

GODOLPHIN FLYING START COLUMN

Mubtaahij



Barefoot training: 'The body responds to demand'

“THE BODY responds to demand,” was the answer I received from the farrier **Declan Cronin**, when I first asked about barefoot training. Declan manages barefoot programmes for Mike de Kock and many other leading trainers and breeders around the world.

Enlightened by the work of hoof specialists Debra Taylor DVM, Robert Bowker DVM, anatomist Paige Poss and Texas farrier Pat Burton who are leaders in the research of hoof reconstruction and hoof pathologies, together with Mike de Kock, he studied the design and mechanism of the foot thoroughly from a cellular, neurological, biomechanical and shoe application level to the science of developing the external and internal structures of the hoof to be functional in high impact, absorption and redistribution of ground forces to the limb.

For Mike de Kock, barefoot training was the right path to take towards foot development and long term soundness, looking back at years of experience gained in barefoot training. “The sooner you start, the better. I love to see horses without shoes,” he declared. “It is a good indication of foot soundness.”

Since the beginning of their programme they have seen success with many horses. **Mubtaahij**, a son of the mighty, Dubawi, winner of the 2015 UAE Derby and a Dubai World Cup contender, is an example

of a functionally formed hoof, conditioned and shaped by barefoot training in Dubai’s perfect climate and terrain, resulting in a tough durable sole, frog and wall with a 60 degree dome to support the load and forces.

Declan and Mike first observed that horses coming from farms situated in arid areas of South Africa had the best developed feet: the horse’s foot develops itself on criteria such as terrain, mileage, nutrition and climate. Certain areas with terrains containing firm and abrasive soils accommodate naked hooves and are the

best for natural development and ‘self trimming’; horses can take care of their own feet in the wild as the hoof is dynamic and formed from movement and impact. In a domestic arena the hoof may not encounter these conditions thus not receive the same movement and impact as it would in the natural state, hence why it requires the farrier’s attention.

But concretely, why are some trainers choosing barefoot training?

There is a common belief that hooves are weak and need to be protected in training;



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Mubtaahij's foot - lateral view



Mubtaahij foot

nevertheless, each horse has the innate capabilities to develop the above type of hoof like Mubtaahij did and most horses will benefit from the barefoot programme in terms of soundness and quality of work.

There are numerous advantages to barefoot training: it helps the horse to develop a healthier, stronger foot, with almost no crisis management; this type of training allows you to identify all the internal and external structures of the foot and study the health and progress of the hoof daily; the natural structure of the foot is maintained through better stimulation, and it also increases hoof circulation; a shoeless hoof can function naturally, expanding and contracting freely with each step the horse takes, which allows the blood to be pumped in and out of the foot; shock absorption is also maximised, which reduces joints and tendon damage.

On the contrary, long term shoeing can create its own pathologies: shoes can create hoof contraction; a loss of

architecture of the foot; bacteria formation and a diminution of the shock absorption as the hoof's movements get limited by the shoe and nails.

When starting the barefoot programme, horses need a period to adapt, in order to give time to their body to respond to the demand created by the withdrawal of shoes. The foot will get stronger naturally, and as soon as there is enough dense material in it, horses will be comfortable anywhere. Once this programme is started, barefoot training necessitates maintenance from the farrier and stable staff.

There is no timeline on when to trim a barefoot horse; the horse's foot needs to be trimmed when there is an excess of material not required that will cause a negative lever effect on the limb or hoof capsule, along with regular adjustments and daily application of antimicrobial sole spray.

Barefoot training could be a way to limit injuries in training in the long term in the Thoroughbred industry. By increasing hoof



soundness for high performance, it should not inflict anything that would create a pathology in the hoof's mechanism, function and design, and establishes strong, durable, sensitive free hooves that can overcome all terrains. Once established, those hooves can be fitted with the application of temporary shoes for races; the shoes used for racing can be kept from one race to another. Barefoot training is developing and keeps showing its benefits; along with De Kock's horses, some other UAE leading trainers follow a barefoot programme too.

Charlotte Rinckenbach
 Godolphin Flying Start 2017-2019 Trainee

ABU DHABI CHAMPIONSHIP (GROUP 3)						
Abu Dhabi		2200M (a11F)			TURF	
For NH 4YO+ & SH 3YO+						
Not run in 2002 & 2003 Prestige in 1993. Listed in 2005. Group 3 in 2011						
Date	Year	Horse	Owner	Trainer	Jockey	Time
Mar 17	2018	LIGHT THE LIGHTS (SAf)	Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Maktoum	M de Kock	A de Vries	2:14.06
Mar 19	2017	ZAMAAM (GB)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum	E Charpy	J Crowley	2:14.28
Mar 20	2016	KHUSOOSY (USA)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum	A Al Rayhi	P Hanagan	2:16.30
Mar 15	2015	DORMELLO (Ire)	HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	D Selvaratnam	O Murphy	2:13.50
Mar 16	2014	JAMR (GB)	Sheikh Mansour bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	A bin Harmash	A De Vries	2:12.70
Mar 17	2013	JUTLAND (GB)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	D Watson	P Dobbs	2:16.94
Mar 18	2012	AL SHEMALI (GB)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	A Al Rayhi	S De Sousa	2:15.36
Mar 20	2011	TOPCLAS (Fr)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	M bin Shafya	P Cosgrave	2:14.01
Mar 21	2010	MONTE ALTO (Ire)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum	A Al Rayhi	R Hills	2:15.12
Mar 22	2009	MR BROCK (SAf)	Mme Serge Seenyen	M de Kock	K Shea	2:15.73
Mar 16	2008	MULAQAT (GB)	HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	D Selvaratnam	J Murtagh	2:16.67
Mar 18	2007	GREAT PLAINS (GB)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum	E Charpy	R Hills	2:15.89
Apr 9	2006	MORSHDI (GB)	HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	D Selvaratnam	D O'Donohoe	2:13.06
Apr 10	2005	MUTASALLIL (USA)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum	D Watson	R Hills	2:17.69
Apr 18	2004	BOWMAN (USA)	Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	E Charpy	S O'Gorman	2:15.30
Apr 8	2001	ALVA GLEN (USA)	Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	J Sadler	A Whelan	2:15.53
Apr 16	2000	NOWRASS (GB)	Sheikh Rashid bin Maktoum Al Maktoum	S bin Suroor	T Durcan	2:17.41
Apr 15	1999	CASINO CAPTIVE (USA)	Sheikh Rashid bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	S Seemar	T Durcan	2:14.51
Apr 24	1998	RIVER USK (GB)	HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum	K McLaughlin	D O'Donohoe	2:13.02
Apr 24	1997	DOREG (Ire)	HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	D Selvaratnam	J Murtagh	2:16.13
Apr 25	1996	COBURG (GB)	Sheikh Rashid bin Mohammed Al Maktoum	S bin Suroor	B Crossley	2:10.34
Apr 28	1995	KAROO LARK (USA)	Mohammed Abdulla Bel Obaida	P Rudkin	P Brette	2:20.51
Apr 29	1994	AZHAR (GB)	HH Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum	D Selvaratnam	J Murtagh	2:14.48
Apr 29	1993	JOHN BALLIOL (USA)	Rashid Humaidath	H Ibrahim	F Quesada	2:15.00