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AIDAN O'BRIEN ASSEMBLES A FORMIDABLE GROUP 1 TEAM FOR THE QATAR GOODWOOD FESTIVAL PRESENTED BY VISIT QATAR

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Aidan O'Brien is assembling a formidable team for the Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar, led by Group 1 contenders Scandinavia, Gstaad and Diamond Necklace.

Group 1 Al Shaqab Goodwood Cup

Scandinavia is set to defend the Group 1 Al Shaqab Goodwood Cup crown he claimed in 2025, having continued his upward trajectory since that victory on the Sussex Downs.

He subsequently added Classic honours in the St Leger Stakes before defeating Trawlerman in a thrilling finish to last month's Gold Cup at Royal Ascot.

Aidan O'Brien confirmed that the defending champion has emerged from his Ascot success in good form.

O'Brien told Goodwood Racecourse: "Everything has gone well with him since, and all this year as well. We were delighted with him at Ascot. He's in good form."

Already a Classic and multiple Group 1 winner, Scandinavia has consistently done what is required to prevail, with the prospect that greater pressure from his rivals could bring further improvement.

O'Brien said: "He'll never win by very far. He just does enough - it's very hard to gauge how much is in there and that's the way he has always been. He's very like Yeats in that way; he's a high tempo horse and finds it very easy to go a high tempo for a long time."

With the possibility of Trawlerman reopposing in the Goodwood Cup next week, O'Brien is hopeful that his son of Justify will showcase his adaptability and retain his winning edge.

O'Brien added: "I think it will be interesting [reopposing Trawlerman] but I think that is him whether the trip is a mile and a half to two and a half miles – so it is something to look forward to."

Scandinavia heads to Goodwood with an impressive record of six wins from his last six starts, although winning sequences are not something the Ballydoyle team dwells on.

O'Brien added: "We don't ever think too much about those things - I didn't even realise that to tell you the truth. We take one race at a time, and we're just delighted to have him."

Illinois, runner-up to Scandinavia in last year's Goodwood Cup, is also under consideration for the two-mile showpiece. He won the Queen Alexandra Stakes at Royal Ascot on his penultimate start before running slightly below par at the Curragh last weekend.

"We're also thinking of running Illinois," O'Brien said. "He was second to him last year, so he might run with him. We're looking forward to it."

Group 1 Visit Qatar Sussex Stakes

Irish 2,000 Guineas winner Gstaad is expected to renew his rivalry with Bow Echo in the Group 1 Visit Qatar Sussex Stakes, having reduced the gap between the pair to just a short head in the St James's Palace Stakes at Royal Ascot.

O'Brien believes the Ascot contest did not unfold ideally for his colt, who will bid to reverse the placings at Goodwood next week.

"He ran a good race at Ascot, and we were delighted with him at the Curragh. He came out of it very well and we're looking forward to going there with him – we always thought it was a race that would suit him."

On the prospect of reversing the placings with the talented Bow Echo, O'Brien said: "It is always possible. He obviously just failed at Ascot. He is progressive, and it didn't really work perfectly for him on the day - he still ran a great race.

"We're looking forward to the race again. Hopefully Bow Echo runs, and it will be a good race.

"Things didn't go perfectly for us at Ascot, and maybe they didn't for Bow Echo either.

"In the Guineas, we felt we were forced on. We were very forward and had to do our own donkey work, while Bow Echo had lovely cover and everything worked well for him.

"Then we went to Ascot and felt that maybe it didn't go 100 per cent for us either. Maybe the lads thought it didn't go perfectly for Bow Echo, either.

"It's going to be interesting. That's what I think makes these races great. We're looking forward to seeing what happens."

O'Brien has also been encouraged by Gstaad's physical development as the season has progressed.

“He’s getting heavier, which is a good sign. His mind is very good. He’s coming through his work very well and coming through his races very well.”

The Sussex Stakes could also help determine Gstaad’s future programme, with O’Brien believing that 10 furlongs is within the colt’s compass.

