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## Gibson in BMW Hong Kong Derby spotlight

**Richard Gibson** has found himself in the full glare of the intense **HKG1 BMW Hong Kong Derby** spotlight this year thanks to the trainer having three leading candidates housed in his Sha Tin stables, with **Akeed Mofeed** likely to start favourite for the 2000m contest on Sunday, 17 March.

Akeed Mofeed has been the race's buzz horse ever since **owner Pan Sutong** purchased the colt out **John Oxx's stable** in Ireland with a fourth placing in the G1 Irish Derby and a facile Listed race win being the sum of a light three-year-old campaign.

Akeed Mofeed recently won impressively over 1800m at his third Hong Kong start but Gibson believes the Dubawi four-year-old is not the only candidate with strong claims on Sunday's HK\$16 million contest. Stablemate **Mizani** is unbeaten in two runs since his own arrival from Ireland and fellow Gibson-trained Irish import **Gold-Fun** goes into the race with the HKG1 Hong Kong Classic Mile in the bag. Chief among his outside rivals are HKG1 Hong Kong Classic Cup hero **It Has To Be You**, representing last year's winning trainer **John Size**, and the **John Moore**-trained **Ashkiyr** who has high-class form at the distance in France.

"Akeed Mofeed won well last time but I don't think all the focus is on him," said Gibson, who is now in his second season in Hong Kong. "In racing I always respect Group 1 winners and there are two Hong Kong Group 1 winners in the race, so I certainly don't think it's all about Akeed Mofeed.

"There are some very good horses in the race and some of them have got a lot better European form than we have. I've got my horses in good condition and they're in great shape for the race. It's up to the jockeys to do their jobs now."

Akeed Mofeed is yet to prove on the track that he stays 2000m, his one career effort at beyond 1800m having been his inconclusive fourth to Camelot in a heavy ground Irish Derby. Mizani won a minor contest at the trip early in his three-year-old campaign but has since shown speed over 1400m and a mile, while Gold-Fun has displayed prowess at a mile and is yet to step out beyond 1800m, at which distance he was a close fourth in a slow-tempo Classic Cup last time.

"I don't really think the 2000m on a flat track is a real test of stamina so it's not going to play a role here like it would on a tough European track," stated Gibson. "All three of my horses have got ability and class, and it's nice to see them winning their races in Hong Kong. We've got them all in top shape – it's going to be a very exciting race and full marks to anyone that can beat my guys."

A field of 14 is set to go to post for what is a fascinating renewal of the BMW Hong Kong Derby. Among those, **Caspar Fownes** has **Rainbow Chic**, fourth in last season's G1 Prix Jean Prat, and Best Show, while **Danny Shum** will saddle Classic Cup runner-up **President Lincoln**.

**Autumn Gold** from the **Sean Woods** stable will seek to reestablish his reputation, forged with a close fifth to California Memory in the G2 LONGINES Jockey Club Cup over the course and distance but dented when down the field in the Classic Cup last time.

The **Me Tsui**-trained **Wah May Star** bounced back from a flop in the Classic Mile to finish a close fifth in the Classic Cup in February, while **Jun Gong** from the **Dennis Yip** stable, the **Size**-trained **Endowing** and the Moore-trained pair of **Albiceleste** and the well-regarded **Poetic Justice** complete the line-up.