

Facteur Cheval bravely withstands Namur in Dubai Turf

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Facteur Cheval wins the Dubai Turf (Photo courtesy of Dubai Racing Club)

Saturday's \$5 million Dubai Turf (G1) produced the biggest upset of World Cup night, as the 25-1 French shipper **Facteur Cheval** just held off Japan's 28-1 Namur in a duel to the line.

Owned by Team Valor International and Gary Barber, Facteur Cheval had first-rate European form. His runner-up efforts to Big Rock when last seen in the Oct. 21 Queen Elizabeth II (G1) on British Champions Day, and to Paddington in the Sussex (G1), came on desperately soft going. Hence he was typecast as requiring a bog, especially at this level.

Up-and-coming trainer Jerome Reynier had tried to warn that Facteur Cheval had also performed up to a high standard in better conditions in 2023. A near-miss third in the Prix d'Isphahan (G1) in the vicinity of this about nine-furlong trip, he filled the same spot in the Prix du Moulin (G1).

Facteur Cheval earned his Group 1 laurel here, ironically in the very race that eluded his sire, champion miler Ribchester, who was third in the 2017 Dubai Turf. With Maxime Guyon aboard, Facteur Cheval was reserved about midpack in the clear, following three-time defending champion Lord North.

The picture up front was changing at the top of the lane, as early leaders Matenro Sky and Luxembourg were retreating. Wide-drawn Nashwa was making her bid, ill-fated Catnip was in the thick of it, Lord North played his hand, and Measured Time, the joint 3-1 favorite, found a seam toward the inner.



But Facteur Cheval was quickening smartly, soon joined by Namur wider out. The two outkicked the rest, and Facteur Cheval withstood the late lunge of Namur by a short head. The time was a spectacular 1:45.91, just off the course and stakes record of 1:45.52 established by Just a Way in 2014.

“He gave me a really great turn of foot and really wanted to fight to the line,” Guyon said. “I didn’t want to go too early because he’s been running over 1600 meters and was stepping up in trip slightly, for all that I think he’ll stay 2000 meters.”

“I always had this thought at the back of my mind that it was his first run of the year and it was further than he’s been running over. But I never felt like he would crack.”

Facteur Cheval, who improved his record to 14-6-4-3, furnished \$52.50 and topped the \$770.40 exacta (\$1). Another three-quarters of a length back came the rallying Danon Beluga, who had been second in last year’s running.

Measured Time, a younger half-brother to Saturday’s Dubai Sheema Classic (G1) star Rebel’s



Romance, reported home fourth. Jockey William Buick observed that inexperience was a factor, but that the Frankel colt would appreciate a step up to about 1 1/4 miles.

Japan's Do Deuce didn't get much room to maneuver from well off the pace on the inside, putting his fifth, over an inadequate trip, in a better light. Straight Arron, Calif, Lord North, Nashwa, San Donato, Real World, Cairo, Voyage Bubble, and the eased Luxembourg and Matenro Sky concluded the order of finish.

Lord North was feeling his age and the ground, according to his connections.

"He had a great spot, great cover," jockey Frankie Dettori said. "He traveled great into the straight but he just didn't have the gears that he had in the past. We are all getting older, right?!"

"The old boy probably found the ground too lively for him," co-trainer John Gosden said. "He's always been lucky to get a little bit of cut here, a little bit of good ground. That's very quick. But he's run a lovely race."

Voyage Bubble, the other 3-1 co-favorite, and Luxembourg were hampered when Catnip broke down badly in deep stretch. Luxembourg was already being wrapped up on by Ryan Moore, who then had to take up.