 1 ¼ miles) only once, also in the Gold Cup.

"I don't think the distance is an issue whatsoever, and the surface is in her favor, too," Shirreffs said. "Whoever is in the field, I think she'll compare very well with them."

Life Is Sweet has scored the biggest successes of her career on synthetic surfaces and Shirreffs said her late-running style also should suit the Meydan track, which he observed seems to have played well to closers during the Dubai International Racing Carnival.

"It seems like if you come from off the pace, it's an advantage (at Meydan)," he said.

Marty and Pam Wygod bred and own Life Is Sweet as well as Dubai Duty Free contender Courageous Cat, who is trained by Bill Mott.

Trainer Jim Cassidy confirmed on Wednesday that The Usual Q. T., a four-year-old gelding by Unusual Heat who won six consecutive races in 2009 including the Hollywood Derby (G1), would also be aimed at the Duty Free.

"I'll train him up to that race," Cassidy said. The Usual Q. T. is coming off the most disappointing effort of his career, a ninth-place finish in the Sunshine Millions Classic on January 30, but that race was over Santa Anita Park's synthetic track and he probably will relish the return to turf.

On Tuesday, The Usual Q. T. worked three furlongs on Santa Anita's firm turf course in :38.20.

In other news regarding the American team:

- Dubai Sheema Classic (G1) contender Presious Passion did just what trainer Mary Hartmann wanted when he won Sunday's Mac Diarmida Stakes (G2) in his trademark front-running style over Gulfstream Park's turf course. "We're ready to go (to Dubai) now," she said. Presious Passion, a multiple Grade 1 winner, finished second in last year's Breeders' Cup Turf (G1).
- Trainer Bob Baffert sent Richard's Kid out for a seven-furlong work on Wednesday, which the five-year-old by Lemon Drop Kid accomplished in 1:25.60, second fastest of four at the distance over Santa Anita's Pro-Ride track.
- Dubai Golden Shaheen (G1) candidate Kinsale King worked a half-mile in :48.40 on Sunday over the Tapeta surface at Golden Gate Fields. The move was the eighth fastest of 93 at the distance.
- Breeders' Cup Turf Sprint winner California Flag, who is aiming for the \$1-million Al Quoz Sprint (G3) on the grass at Meydan, worked six furlongs on Wednesday over Santa Anita's turf course in 1:14, second fastest of four at the distance.
- Ken and Sarah Ramsey's Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile (G1) winner Furthest Land drilled five furlongs handily on Sunday at Gulfstream Park, stopping the clock in 1:00.40, third fastest of 40 workouts at the distance. Furthest Land apparently will be the Ramseys' only runner in Dubai this year as their international campaigner Cannonball, who had been a candidate for the Al Quoz Sprint, has been entered in Saturday's Newmarket Handicap (G1) at Flemington Racecourse in Australia. Ramsey Farm Manager Mark Partridge said recently that Cannonball, second in the Golden Jubilee Stakes (G1) at Royal Ascot last year, would not run in Dubai if he raced in Australia.

