

ON TOP OF HIS 'GAME'

By Steve Sherack

DUBAWI HEIGHTS (GB) PROVIDED trainer Simon Callaghan with his first win at the top level when getting up for a narrow victory in Hollywood's Grade 1 Gamely Stakes May 30. The 28-year-old left his native England for the Southern California circuit late in 2009.

"I'm young and ambitious and I just thought it was the right time to make the move," Callaghan explained of his decision to relocate to America. "I discussed it with a few of my principal owners and they all thought that it was a good idea. They've shown their support by sending me horses. I've worked in America before, so it wasn't totally alien to me. I've really enjoyed it since I've come over. Now, I just want to work on getting some more clients and, hopefully, some more American-based clients to help build up my business."

Callaghan learned his trade from some of the best in the business, including his father Neville, who trained European champion and leading sire Danehill Dancer (Ire). The second-generation horseman also assisted top conditioners Todd Pletcher and Richard Hannon before venturing out on his own. Callaghan was quickly bitten by the racing bug as a youngster, leaving school at the age of 16 to begin working around horses.

"Originally I worked for Richard Hannon, a very successful trainer in England, followed by my father, then I came to America to work for Todd Pletcher for just under a year in Florida," Callaghan

revealed. "I just think the combination of all the experiences--no one person more than anyone else--stood me in good stead. It was a great opportunity."

He continued, "I was always very taken by the horse industry and always wanted to train. It was the only field in racing that I wanted to do."

Callaghan currently trains a string of 15 horses in the Golden State, mostly grass/synthetic types. The aforementioned Dubawi Heights needed nine chances to earn her diploma, but showed her class while racing in Europe as a juvenile for Callaghan. The bay placed third in a Group 2 contest in York and also completed the exacta behind subsequent champion Lillie Langtry (Ire) in a conditions race.

"She was always a good filly," Callaghan said of his current stable star. "She showed some very good form as a two-year-old. She was beaten just over a length by Lillie Langtry, who went on to win the Group 1 Coronation in England. She had a few setbacks and it just took her a little bit of time to really find her feet and get fully acclimated. She's got a great mind, and we really felt that even though she just won a maiden, that she was a stakes winner in the making."

She sure was.

Dubawi Heights lined up three times during her sophomore season once shipped to the States, led by a Hollywood

maiden win in late November. Freshened, the Dubawi (Ire) filly has come back better than ever at age four. She began the campaign with a Santa Anita allowance win in April, then annexed Hollywood's Grade 3 Wilshire Handicap April 30. Dubawi Heights, owned in partnership by the elder Callaghan, Clodagh McStay, M. V. Magnier and Annabel Wyatt, made it four straight trips to the winner's circle in the Gamely.

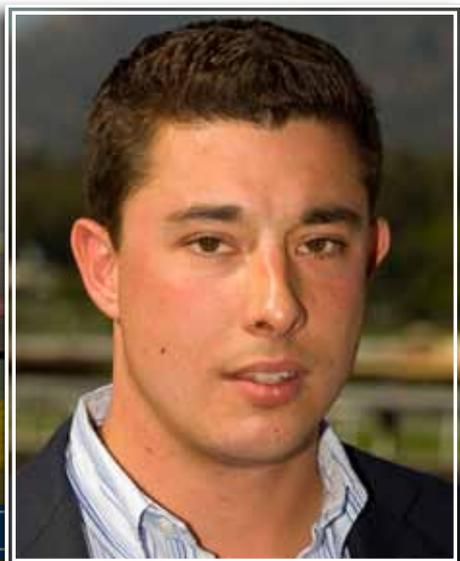
"Every trainer wants to win races at the very top level and it's great that we did it with a filly that we originally brought over from Europe," Callaghan said. "She's improved from each run and has gone from strength to strength. She's a very exciting filly to have."

With regular rider Joel Rosario aboard in the Gamely, Dubawi Heights stalked Celtic Princess (Brz) in second through early fractions of :23.26 and :47.52. Backed at odds of 9-2, she turned up the heat on the turn for home, and wore down the front runner in the shadow of the wire to score by a head.

Dubawi Heights, bred by Aston Mullins Stud, was immediately flattered by the runner-up, who returned to score in Hollywood's Grade 2 Royal Heroine Mile S. July 4.

"She was always positioned really nicely," Callaghan recalled of the Gamely. "Joel had her in a nice stalking position. One thing with her, she's extremely tough. Whatever happens, she's going to give 110 percent. I always thought she'd win, even

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HORSE OF THE MONTH (Continued from page 41)

Absinthe Minded. Awesome Maria raced by her without much of a struggle in the Phipps and drew off to win by three lengths over Payton d'Oro under John Velazquez with Super Espresso third.

"I think she was impressive again," Pletcher praised. "She's been pretty impressive every start this year, her hardest-fought one being the last one. She's been just very, very good." Pletcher noted that the plan for Awesome Maria was to stick to 1 1/8 mile races and that the G1 Ruffian at Saratoga on July 31 was the next race under consideration for her.

