



"IT HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING WEEK"

Adam Waterworth, the Goodwood Estate Sports Managing Director, reflected on a challenging week at the 2017 Qatar Goodwood Festival. The five-day meeting experienced a deluge of over two inches of rain on Wednesday, but that was dealt with, racing continued and the week has ended on a high with the sun shining.

"I think it has been the hardest meeting that I have ever been involved with," said Waterworth. "I have never had a day as bad as Wednesday, ever. And, obviously, two inches of rain falling in 12 hours then caused its problems for the next day so Thursday was also really hard.

"The groundstaff did a tremendous job keeping us on, and going, on Wednesday, and then Sarah Bullen and the operations team were unbelievable in keeping the show on the road on Thursday. The concerns on the Thursday moved more to the customer side, getting people in, dealing with the car parks, and a little less then about the horses. The ops team did a pretty spectacular job to keep us going on Thursday.

"Then, on Friday and Saturday, the sun has come out, we had a little blip when Storm Katy came through, but the meeting has finished on a real high. Friday and today are what Goodwood is all about - great racing, great weather, and a fantastic atmosphere.

"We had some pretty determined racegoers on Wednesday, but the week has finished on an absolute high and at least no one drowned on Wednesday! It is a fabulous testament to our racegoers their determination to come to racing at Goodwood."

Moving on to pay tribute to the retiring Clerk of the Course Seamus Buckley, Waterworth was full of praise and just thankful that Buckley was still in situ to deal with this year's challenges.

"The biggest tribute I can give Seamus Buckley is Wednesday and Thursday. When I walked the course on Thursday morning it was an absolute mess, and I was thinking we'd be in trouble with it, but Seamus would hear none of it. He and his team got to work on it, and sure enough, proved that I was stupid to worry.

"That is when you appreciate how good he is, on a day such as Wednesday. And also, thank god, that he decided this would be his final year and not last year, as there is no one I would rather have had on my side!

"We came into the meeting with the ground in such good nick, Seamus had the track in such good condition and the grass covering was unbelievable, that is reason why we got away with it. Of course, he has been doing the job long enough to know how much ground to keep up his sleeve and when to play that card.

"But from an unbelievably difficult hand, he played it beautifully - it is a great testament to him and the team.

"I have said to the whole Goodwood team that if they could cope with this year, they could deal with anything!"

BUBBLY, THEN BACK TO WORK FOR BUCKLEY

Seamus Buckley, the consummate professional in his role as Goodwood's clerk of the course, was planning a glass of bubbly after officiating at his final Qatar Goodwood Festival today.

After 23 years at the Sussex track he retires later this year, yet after the afternoon's final race there was no sign of him taking the foot off his going stick or swapping the racecourse's verdant swathe for a little light gardening. Instead, he said: "There are another six days' racing here at Goodwood before the season's end, so I'm not thinking about retirement."

Looking back over one of the most challenging race meetings, one which started in bright sunshine on Tuesday, but deteriorated into a mud bath with 50mm of rain on Wednesday, and ground that was soft or near soft for the rest of the week, Buckley said: "I am relieved now because it's been a very trying week due to all the rain we had on Wednesday.

"We got through it and I believe it's been another successful Qatar Goodwood Festival, with some wonderful racing and some great horses. The number of non-runners due to the weather was a little disappointing, but we were able to keep the show on the road, and things could have been a lot worse.

"I'm so proud of the groundstaff for the work they put in to keep things going and to keep the course fit for racing.

"The change to the programme which meant we had a Group One race on each of the first three days [the Qatar Goodwood Cup switched to Tuesday, and the Qatar Nassau Stakes was moved to Thursday from Saturday] worked fine, although it usually takes about three years before things settle down. The Qatar Nassau Stakes has been a little overshadowed on occasions by the Qatar Stewards' Cup, which is now worth £250,000, and so it is nice that it now has its own day.

"Winter, who won the Nassau, was very impressive and one of the nicest fillies we have seen here in recent years - although Minding [trained like Winter by Aiden O'Brien] was very special a year ago. It's a top-class race now and one that owners and breeders want to win.

"I suppose this year's Qatar Sussex Stakes will be looked back on as a little disappointing, because Churchill didn't run and the weather conditions were so horrible, but what can we do? And Here Comes When was a brave winner.

"It was very satisfying for me and everyone at Goodwood that the Qatar Goodwood Cup was given Group One status for the first time this year. Stradivarius won another wonderful running of the race on the first day, beating Big Orange, but at nearly a stone difference in the weights. Will he beat him next year at levels?"

Buckley then added: "I'll be joining other members of staff for a glass of champagne before we go home, and will reflect on a good week without too many mishaps - that's all I'm thinking about now. I'm very glad it's gone so well."