

Laura King is a presenter for the Dubai Racing Channel

Thursday preview

With 421 UAE winners, including a Dubai World Cup, to his name, American trainer Kiaran McLaughlin certainly knows what it takes to succeed in the Middle East, so his four-strong team at Meydan on Thursday's night's excellent card has to be respected.

Chief among them is the Grade One winner Frosted, who is aiming at the Dubai World Cup, but will prep in the Maktoum Challenge Round 2 – his first start of 2016. The grey son of Tapit arrived at Charlie Appleby's Al Marmoon Stables 12 days ago, and has pleased his trainer, who himself arrived on Monday.

“After only three weeks' rest Frosted ran one of his best races, in the Pennsylvania Derby, so that's the thinking with coming over now – we could run back in Maktoum Challenge Round 3 and then to the World Cup on three weeks' rest.

“He's a nice horse, up there with the best I've trained, and he's travelled over very well. We hope he wins on Thursday night.”

Although Frosted is rated 9lbs clear of the field on official ratings, 12 days is a short enough turn around after a long trip from the US, and preference is for the locally-based horses.

Special Fighter is hugely progressive and looks up to this grade, but **Prayer For Relief** [Meydan, 16.45] gets the nod after finishing like a train last time out. Natural progression, fitness-wise, should see him go close again. Munaaser, who won a decent handicap on local debut last time, has each way appeal for a confident yard.

McLaughlin runs two, Confrontation and Watershed, in the Group Three Firebreak Stakes, saying: “It's Confrontation's first start for us, so it's difficult to know, but if he runs up to his form he's the pick of the two.”

On ratings, the McLaughlin pair have it to do to catch **Mubtaahij** [Meydan, 17.55] who is 6lbs clear of the field. Mike De Kock, whose colt has suffered only one Meydan defeat so far, was keen to stress that “he's put on a lot of condition, so everything he does before the end of March is just relevant to World Cup night.” However, hopefully, his class will see him through here. If it doesn't then One Man Band and Le Bernardin are obvious dangers.

De Kock is enjoying an excellent Carnival, and his **Star Empire** [Meydan, 17.20] can follow up his handicap win last time in the one-mile-six turf race, while the 10-furlong grass handicap can go to Godolphin, with the unexposed **Think Ahead**, [Meydan, 18.30] who will appreciate a return to this surface.

Ertijaal [Meydan, 16.10] – the one trained by Ali Rashid Al Raihe and not Mike De Kock – looks well treated in the five-furlong dash and can follow up, while German-trained filly **Si Luna** [Meydan, 16.10] can come home best in a weak renewal of the Cape Verdi Stakes. The big filly Icecapada, who hated dirt last year, can also feature at hopefully a bigger price.