The UAE hosts many of the world's major events in a wide range of sports, from horse racing to motor racing, golf, tennis, football, rugby, cricket, sailing, powerboat racing and almost every other competitive sport.
Sports play an increasingly important role in the UAE’s efforts to develop tourism, and facilities throughout the country are being upgraded or newly constructed. So much so that the country is bidding to host the 2016 Olympic Games and has already been awarded the tenth FINA World Swimming Championships in 2010.

As part of the Dh20.81 billion (US$5.7 billion) Dubailand project, developers are constructing a Dh7.34 billion (US$2 billion) Sports City due to open in 2007. Covering an area of 4.65 million square metres, Sports City will be an integrated purpose-built venue, incorporating a Manchester United soccer school – the first outside Europe – a championship golf course designed by Ernie Els, David Lyons tennis stadium, Butch Harmon golf academy and the International Cricket Council. The City will house four main stadiums with seating capacities ranging from 8000 to 25,000, to host major events in cricket, football, rugby, athletics and field hockey.

Aside from the international circuit events, the UAE has a healthy indigenous sporting environment with the local community participating in a wide variety of clubs and establishments. New sporting councils, such as the Abu Dhabi Sports Council, have been established to coordinate growth and development of local and national sports clubs, and the seven emirates regularly compete in national leagues and cups in a multiplicity of sports that are controlled by specialised governing bodies. Top sporting venues (both indoor and outdoor) and a favourable climate ensure that the activities continue throughout the winter season.
With the Arabian Gulf on its western shores and the Indian Ocean along its eastern flanks, the UAE is particularly attractive for watersport fans. The emirates on the Gulf coast are blessed with long stretches of sandy beach where residents take part in sports such as sailing, jet-skiing, surfing, swimming and kitesurfing. Snorkeling and diving are hugely popular within the region. Many residents and visitors enjoy the UAE’s East Coast, which also provides a wealth of exotic fish and coral. Popular locations for divers include ‘Snoopy Island’ and the area north of Dibba.

Residents are able to take full advantage of the country’s parks and recreational grounds where football, basketball and cricket matches are a favourite pastime, while the desert and mountain areas outside the main cities provide rough, rugged terrain for more adventurous pursuits. It would be extremely difficult to pinpoint a sport that is not enjoyed in the UAE as there are always new centres, clubs and associations being established around the region.

**SPORT SPONSORSHIP**

Sport sponsorship, considered to be very effective brand advertising, has been used to great effect by UAE companies, led by Emirates airline, which signed its biggest-ever sponsorship deal in 2006. For an agreed investment of US$195 million (Dh716 million), the airline has become FIFA’s official partner from 2007 to 2014. The move came on top of an existing 30 million euro (Dh135 million) deal between Emirates and FIFA to act as a sponsor of the 2006 FIFA World Cup. The new deal took Emirates’ principal sports sponsorship portfolio to almost Dh6 billion.

The deal is not only the biggest in Emirates’ history but also the largest in the history of FIFA. With it Emirates became the sixth and the final FIFA partner, joining Adidas, Hyundai, Coca-Cola, Sony and Visa. It is in the top tier of the world football governing body’s new sponsorship programme, which awards six bluechip corporations the highest level of affiliation to FIFA over an eight-year period. Emirates’ passengers will also benefit as the airline has the exclusive opportunity to further the airline’s brand awareness internationally.

Emirates’ other key sports sponsorships include the GB£100 million (Dh662.2 million) deal with Arsenal Football Club, which is also one of the biggest club sponsorship deals in English football history. Other smaller sponsorship deals include the Asian Football Confederation, which will run until 2008; a three-year sponsorship for the Franz Beckenbauer Foundation, a charity organisation; a multi-million pounds three-year deal with Referees, the Professional Game Match Official Limited (PGMOL), which Emirates announced in August 2004; and a three-year official partnership deal with Paris Saint Germain, the French football club.

Emirates also signed a multimillion-dollar sponsorship deal with Formula One motor racing team McLaren Mercedes. The metallic grey McLaren cars, sporting Emirates logos on orange backgrounds, have been prominent at Formula One Grand Prix events. Grand prix racing attracts millions of followers around the globe, providing Emirates with a great opportunity to further the airline’s brand awareness internationally.

Etihad Airways also supports the promotion of local culture in the UAE and worldwide and from time to time sponsors cultural and sporting events that are consistent with its values of hospitality, team spirit and helping bring cultures together. As a general principle, it only considers projects that have more than a three-month lead time, are televised and involve a series of events. It provides a sponsorship application form on its website.

