

New international turf series for Bahrain horseracing

Beginning in December, 10 new races to be introduced to Bahrain specifically targeting international horses rated 85 to 100

● **Bahrain Turf Series will be linked together and run alongside the best racing in Bahrain, including the prestigious King's Cup, Crown Prince's Cup and National Day Grade One**

● **Turf series to have a total of £550,000 prize money fund; £50,000 is allocated per series race, with a minimum of £30,000 to the winner**

● **Points to be added and at the end of the series, the owner of the horse with the most points in each pot will get £15,000, and the trainer of the horse with most points will get £10,000**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's horse racing programme is rapidly evolving due to the unwavering support it continues to receive from His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The robust horseracing infrastructure the Kingdom proudly boasts is only one of the wide-ranging attributes that make it an ideal hub for the sport to flourish and expand locally, regionally and internationally.

Building on this development, and the success of the Bahrain International Trophy, a brand-new turf series will begin in Bahrain from December 2021.

Ten new races have been in-



Races at REHC last season (file photo)

roduced to the Bahrain race program specifically targeting international horses rated 85 to 100.

The Bahrain Turf Series will be linked together and run alongside the best racing in Bahrain, including the prestigious King's Cup, Crown Prince's Cup and National Day Grade One.

The race series will have a total of £550,000 prize money fund. £50,000 is allocated per series race with a minimum of £30,000 to the winner.

The turf series will also have a bonus point system attached depending on where horses finish.

The points will be added and at the end of the series the owner of the horse with the most points in each pot will get £15,000, and the trainer of the horse with most points will get £10,000. This will mean an extra £50,000 in total prize money.

This will not only increase the competitiveness of the races held in the Kingdom, but also make more rewarding the participation of Bahraini jockeys and owners alike. With wider international participation, Bahraini jockeys and owners will be

able to add to their rich horse racing expertise and showcase their local talent on a global level.

The Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club will oversee all racing in Bahrain, providing a top class concierge service for owners with horses running and trained in Bahrain. The Bahrain Turf Series will offer exclusive benefits and opportunities to owners ensuring an excellent experience of Bahrain.

Ahead of the new Turf Series starting, the third running of the Bahrain International Trophy will take place on November 19 at the Sakhr racecourse.

The race has attracted high-quality international entries in its first two years, including five individual Group 1 winners in 2020. Last year's race was won by the locally-trained Simsir who just edged out Global Giant (John Gosden) and Sovereign (Aidan O'Brien).

The race is open to horses rated over 95 and is run over a distance of 2000 meters (10 furlongs).

There will be three races which will grant "Automatic In-

itation" to the winners even if not originally entered: August 13, The Curragh - Fitzdares Royal Whip Stakes (G3); August 21, York - The Sky Bet and Symphony Group Strensall Stakes (G3); and October 9, Newmarket - The Darley Stakes (G3). Entries for the race close on October 5.

"I am very proud of the Bahrain International Trophy. We have hosted the race for two years and we will be hosting it again in 2021 for the third time having seen a huge jump in the quality of horses and participants in year two," Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC) High Committee chairman His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa said.

"By introducing the new Bahrain Turf Series we hope to further attract great horses to the Kingdom of Bahrain, horses that can add a higher quality of performance to our two most prestigious races, His Majesty the King's Cup and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince's Cup.

"My own personal goal is to develop the industry of thoroughbred horse racing in the Kingdom of Bahrain and if we are able to facilitate our Bahraini trainers and jockey's relationships with European connections that will be one of my key goals met."

REHC Deputy Chairman His Highness Shaikh Faisal bin Rashid bin Isa Al Khalifa added: "We are delighted to be introducing the new Bahrain Turf Series to our race programme and hosting these races for the forthcoming season.

"We look forward to welcoming owners and trainers to experience horse racing in Bahrain and everything that the Kingdom of Bahrain has to offer."

REHC Executive Director Shaikh Salman bin Rashed al



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HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH ISA BIN SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA

Khalifa commented: "It is an incredibly exciting time for horse racing in Bahrain. We have been blown away with the amount of quality trainers, jockeys and horses who have come to race in Bahrain since the first Bahrain International Trophy in 2019.

