



Participants in action during a race (file photo)

Stage set for international race

The eyes of the world are focused on REHC for Kingdom's first-ever international horserace

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Bahrain's very first international horse race, the inaugural Bahrain International Trophy, is set to take place today at the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC), with preliminary races starting at 1.40pm, ahead of the main race at 4.30pm.

The event represents the vision of HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, High Committee Deputy Chairman of REHC, and the support of HH Shaikh Abdulla bin Isa Al Khalifa, High Committee Chairman of REHC. Local partners include Gulf Air, Bapco and Batelco.

The main race will see nine thoroughbred race horses from around Europe join five local runners to battle it out on turf over 2,000 metres (10 furlongs). They were selected from 46 global entries, with all rated at or above 95 by their domestic authority, including six rated 106 and over.

Starting gate positions were randomly selected during a Post Position Draw (PPD) event held at the Four Seasons Hotel on Wednesday.

Despite being the first occasion of its kind for the nation, Bahrain International Trophy has debuted as a key fixture on the racing calendar, both locally and on the world stage. Having attracted an unprecedented calibre of participants, the race has created a buzz amongst the global horse racing elite and is expected to spur on a new era of international horseracing events hosted by the Kingdom.

Media teams and top photographers from leading international horseracing



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa speaks after PPD event

publications have flown in to capture the historic action. Famous TV racing presenter Nick Luck and noted commentator Mark Johnson have also arrived to follow the extravaganza.

Commenting on the stature of the race, Mark Johnson said: "Bahrain has become famous in the sporting world for staging one of the most popular grand prix motor races annually, and now this is a chance for the people of Bahrain to see a horse racing equivalent.

"Amongst the 14 jockeys riding in the inaugural Bahrain International Trophy, seven are, or have been, national champion jockeys. It is a truly international field and I would not be surprised if the finish is fought out by horses representing France, the UK and

Bahrain. The French contingent are particularly strong, given Intellogent has already won at Group 1 level (the highest grade of racing)."

The runners include Intellogent (Ireland), the first overseas-trained winner of a Group 1 race to run in Bahrain, with an accumulated £401,647 in career earnings. He will be ridden by two-time champion jockey Pierre-Charles Boudot, who is one of the most recognised names in French racing, and is coming off a recent win at Europe's most prestigious race, the Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.

HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, will be showcasing his winning horse, Afaak (Great Britain), who took out this year's Royal Hunt Cup at Royal Ascot, with

trainer Charlie Hills.

Mountain Angel (Ireland) has won twice this year in England, and placed second at one of the regional races. His trainer is Roger Varian, a classic winner with 17 Group 1 victories to his name.

Turgenev (Great Britain), nearly completed what would have been a famous five-timer for jockey Frankie Dettori at Royal Ascot earlier this year, and has since twice finished runner up to two subsequent Group winners.

Royal Julius (Ireland), a Group 2 winner in 2018, has finished in the top five places from his last eight starts, with £469,000 in accumulated career earnings.

Pivoine (Ireland) will be ridden by three-time champion jockey Silvestre De Sousa, in what will be his third international trip of the year, following outings in the US and Canada.

Runners and jockeys will be accompanied by equally famous owners, including Fiona Carmichael, Ziad A Galadari, Godolphin and King Power Racing, along with world-class trainers, such as Fabrice Chappet, John Gosden OBE and Andrew Balding, plus many more recognisable names.

The winner's trophy, which was also revealed during the Post Position Draw, is as grand as the occasion itself, designed and handcrafted by House of Garrard.

The event will be open to the public free of charge in addition to being broadcast live, locally on BTV and internationally on Racing TV. The festivities will include family-friendly entertainment options, as well as food and beverage vendors.



Mark Johnson announcing at the Post Position Draw



Nick Luck presenting at the Post Position Draw

Shaikh Isa welcomes the calibre of participants in the historic event

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The excitement ahead of the first-ever Bahrain International Trophy has reached unprecedented levels.

The spotlight is set on Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC) in Riffa, and the long-awaited event promises to deliver an occasion like no other.

Deputy Chairman of the High Committee REHC, HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, commented ahead of the race: "On a personal note, I am very excited to welcome all these international horses. It is a solid field and would be a solid Group 2 race anywhere around

the world.

"Bahraini-owned horses have had a very successful year on racetracks internationally, including an unprecedented two Royal Ascot winners, so it is only natural that we now take the next step here locally in the Kingdom to host a race of this calibre."

HH Shaikh Isa continued: "I would love everyone to come out and show support. It is truly a world-class, marquee event. This is a calibre of horses you will not find on a regular basis on the island."

The event has taken the international horse racing world by storm.

REHC executive director Shaikh Salman bin Rashed Al Khalifa commented: "Attracting so many top owners, trainers, jockeys and horses for our first international race has exceeded our expectations and truly means a lot for Bahrain. I am sure this is only the beginning of a successful journey which will establish our country as a vital fixture in the racing calendar."

Shaikh Salman took time to pay tribute to the REHC's local partners – Gulf Air, Bapco and Batelco – and to all those associated with managing the racecourse, commenting: "It is clear everyone involved in making this race meeting happen has worked



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HH SHAIKH ISA BIN SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA

from the heart."

Shaikh Salman expanded by arguing a seminal event like this will lead to further high-level international competitions, which will in turn allow the broader attractions of the island to be highlighted on the world stage: "As well as benefiting our racing, I believe this event will benefit the tourism sector in Bahrain immensely. We have put in place a schedule of events designed to showcase everything our country has to offer, with the aim for everyone to leave here with a positive image of Bahrain."

The visitors have also been given the chance to inspect the REHC course itself, with trainers

especially impressed by the magnificent condition of the turf. The track has been cared for over the past five years by REHC facilities manager and clerk Neil Mackenzie-Ross, who brings a wealth of experience to the role after spending nine years in a similar role at Lingfield Park in England before moving to Bahrain.

Mackenzie-Ross said: "The reason I came to live and work here was for the opportunity to get Bahrain to a position where we could have international racing like this, so there is a real sense of achievement about staging the Bahrain International Trophy."