O’Brien commented: “We always thought he’d have no problem going up and we thought a mile and a quarter wouldn’t be outside his compass. It’s nice to have a horse like that where you’re not minding him through a race and you know he’s going to finish for you.”

Puerto Rico, a dual Group 1 winner in France as a juvenile, is also on course for the Sussex Stakes following a troubled run at Royal Ascot.

O’Brien said: “Obviously, Ascot was a complete mess for him. He went forward, and I think he got taken on for the lead. It just all went out the window.

“We had planned on making the running with him. He won his two Group 1s making the running - it just didn’t work for him on the day.

“There was a snowball effect throughout the whole race when that happened, but that’s racing, and it doesn’t go right all the time.

“We’re very happy with his progress since, and we feel that we will see a different horse this time.”

O’Brien also welcomed the increase in prize money for the Visit Qatar Sussex Stakes to £1.5 million, making it Europe’s most valuable mile race, commenting: “I think it’s vital. That’s what brings good horses to the races, and good horses bring the crowds, the spectators and the people to the races and those big meetings.

“It’s all about the prize money. It’s such an expensive game - to buy a horse, train a horse and do everything with a horse. I think it’s vital.

“Hats off to them. Obviously, they get it. It’s very important and very exciting.”

Group 1 Qatar Nassau Stakes

Diamond Necklace, the unbeaten winner of two French Classics, the Poule d’Essai des Poulaches and the Prix de Diane is set to spearhead O’Brien’s challenge in the Group 1 Qatar Nassau Stakes after proving herself over a mile and a quarter.

O’Brien said: “She’s a lovely, natural filly. We stepped her up to a mile and a quarter last time, and we felt we would stay there for the minute.

“We were very happy with her. She’s doing very well physically. She obviously has a great pedigree, and she’s by St Mark’s Basilica, so she’s exciting.”

O’Brien expects the filly’s balance and previous experience on right-handed courses to help her handle Goodwood’s distinctive test.

O'Brien added: "I think she'll be fine. She's well balanced. She's a medium-sized filly with a good stride.

"She's been around Longchamp and Chantilly, both right-handed tracks, so I don't think that should be a problem."

Asked how Diamond Necklace compares with the outstanding fillies he has trained, O'Brien offered a tantalising assessment:

"She looks very good at the moment. She looks very special. Everything she's been asked to do, she's done very easily and very comfortably.

"She is obviously in that 'could be anything' category. She looks really special at the moment, and we're very excited to have her."

ENDS

Notes To Editors:

Tickets, dining, and hospitality for the 2026 horseracing season at Goodwood Racecourse are now available to purchase. Visit [Goodwood.com](https://www.goodwood.com) to find out more.

Contact

For more information about Goodwood Racecourse events, please contact Saskia Osmond-Evans , Press

Officer: Saskia.Osmond-Evans@goodwood.com

For all other press enquiries please contact: Media@goodwood.com

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About Goodwood Racecourse

Introduced to the Goodwood Estate in 1802 by the 3rd Duke of Richmond, Goodwood Racecourse has a long and distinguished horseracing heritage. Set on the South Downs, Goodwood Racecourse is regarded as one of the world's most beautiful racecourses and has been home to significant moments in horseracing history.

Hosting 19 race days from May through October, thousands of racegoers flock to Goodwood each year to enjoy a season of top-class horseracing and entertainment. With a varied calendar of fixtures, race day

highlights include the May Festival, Three Friday Nights, Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar—more affectionately known as Glorious Goodwood—and Season Finale to name a few.

About Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar

Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar is one of the undisputed highlights of the British flat racing season. The world-famous five-day festival is a sporting and social occasion like no other, unrivalled style, superb racing, and hospitality experiences to savour mean it's not to be missed. The 2026 Qatar Goodwood Festival takes place from Tuesday 28 July to Saturday 1 August. The week is headed by three Group 1 races, including the Al Shaqab Goodwood Cup (2m), the Visit Qatar Sussex Stakes (1m), and the Qatar Nassau Stakes (1m2f)