"To have had five individual Group 1 winners in our second running of the race, including Aidan O'Brien's Irish Derby winner Sovereign was very special. Off the back of the race's success, REHC are very proud to introduce the Bahrain Turf Series for the 2021/22 season in Bahrain."

Andrew Balding has sent a horse to each of the two run-

nings of the Bahrain International Trophy (Pivoine in 2019 and Bangkok in 2020) and is keen to continue to support the Bahrain International Trophy and the new Turf Series moving forward.

"Our experiences with sending horses to Bahrain has been exemplary," Balding said. "The fantastic facilities for the horses and stable staff, coupled with brilliant hospitality means we would love to be returning there this winter for either the Bahrain International Trophy or the new Turf Series. Preferably both!"

John and Thady Gosden have finished second in both Bahrain International Trophy races held (Turgenev in 2019 and Global Giant in 2020). Thady Gosden is full of praise for the set-up in Bahrain.

"Having taken horses to the inaugural, and second running of the Bahrain International Trophy, the race remains firmly as a target. The training and quarantine facilities in Bahrain are world-class, and constantly being improved. The racecourse is also well-suited to the European style of racing, and we would not hesitate to take the right horses there in the future," Gosden said.

Frankie Dettori has been riding in Bahrain for over five years and has had plenty of success there including four Crown Prince's Cups. He finished second on Global Giant in the 2020 Bahrain International Trophy for His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

"It is a joy to ride in Bahrain," Dettori said. "It is probably one of the best turf courses in the Middle East. His Highness Shaikh Isa has done a fantastic job in creating the Bahrain International Trophy, which has already attracted some incredible horses. It is a very exciting time for horse racing in Bahrain."

Arab Cup U-17 postponed

● **Competition originally scheduled to take place between July 29 and August 15 in Morocco**

● **Bahrainis drawn in Group D alongside Egypt, Somalia and Lebanon**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's participation in the 2021 Arab Cup U-17 football tournament will have to wait a while longer, following the announcement yesterday of the competition's postponement.

The announcement was



made by the Union of Arab Football Associations, and confirmed by the Bahrain Football Association.

The competition was supposed to take place between July 29 and August 15 in Morocco. It was put off due to challenges posed by the COVID-10

pandemic.

The new dates, and the possibility of a new host country, were not revealed.

The Bahrainis are one of 16 teams set to compete once the event takes place. They have been drawn in Group D alongside Egypt, Somalia and Lebanon.

Group A features hosts Morocco, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Group B includes Algeria, the UAE, Libya and Djibouti. Group C comprises Tunisia, Mauritania, Yemen and defending champions Iraq.

The top two teams from each group move on to the knockout quarter-finals.

This edition of the Arab Cup U-17 will be the fourth. It will be the first time Bahrain are participating.

Impossible for Barca to keep Messi without departures - Liga chief

Reuters | Barcelona

Barcelona must considerably reduce their wage bill in order to keep Lionel Messi, La Liga chief Javier Tebas said yesterday, adding that the club would not be shown any leniency when it comes to obeying the league's strict financial control rules.

Messi, Barca's all-time top scorer and appearance maker, ended his 21-year association with the club last month and is currently a free agent as the Catalans cannot offer him a new deal due to their financial predicament.

President Joan Laporta said last month that Messi was keen to remain at the club but giving



Lionel Messi

him a new deal was being held up by the league's Financial Fair Play regulations.

Spanish media reports had suggested La Liga could relax the rules to allow the six-time Ballon d'Or winner to stay at Barca but Tebas said there was no chance of that happening.

"The rules are what they are

and everyone must comply with them, from Barcelona to (second division side) Alcorcon," he told Spanish network La Sexta.

The 34-year-old Messi has helped guide Argentina to the Copa America final and on Saturday will play against hosts Brazil hoping to win a first major trophy with his country.

But his club future still needs to be settled with the La Liga season starting again in five weeks' time.

Tebas said the only way for Barca to keep their captain was to get rid of more players, having recently sold left back Junior Firpo to Leeds United and U.S. international Konrad de la Fuente to Olympique de Marseille.