**FOOTBALL**

Like any other sporting nation, the UAE has a huge interest in football. The UAE FA was first established in 1971 and since then has devoted its time and effort to promoting the game, organising youth programmes and improving the abilities of not only its players, but of the officials and coaches involved with its regional teams.

Al Ain won the 2006 President’s Cup thanks to a goal by Ali Al Wahibi’s in the seventy-ninth minute, beating Sharjah 2–1 in a thrilling final.

Beach Soccer’s successful journey from the beaches of Brazil to the hearts of millions of fans all over the globe took another big step in May 2006 when one of the fastest growing professional
sports in the world came to UAE shores. Six Asian nations – Bahrain, China PR, Iran, Japan, Philippines and the United Arab Emirates competed at Jumeirah Beach Park for three slots in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup 2006 to be held on Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro, from 2 to 12 November 2006. With sun, sea and sand in abundance, the UAE provides the perfect venue for the game, which has become even more popular since 2005, when beach soccer became a part of the FIFA family and the first FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup took place in Copacabana.

Ladies Soccer is also gaining in popularity. The Abu Dhabi Sports Club team represented the UAE in the Arab Ladies Soccer Championship 2006, meeting with early success with a decisive 5–1 win over the Sultanate of Oman team. Ten teams battled it out for a slice of the Dh555,000 (US$151,220) prize on offer in the First Arabian Women’s Football Tournament organised by the Abu Dhabi Sports Club (ADSC) in association with the Armed Forces Officers’ Club and UAE FA. In the end, Bahrain prevailed. But that didn’t happen without the ADSC putting up an impressive fight. The ADSC team was formed in June 2005 and is trained by Egyptian coach Mohammad Al Rasheedi. The 20 girls are aged between 15 and 23 years, and all but two are UAE nationals. While the UAE is still in its teething stage of women’s football compared to countries in Europe, the US and Asia who have women’s teams, the tournament gives reason to believe that it will grow to international levels.

CRICKET

The Zayed International Cricket Stadium was opened in April 2006 in Abu Dhabi. The event was marked by a match between India and Pakistan that was held in aid of earthquake victims in Pakistan and India. A total of Dh10 million (US$2.72 million) was handed to the two countries to assist in the humanitarian efforts resulting from the recent earthquake.

TENNIS

Rafael Nadal achieved a stunning come-from-behind victory over World No. 1 Roger Federer in an action-packed Dubai Duty Free Men’s Open in March 2006. Federer, a three time winner in Dubai, could hardly have lost with a bigger bang, the eruption being caused by a feisty Nadal who won in three heart-stopping sets 2–6, 6–4, 6–4. About 7000 fans packed the Aviation Club stadium and generated a tremendous atmosphere fitting for the occasion.

Besides denying Federer a record fourth title, Nadal also managed to break the world number one’s unbeaten streak of 29 matches in the Middle East. Federer had also gone into the Dubai final with a perfect 16–0 record for 2006, having won the Doha Open in Qatar and the Australian Open already.

Meanwhile Justine Henin-Hardenne extended her impressive run in Dubai by clinching the third Dubai Duty Free Women’s title.
were allegations that young expatriate jockeys from south Asia and Africa were being kidnapped or, indeed, sold by their parents, and smuggled into the country. In 2005 the UAE took measures to clarify the prohibition on underage jockeys and improve enforcement of the law. Anyone caught using a jockey under the age of 18 or a jockey that is less than 45 kilograms in weight faces a Dh50,000 (US$13,620) fine or a three-year jail sentence, with the penalties being doubled in the case of repeated offences. Prior to the enactment, in a major step to provide protection and support to children involved in camel racing, the UAE Ministry of Interior and UNICEF signed an agreement under which the UAE provided US$2.7 million (Dh9.91 million) to help in the return and re-integration of child camel jockeys into their families and their home communities. In accordance with the agreement, a social support centre was established to provide protection and support for the ex-jockeys and assist in their repatriation. The United Arab Emirates has now repatriated over 1000 children to their original countries. The children from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sudan, Mauritania and Eritrea, returned home after undergoing a rehabilitation programme. Their places were taken by mechanical robo-jockeys that were introduced on a trial basis, bringing considerable weight savings. The robot jockeys are controlled by their owners who communicate over a wireless network. Previously, a contesting camel had to carry a jockey, weighing around 45 kilograms, whereas the 4-kilogram robot jockeys enable the camels to achieve their maximum speeds.

