

2007 Season Review

The Season Gets Underway

This season featured 14 racemeetings in total, with an additional 11 single races held on Thoroughbred cards. With a total of 118 races, ARO attracted over 1,000 runners, giving an average of 8.7 per race. The opening meeting at Wolverhampton took place amid glorious sunshine; having attracted 53 runners, this curtain opener saw the impressive comeback of Gill Duffield's charge No Risk Al Maury, who went on to be unbeaten in 4 runs this year, including the Group 1 Shadwell Dubai International Stakes on Dubai Day. Newcomers Benamer, trained by D Batteate and Noble Athlete for Delyth Thomas, both won their maidens nicely, and went on to be key players later on in the season.

Rain, Rain, Rain

Despite the sunny start, the weather certainly played its part this year; firstly by forcing the abandonment of the May Exeter fixture, and then by flooding Newbury on the eve of this year's Dubai Day, which was celebrating its Silver Jubilee. The second Exeter was also marred by wet weather and fog, however, some great finishes were in store, particularly the staying handicap which was won by Debrett, having just got the better of stable companion Kizhi.

New Venues

This year saw the first meeting at Nottingham, where, despite atrocious weather, which just got wetter and wetter, it was a day for jockeys and great finishes. Both Sam Holdsworth rode and Phil Collington rode trebles; Sam with wins on Karang, trained by Bill Smith, Bonham for Chris Culleton, by the narrowest of margins, and Jana for Sarah Saunders. Phil's victories were aboard Furaat and Anayid for Gill Duffield, and John Wilson's Night Cap. However, the day's top story had to go to Lucy Saunders, who won aboard Adalar, trained by her mother Tig, after a tremendous battle with John Wilson's Princess Karla to win by a short head having led from start to finish. This was only Lucy's second ride with ARO.

Summer at Last

Huntingdon bucked the trend of the summer by being hot and sunny on both days; ice creams were certainly the order of the day! Always popular with runners, this midlands track provided some great finishes, including the first maiden, which was eventually won by Nasij for Gill Duffield. The August meeting will go down as a red letter day for Caroline De Wilde, who rode her first winner on Egypt, winning by a neck from the always consistent Bonham. Fraternity must be mentioned here - the Champion Thoroughbred just held on for a well deserved victory over Hoofbeats Tour after already doing a circuit after unseating at the start. However, one of the best finishes of the day went to the Anglos, where Hardtoback made all to win from Marmot D'Estruval and Prussian Emperor.

Dubai Day

Although this was forced to be rescheduled to the end of August, it proved to be a fantastic day for Arab Racing. Glorious sunshine brought a record crowd of 16,500 to watch some of the best Arabs in Europe compete for nearly £100,000 prize money. Although the raiders went away with 3 wins, including Dahess, pictured below right, who completed a historic hatrick of wins in the Group 1 Zabeel Stakes; the home team claimed the other 4 races, with victories for Shuhood for Sam Davison, No Risk Al Maury and Aljaareh for Gill Duffield, and Angel Picamer for Bill Smith.

The battling finish of the season must go to Salisbury, where the gallant CS Al Wahed gave his all to nearly fend off the persistent challenge of Malik D'Or, ridden by Simon Walker. This meeting also saw the game Plus finally get his head in front for David Paton, after twice being in the places. Jelvita, trained by Sue Herrod, and determinedly ridden from the front by Danny Burton, deservedly took the honours in The iimia Wealth Management Handicap Stakes.

Breeders Cup

The record number of runners for the season went to Stratford, which also featured the renewal of The Breeders Cup, won by Anayid for Gill Duffield. 87 runners turned out for this meeting, which saw an emphatic victory for Night Cap over Fraternity, a second win of the season for Floren, who scooped the Sweepstakes Final, and a fourth win for Curupanna, winning the Anglo Penn Challenge Series. This meeting saw Rhys Flint lose his novice claim and subsequently win without it on Bonham, albeit after a thrilling battle to get the better of Fair Deed Dash by half a length.

Jebel Ali Day

Although this year's introduction of Gold, Silver and Bronze Finals caused its fair share of problems, the races proved to be highly competitive and all had excellent outcomes. It was good to see Estival back to her best and fulfil the early promise she showed when winning her maiden at Huntingdon to win the Gold, although

Benamer ran a tremendous race in defeat. Both should be exciting prospects next year. Pacific Way ran an eye-catching sixth, having been well behind early on. The Silver sprung a surprise from Pavot Al Kyle, who won in great style for Delyth Thomas. It was quite appropriate that Bonham should be involved in the Bronze shake up, as he has performed consistently all season for Chris Culleton, but nothing was going to stop John Collier's CS Lafaz, who proved you don't need to be young to scoop one of the top prizes of the season.

The race signalled the end of the UK Arab race season with owner/trainer Carol Legg's useful gelding Mushammer (Passeem Lotois x Kawzah Tiki) crowned UK Champion Arab, with four wins and four places from eight runs.

The Final Race of the Season at Kempton

This saw Welsh-based trainer Delyth Thomas pull off an incredible achievement when all five runners finished in the first six in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Stakes at Kempton Park. The race was won by Thomas's smart gelding Final Fling (Djamel x FH Honey Mellon) who beat stablemate Noble Athlete (Dorwan Du Cayrou).

The Championships

Champion trainer was the incredible Gill Duffield once again, who ensured main patron HH Sheikh Hamdan was crowned Champion owner. Their leading performers were Anayid, who won three races, including the UK Breeders Cup; the amazing No Risk Al Maury, unbeaten all season winning the Group 2 Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club Stakes, the Group 1 Shadwell Dubai International Stakes and the State of Qatar International Handicap Stakes. Furaat won twice, including the UAE Equestrian and Racing Federation Premier Handicap Stakes and Paul De Faust who won the Qatar Racing & Equestrian Federation Stakes at Newbury.

Simon Walker narrowly beat last year's champion Phil Collington to land the jockeys Championship. They were level with twenty winners each at Warwick, the final meeting of the season; although Collington briefly went into the lead when winning the opener on Kamilya, Simon Walker won the next two races on Fraternity and Earlsdon to clinch the title.

Katie James won the novice jockey title with eight wins narrowly from promising young jockey Rhys Flint who rode the majority of Delyth Thomas's winners this season; he finished a good runner up with seven winners in his debut season.