

# QATAR PRIX DE L'ARC DE TRIOMPHE

## LES MEILLEURS CHEVAUX AU MONDE

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## QATAR PRIX DE L'ARC DE TRIOMPHE

### **William Haggas, trainer of Maltese Cross: “Everyone wants to win the Arc!”**

The Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe remains a dream yet to be fulfilled for William Haggas. At the age of 66, the English trainer, based at Somerville Lodge in Newmarket, returns to ParisLongchamp with Maltese Cross... eight years after coming agonisingly close to victory with Sea of Class. The filly's second place behind champion Enable in 2018 remains a very vivid memory for William Haggas, combining both pride and disappointment.

Three-year-old Maltese Cross carries the colours of film producer George Waud. He is the main challenger to defending champion Daryz. Like Sea of Class, both are by Sea the Stars, winner of the Arc in 2009 and now standing at Gilltown Stud in Ireland, one of the Aga Khan Studs' European operations.

As organiser of the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe, France Galop today invited journalists to a press conference with William Haggas. Here are his main comments:



### **On the decision to run Maltese Cross in the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe**

*"When he won the Grand Prix de Paris, overcoming a difficult situation, that was the first time he really showed me speed. Then, in the Great Voltigeur Stakes, about 500 metres from the finish, he travelled into the race very easily and showed more speed than the others. And yet his rivals had strong form over 2,400 metres. So, deep down, I think the Arc was always the race that seemed most suitable for him."*

*"For an Englishman, the St Leger is obviously a very prestigious race, but it is run over a little more than 2,800 metres. Although I think he would stay that trip without any problem, I felt he deserved the opportunity to take his chance in the Qatar Prix de l'Arc de Triomphe.*

*"What I like about him is that every one of his races this year has been better than the one before. And I think that last time at York he probably produced his best performance, certainly from a ratings point of view. He was giving five pounds to the Irish Derby runner-up and beat him comfortably.*

*"Everyone wants to win the Arc. To line up with a chance is fantastic for us, just as it is for anybody. Everyone with a runner in the Arc is delighted to be taking part. Somebody will win it. We just hope it will be us."*

### **On the colt's current form**

*"I think he has improved physically. He is not particularly spectacular at home, so he is quite difficult to assess, but his work has been satisfactory. We took him to a racecourse about ten days ago. He worked well without overexerting himself, and I was very pleased with him.*

*"He is quite an easy horse to get fit and does not need a great deal of work. But he can have too much energy. So we have to find the right balance: give him enough work to stop him doing anything silly, but not so much that we tire him out. I hope we have found that balance."*

### **On the ground conditions**

*"There are two things you can do nothing about: the weather and the draw. So you just have to deal with them. The ground will suit him whatever it is. Obviously, if it were very soft or heavy, that would not be ideal for him because I do not think he is as effective in those conditions. But that does not appear likely to be the case."*

### **On Maltese Cross's sire, Sea the Stars**

*"In my view, Sea the Stars is the best horse I have ever seen. And I do not say that lightly. I think he was unfortunate to be overshadowed afterwards by Frankel. Frankel was a whole story in itself, beyond the fact that he was a great horse. The story of Frankel was as much about Sir Henry Cecil as it was about the horse himself.*

*"Sea the Stars won every race a trainer dreams of winning during their career: the Guineas, the Derby, the Juddmonte, the Arc, the Irish Champion Stakes. He was an exceptional horse.*

*"And perhaps there is one trait Maltese Cross shares with him: he does not win by very far. Sea the Stars never won by very far either."*

### **On Sea of Class's second place in 2018**

*"She finished very strongly, and I am convinced that with another 100 metres she would have won. So you can imagine that we were delighted with her performance, but obviously extremely disappointed that she did not win.*

*"Christopher Tsui, the son of her owner Mrs Tsui, was of course there. And I could have kissed him — which may sound a little strange, because it is not really my style! A journalist rushed over to him and said: 'You were terribly unlucky; you must be absolutely devastated.' And he replied: 'I have never been so disappointed to win a million pounds.' I thought that was a wonderful answer."*

### **On George Waud, owner of Maltese Cross**

*"To say he is looking forward to it would be an understatement! He is chairman of the Old Gold Racing syndicate and offered one hundred syndicate members places on an all-expenses-paid trip through a prize draw. He will have a lot of friends and guests there. He is making the very most of the experience. He has organised lunch, a box, everything you could possibly need. Nothing is going to stop him — and quite right too!"*