

American Affair edges out rivals in King George Qatar Stakes

3.35pm King George Qatar Stakes (Group 2)

Jim Goldie's American Affair (12/1) prevailed in a thrilling G2 King George Qatar Stakes that saw the first four home spread right across the track in the closing stages.

With the field having split into two, American Affair raced prominently on the stands' side under Paul Mulrennan, while Asfoora was handily placed on the far side in a group that included Rumstar and Time For Sandals.

The quartet all worked their way into challenging positions entering the final furlong and it was American Affair who found most to score by half a length from Rumstar (6/1). Time For Sandals (14/1) was a neck behind in third, with the same distance to Asfoora (14/1) in fourth.

This was American Affair's first success since the 2025 G1 King Charles III Stakes at Royal Ascot, after which an injury forced him to miss the rest of the campaign.

Mulrennan said: "I thought I had won, but you never want to be too confident. Then Jason Hart was beside me and he was saying, 'Well done, Paul', so I was looking down at my number. What a horse American Affair has been.

"I was looking at this race and, on paper, it looked like there was going to be loads of pace. Within three strides, I winged the gates and I was there. I thought, 'I have got him in a nice comfort zone now.' He was happy.

"He probably would have beaten Battaash's time, but I dropped my whip. On his day, he is very fast and this race has always been at the back of our minds because it is such a fast track. We have York now.

"He is another year stronger. He has had all that time off. There have been reasons why he has run bad this year, but he has done everything right today, so touch wood, he comes back from this good. We will enjoy today, but we have the Nunthorpe and possibly America would be nice.

"At this stage of the game, I have probably got more years behind me than in front of me, but I feel I am still going strong. It is very competitive, it is hard. I have only got one ride down here this week, but we have made it count.

"I have got my driver with me, Adele [wife]. The last time I won it was on Moviesta, Adele drove me then. I have won this race twice and I probably should have won it twice again – Easton Angel probably should have won and Moviesta was unlucky another year. So it has been an unlucky race for me and a lucky race for me, but we got it right today."

Winning co-owner Wendy McGrandles said: "He has had one or two excuses and we always felt that he was as good as he was last year. It is once in a lifetime for us as small breeders. I remember him as a foal, tied up in the barn, and thinking we could maybe send him eventing if he was not fast enough to go racing. He was broken in to go eventing because we were not sure whether he would be big enough or fast enough to be a racehorse. He can always do that as a second career!"

John McGrandles said: "It is absolutely brilliant. We knew that he could do it; it was just a case of whether it would happen. We have had quite a few horses, but this is the best by a long way. You rise to the top and, hopefully, he will stay there."

George Goldie, the trainer's son, said: "We were pleased with his previous run at York, when he was running into a headwind from a bad draw. So we came here hopeful that today would suit him better. The plan is now to go for the Nunthorpe and then either the Curragh or maybe step up to six furlongs for the Haydock Sprint Cup."

Jonathan Portman said of Rumstar: "I am super, super proud. He has run an absolute cracker. He thought he had won, we hoped he had won, but maybe being drawn a bit this way, who knows. The main thing is that he has turned up and run his race. He was just caught out a bit by the sharp track. Rob rode a very mature race on him and took his time. I am super proud. He is getting on a bit, this horse, but he is a joy to have. He owes us nothing. He has won four Group races and a Listed race, and now he has been second in a Group 2. It will not stop us trying to win a Group 1. You can do no more than turn up and do your best, and that is what he has done."

Rob Hornby said of Rumstar: "I just feel a bit sorry for the horse. When they split like that, he travelled fantastic – he did all he needed to do and he is beating Group 1 horses. He has been beaten by half a length today in what was almost a different race. I am proud of the horse and proud of the team for getting him here in such good shape as a six-year-old. I just said to his owner, Russell, 'The show goes on. We will keep fighting.' We will go to York now. There are still plenty of targets to look forward to. That was his fourth run this year and he felt great. I am proud of him."

Kieran Shoemark said of Time For Sandals: "It was important to see her hit the line like that. Connections are delighted. She has not run her race this year at all, so to see her bounce back like that is great. She seemed far more herself, with the freshness out of her and much more manageable, and it was great. Everything went right, she relaxed and she hit the line strong, but it is just such a fast five here that you probably cannot move soon enough."

Henry Dwyer said of Asfoora: "Incredibly proud that we have been able to keep her up for so long. She is a seven-year-old mare – an eight-year-old mare your time. She has had a fair bit of racing and a lot of travel. As a horse trainer, you can only judge yourself on the performance of your animals, and she has made us incredibly proud."

"I do not normally get too excited, but I had the left foot stomping and got a bit excited there. Oisin [Murphy] just felt that she got left without a buddy for too long. She was left by herself probably 100 metres too early and that probably told in the last 50 metres. The three who finished in front of her came down the outside and had the target, and we did not. You just need so much to go right in these five-furlong sprints. They are only out there for 54 or 55 seconds, so if you do not get the right rub of the green, then you struggle."

On whether he was tempted to stick around for the Nunthorpe, he said: "I am incredibly tempted, do not worry, but I do not think it is my decision. I will make a phone call to Akram, the owner. At the end

of the day, it is his money and his horse, and he can decide what he wants. I will not advise him either way. It will be his call. Off today, you would think there is no reason not to – the door is ajar.”

1 American Affair (Barraston Racing & Jim Goldie) Jim Goldie 6-9-04 Paul Mulrennan 12/1

2 Rumstar (Vincent & Russell Ward) Jonathan Portman 6-9-04 Rob Hornby 6/1

3 Time For Sandals (D Bevan and Mrs D Bevan) Harry Eustace 4-9-01 Kieran Shoemark 14/1

15 ran 5/2 fav Night Raider (10th)

Jim Goldie – 5th Qatar Goodwood Festival winner

Paul Mulrennan – 2nd Qatar Goodwood Festival winner

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar takes place Tuesday 28 July – Saturday 1 August.

Tickets

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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, with unrivalled style, superb racing, and hospitality experiences to savour. 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), while Ladies' Day on Thursday 30 August sees the running of the Markel Magnolia Cup charity race for amateur female jockeys.