

H.H. THE PRESIDENT OF UNITED ARAB EMIRATES ENDURANCE CUP 2013 FEI CEI ***

*160Km Endurance Ride
Emirates International Endurance Village, Al Wathba, Abu Dhabi – UAE*

by Talitha Bakker ■ photos by Melanie Cottle

At the 16th of February the world famous President Cup was held at the Al Wathba Endurance village in Abu Dhabi, UAE. A 160 km CEI *** endurance contest in the middle of the desert. 132 riders and their brave horses came to start.

After the pre-check all horses had to pass the day before, all the horses started at 06:00 am. Immediately after the start,

already a lead group was formed. This head group was led by Saeed Ahmad Saeed Al Kbattal, followed by Mohd Saeed Mohd Al Fares. Mohammed Ali Al Shafar, whose family has been very competitive in the endurance racing over the years was also in the first group, as well as Fatma Jassem Saeed Al Marri and the 13-year-old Khalifa Ali Kbalfan Al Jabouri, aiming for a double having won the JYR Presidents Cup last month.



It was Saeed Ahmad Saeed Al Khattal with his 11 years old Anglo Arabian gelding Opium Lord that came in first with an average speed of 26.75 km/h. He was also the first one to leave the wet gate, closely followed by Mohd Saeed Mohd Al Faresi. The two riders continued their lead and came in with 10 seconds of difference after the second leap. Closely followed by Mohd Ali Al Shafar, who managed to win some time in the past round to claim again his position in the headgroup.

It was the 14 yr old Purebred Arabian Yamamah of Mohd Saeed Mohd Al Faresi that showed the fastest recovery and was able to leave the wet gate for the 3rd leap a few seconds before its competitors. Al Khattal was determined to keep ahead and managed to come in the wetgate a few second before Faresi, closely followed by Al Shafar.

Going into the 4th leap it was again Faresi's Purebred Arabian Yamamah that showed the fastest recovery and was allowed to start first. Followed closely again by Al Khattal. It was in this leap where Al Khattal took some more distance from Faresi and Faresi felt back to the 6th position. Being outpaced by Al Shafar, Khalifa Ali Khalfan Al Jahouri and Saeed Saqer Mohd Qabea Al Ameri.

Going in to this last leap, the fifth round, it was very important to be the first to leave the wetgate. This is the moment when the real endurance of the horse is tested. It was the 9 years old purebred Arabian gelding Farak from Al Jahouri that recovered the fastest and he left the wet gate at the first position, followed 18 seconds later by Al Khattal. Al Shaffar was leaving the wet gate at the 3rd position, closely followed by Al Ameri.



Emma Victoria Finnie
from Great Britain riding Baraka Farid



Khalifa Ali Khalfan Al Jahouri
from the UAE riding Farak





Mohd Ali Al Shafar from the UAE riding Orman De Cardonne



With an average speed of this last leap of 31.36 km/h it was Mohammed Ali Al Shaffar with his 11 yr old French bred Purebred Arabian gelding, Orman De Cardonne who took the lead. Separating himself from the headgroup and finishing first after a ride of 6 hours, 6 minutes and 24 seconds with an average speed of 26.20 km/h and a heartbeat of 53/52. Coming in second was the 13-year-old Khalifa Ali Khalfan Al Jahouri with a difference of 44 seconds. Coming in third was Saeed Saqer Mohd Qabea Al Ameri riding the part bred Arab Eclips. Fatma Jassem Saeed Al Marri finished fourth, with Rashid Mohd Ibrahim Al Baloushi fifth, Saeed Ahmad Saeed Al Khattal at the sixth position and Mohd Saeed Mohd Al Faresi finishing seventh.

In total 50 out of 132 riders managed to finish the President Cup. The other 82 horses were taken out of the competition because of lameness or not good enough recovery after the rest periods. The top European rider was Emma Victoria Finnie from Great Britain, riding the 16 years old purebred Arabian Baraka Farid at an average speed of 24.89 km/h, bringing them to the 11th place.

The organizers of the President Cup had also invited some young riders from Europe to compete at the CEI*** Presi-

dent Cup. From all the riders invited, it was the Portuguese Maria do Carmo Farraia Cruz, riding the 10 years old Anglo-Arabian stallion Africano at an average speed of 19.57 km/h, finishing at the 41st position. Followed closely by Daniele Seriola from Spain with Indian Laksika and Marijke Visser from The Netherlands with Wamid.

With the burning sun, the desert sand and the high speed the riders are riding, The President cup is a real challenge and quite different then most are used to in Europe. Big jeeps are riding on full speed next to the horses galloping, plastic bottles are scattered around the tracks. Horse breeders, owners and potential buyers following the horses, most of them trying to agree on a price for the horse currently running down the track. Ten people around one horse, floating it with water as soon as it arrives at the vet gate. It is really a special world and a real spectacle to attend! As the President cup is being held every year during the International Arabian horse show in Abu Dhabi, it is really nice to combine the two events. Al Wathba is situated just one hour from the Equestrian center and it is very interesting to see first the Arabian horses in the show and after seeing them do what they are actually bred for... endurance. □

