

A TDT EXCLUSIVE

# Training with the world's best

UK-based trainer George Baker, founder of highly acclaimed George Baker Racing, is looking forward to making the most of their long-term partnership with Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club. In an exclusive interview, TDT talks to Baker about their plans and goals in establishing a permanent yard in Bahrain as he makes an official visit to the island

TDT | Manama

Renowned UK-based trainers George Baker Racing are excited about making their mark in Bahrain and tapping into the "limitless" potential of the Kingdom's thriving equine community.

This is according to George Baker Racing founder George Baker, who is currently on a visit to the island with his wife Candida.

George Baker Racing recently signed a long-term partnership agreement with Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC), which includes the establishment of a permanent training yard in Bahrain.

TDT caught up with Baker for an exclusive interview and spoke about the partnership, what they have to offer to local horse owners, and the future possibilities that await Bahraini-owned and trained horses.

**TDT:** How did the partnership between REHC and George Baker Racing come about?

**GB:** We were approached last summer to discuss the possibility of setting up a satellite racehorse training yard in the Kingdom. With a view to further expanding the racehorse ownership base, and to attract a wider audience to engage with the compelling sport of horseracing.

**TDT:** What was it about horseracing in Bahrain that made you confident about entering into a long-term partnership with REHC?

**GB:** We were immediately im-



George Baker attends the races at REHC

pressed by the tangible ambition and commitment of [REHC] Executive Director Shaikh Salman Rashed Al Khalifa and his excellent team. To be involved as this burgeoning racing jurisdiction continues to make an impression on the global stage is incredibly exciting, and a very real privilege. I know Clerk of the Course Neil Mackenzie-Ross from his time working within the sport in the UK, and his husbandry of the racecourse and associated facilities deserves the highest praise.

**TDT:** Tell us about the scope of this partnership.

**GB:** This is very much a long-term commitment to the Kingdom on behalf of George Baker Racing and my superb team. We will have permanent stabling based at the racecourse, and will have access to all training facilities, including the recently completed, state-of-the-art equine swimming pool. We will be starting with a handful of horses to run through next season, and we

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GEORGE BAKER

very much hope and plan for the number of horses under our care to increase in the coming years.

**TDT:** Will the difference in the climate year-round between Bahrain and the UK affect your training practices?

**GB:** Horses are swift to adapt to change of climate. The racehorses that we bring to the Kingdom will remain here to race on a permanent basis. There is much for me and my team to learn as we embark on this venture, and we will adapt our training regime for our horses accordingly. Everybody here has been incredibly supportive, and I will be seeking advice and wise counsel at every turn. There are some superb trainers here, and I will be listening to their advice!

**TDT:** How can members of Bahrain's equine community get involved with George Baker Racing?

**GB:** We are very keen to attract new owners to the sport. My wife Candida and I adopt an "open house" policy, and are always delighted to discuss ownership options with interested parties. We will be launching

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

George Baker has trained over 400 winners, including a Royal Ascot winner with Belgian Bill. He has been rewarded with winners in Dubai, Turkey, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland and on the Channel Islands. Runners have performed with credit in the US, Scandinavia and Spain

racehorse ownership syndicates to suit all budgets, and the emphasis will be on ensuring that all involved have a thoroughly enjoyable and exciting experience. We are committed to making an afternoon at the races on a Friday a hugely entertaining leisure activity. And we will encourage owners to visit the stables, to watch their horses working on the gallops, and to discuss plans over an excellent breakfast. And here's hoping that we are cheering home many winners in the years ahead! If you are interested in becoming involved or learning more detail, please e-mail me on gbakerracing@gmail.com.



Thrilling action at REHC

**TDT:** What potential do you see in Bahrain for globally renowned trainers like yourself?

**GB:** The potential here is limitless. The culture of the horse is endemic in the Kingdom, and the enthusiasm for the sport of horseracing is, as previously mentioned, tangible. As evidenced by the stellar fields that Shaikh Salman and his team have attracted for both runnings of The International Trophy, there is global acceptance that Bahrain is a burgeoning and progressive force on the international horseracing stage. We look forward to training in the years ahead for both established and new followers of the sport.

**TDT:** With your expertise and experience in training over 400 winners over the years, can we expect Bahrain-trained horses to excel abroad in the near future (if

they aren't already)?

**GB:** Bahraini-trained horses will undoubtedly be a potent force on the international stage, and they have already made a considerable impression both in the region and further afield. There are some exceptionally talented racehorse trainers based in the Kingdom, and the standard of competition is already high. In recent years, the quality of horse bred locally and imported has risen, and I have no doubt that Bahraini-owned and trained horses will be competing at the highest level in the years ahead. I fervently hope that our commitment to this venture will enable my team and I to train many winners both here and elsewhere in the region. These are exciting times for the sport of horseracing in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and it is a privilege and an honour to be involved.

## Luiz screamer lifts East Riffa to win over Manama

● Brazilian professional scores game-winner from 25 yards out with eight minutes remaining in regulation

● Al Najma strike twice in 12-minute span for come-from-behind win over Muharraq

TDT | Manama



Action from East Riffa's match with Manama

Luiz Fernando Correa Sales scored a stunning winner last night for East Riffa in a 2-1 victory over Manama in the 2020/2021 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

The Brazilian professional, more popularly known as "Luiz", fired in a rocket from 25 yards out with what could be the goal of the season.

Meanwhile, Al Najma found the net twice within a game-changing, 12-minute span in the second half to escape with a stunning 2-1 win over Mu-

harrag. Yesterday's matches capped the league's seventh week of action.

In East Riffa's victory, Bahrain national team star Mohammed Al Rumaihi put his team ahead with a 33rd-minute header that Manama goalkeeper Ammar Mohamed Abbas almost stopped but could not fully control. That was enough to give his team the single-goal advantage at the break.

In the second half, Manama

equalised through Mahdi Abduljabbar in the 72nd minute. He took advantage of some poor East Riffa defending as he received a brilliant lob pass from Esraa Amer Alhamwiah and hit home from the edge of the six-yard box.

Manama's celebrations were shortlived, however, as just 10 minutes later Luiz scored his stunner. Unmarked from well outside the box, Luiz unleashed a powerful left-footed shot that flew straight into the top-left

corner of the net, which Abbas had no chance of stopping.

The result earned East Riffa their fifth win in seven matches as they maintained their place on the standings three points behind leaders Riffa. Manama suffered their second loss but remained in the top half of the table.

In last night's other fixture, Bahrain international striker Ismaeel Abdullatif scored for Muharraq in the 40th minute with an opportunistic effort off a fine lead pass from Abdulwahab Al Malood.

Najma then stormed back into the contest in the final part of the game, and a goal from Luiz Junior in the 71st minute sparked their comeback. Junior fired in from an acute angle after some lax Muharraq defending.

Then, 12 minutes later, substitute Arthur Alves supplied the winner with a header in front of goal off a short cross from Rashed Al Hooti.

It was a well-deserved second win for Najma in seven matches as they rose to eight points, tied with Muharraq who were dealt their third defeat.

### Standings

	P	W	D	L	GD	PTS
Riffa	7	6	1	0	7	19
East Riffa	7	5	1	1	8	16
Manama	7	3	2	2	1	11
Budaiya	7	2	3	2	0	9
Muharraq	7	2	2	3	1	8
Al Najma	7	2	2	3	-1	8
Hidd	7	2	2	3	-1	8
Busaiteen	7	1	3	3	0	6
Al Ahli	7	1	2	4	-7	5
Malkiya	7	1	2	4	-8	5

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