She has set a very high standard for her dam as her first foal. Since Awesome Maria, the mare has produced Yes I'm Awesome, a colt by El Corredor who is unraced as of this writing and she produced a Street Cry (IRE) filly this spring. Discreetly Awesome was bred back to Bernardini.

Awesome Maria is the most satisfying type of horse for a breeder to own. She is now the third generation of this remarkable family to race for Robsham.

With her G1 tucked safely away, her courage and the class of her competition unquestioned and her consistency without need of excuse, she is on target in her quest to be the next filly superstar. Wherever she runs, she'll be easy to spot, a glimmer of silver among the bays and brown and chestnuts, running for history and a family which has been getting good fillies or mares for several generations.

Editor's Note: Unfortunately Awesome Maria suffered a condylar fracture to her left foreleg. She had surgery to repair it and will miss the remainder of the year. The injury is not deemed career-ending and the decision on whether she will return to race next year will be made at a later date. 

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BETTING FRESHMAN STALLIONS (Continued from page 42)

should perform well on grass, where they will provide even greater value.

Representative 2-year-olds from Latent Heat's first crop:

HOT SPA, filly is out of a Coronado's Quest mare and second dam is stakes winner, Chaposas Springs.

STARSHIP FLASH, filly won her career debut, a maiden special weight at Calder, and her third dam, Rhodie, won four of five starts at 2, and was second to Bold Experience in the Sorority Stakes.

DOGWOOD'S BARTO, a \$20,000 maiden claiming winner out of a Woodman mare, descends from a full sister to champion filly and outstanding broodmare, My Dear Girl, famous as the dam of In Reality.

FIRE AND VICE, filly's dam, stakes winner, Passing Vice, was a full sister to major stakes winners, Trumpet's Blare and In My Cap.

LATENT RUSH, colt is out of an unraced Danzig mare, and second dam, Ophidian, was a stakes winner and half-sister to stakes-winning sprinter and sire, American Chance. Very classy female family descending from blue hen, Exclusive.

SOFTLY LIT, filly's second dam, Paliser Bay, won the Gallorette Handicap.

TRUE FEELINGS, filly won her maiden debut at Delaware Park, is out of a stakes winner, Grand Charmer (Lord Avie), a half-sister to Private Feeling, the dam of champion Lookin at Lucky and stakes winner, Kensei.

ONEPLAYFULLADY, placed in her only start thus far, she should love grass, with Mr. Greeley as her sire and Nijinsky II as her second damsire. 

(Lauren Stich, a renowned breeding expert, was the longtime pedigree handicapper and bloodlines columnist for Daily Racing Form, and has written for The Racing Times, American Turf Monthly, Today's Racing Digest and breederscup.com. She is currently the pedigree analyst and bloodlines columnist for Gradeoneracing.com and was the founding Racing and Bloodlines Editor for Horse Society Magazine. Stich is the author of "Pedigree Handicapping," "Bet With the Best," and "Bet With the Best 2: Longshots.")

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when she got into a battle."

Callaghan decided to back off Dubawi Heights following her hard-fought victory in the Gamely and is pointing his charge toward the second half of the season. The daughter of the Suave Dancer mare Rosie's Posy (Ire) is shooting for a return in Arlington Park's prestigious Grade 1 Beverly D. August 13.

"We felt that now is the time to give her a break, then build her back up," he said. "The plan is to go to the Beverly D., then probably the Yellow Ribbon, and hopefully, fingers crossed, she shows that she's good enough to run in the Breeders' Cup."

Through early July, Callaghan has saddled nine winners from 41 starters in 2011, good for a 22-percent batting average. His horses have finished in the money at a 44-percent clip. In addition to Dubawi Heights, Callaghan has also been represented by Grade 3 Beverly Hills H. heroine and Grade 1 Yellow Ribbon S. runner-up Turning Top (Ire), and graded-stakes horses Falcon Rock (Ire) and Jairzihno (GB) since having his passport stamped.

Callaghan took over his father's Newmarket operation in February 2008, and quickly won his first group race back in England with Finalmente (GB) in the 2008 Group 2 Henry II S. at Sandown in late May. He trained 33 winners during his rookie season across the pond.

"I never expected to have a Grade 1 winner in my first two years of training over here, but we felt like we came with some nice horses," Callaghan commented. "We thought we'd have some stakes-caliber horses, but for that filly to have done what she's done, it's been great."

Any race in particular that Callaghan has his sights set on?

"I'd love one day to win a Breeders' Cup race," he replied. "I think it's probably the most fiercely competitive meet of the whole season anywhere in the world with the best European and American horses going head to head. To be given the opportunity to train a winner at the Breeders' Cup would be my dream really."

If Dubawi Heights keeps running the way she has so far this season, Callaghan's dream is about to become a reality. 