The UAE’s coordinated programme of banning child jockeys and rehabilitating the children involved drew praise from UNICEF, whose local representative described it as an exemplary model for other GCC states.

CAMEL RACING

The inhabitants of the Gulf states have enjoyed a long and productive relationship with the camel, which is held in great admiration and respect. Formalising camel racing was one way of maintaining its central role in UAE life. The UAE now has no less than 15 race tracks across the seven emirates. Nad Al Sheba, 10 kilometres outside of Dubai, Al Wathba, 30 kilometres south-east of Abu Dhabi, and Al Ain track, which is 20 kilometres west of Al Ain, are all large, well-equipped camel tracks with high-tech facilities. Two smaller tracks are located in Sharjah, one in Ra’a al-Khaimah and one in Umm al-Qaiwain. Others are spread throughout the desert areas.

Through camel racing, the UAE has been able to maintain the symbolic significance of the camel and, by giving it structure, has developed it into a professional sport with significant prize money. Camel racing is also a big tourist attraction for those people who visit the UAE throughout the winter months. The race season runs from late October to early April with races taking place on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturday at 7.30 a.m., and on national holidays.

Even though camel racing has become a popular pastime in the UAE, it has not been without controversy. Particularly reprehensible were allegations that young expatriate jockeys from south Asia and Africa were being kidnapped or, indeed, sold by their parents, and smuggled into the country. In 2005 the UAE took measures to clarify the prohibition on underage jockeys and improve enforcement of the law. Anyone caught using a jockey under the age of 18 or a jockey that is less than 45 kilograms in weight faces a Dh50,000 (US$13,620) fine or a three-year jail sentence, with the penalties being doubled in the case of repeated offences. Prior to the enactment, in a major step to provide protection and support to children involved in camel racing, the UAE Ministry of Interior and UNICEF signed an agreement under which the UAE provided US$2.7 million (Dh9.91 million) to help in the return and re-integration of child camel jockeys into their families and their home communities. In accordance with the agreement, a social support centre was established to provide protection and support for the ex-jockeys and assist in their repatriation.

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MOTORSPORTS

UAE Desert Challenge

This unique event was conceived by Mohammed bin Sulayem, whose motorsport career goes back to the early 1980s. Mohammed, who has a record 14 FIA titles to his name, is well qualified in his role having very considerable experience as a competitor and an

www.uaeinteract.com/camelracing

Robot jockeys are controlled by their owners who communicate over a wireless network. Previously, a contesting camel had to carry the jockey, weighing at least 45 kilograms.

The tennis court was temporarily flooded by unexpected rainfall during the 2006 Dubai Duty Free Open Tennis Tournament.

Electronic, wireless controlled robot ‘jockeys’ are used in camel races.

with an engrossing 7–5, 6–2 win over Maria Sharapova in the final at the Dubai Tennis Stadium in February 2006. Henin-Hardenne raised her game when needed to overcome a stiff challenge from a resurgent Sharapova to claim her second title of the season. Plans to nurture a UAE champion are being supported by Tennis Emirates, the governing body for the sport in the UAE, which has established training programmes aimed at putting UAE players on the world map. In the next 10 to 15 years, the UAE hopes to develop players of international standard. Al Nasr tennis squad’s victory in the International School Championship in France shows that there is real potential in this strategy. The Abu Dhabi International Tennis Complex, which is part of Zayed Sports City, holds an Annual Tennis Championship in March with the aim of seeking out both new and undernourished talent. Men’s, women’s, mixed and youth tournaments are held with prize money on offer.
of central Dubai, the extensive Autodrome offers a range of events, from local to world class. The track is one of the most modern and challenging in the world. At 5.39 kilometres in length, it has six different configurations – the club track, hill handling, international, Grand Prix, national and oval handling, three of which can run simultaneously. Facilities within the grounds are also of world class standard.

The Autodrome also houses a Kartdrome, with a 1.2 kilometre circuit that can be split into two. This has 17 test corners and can accommodate up to 40 cars at one time. The track has over 55 karts made to different specifications, ensuring that karting is on offer to sports fans of all ages. The Autodrome also runs a Race and Driving School for anyone who wishes to develop their driving skills and techniques. The Dubai Autodrome, part of the Dubai Sports City project, staged the LG Super Racing Weekend, which saw the final stages of the FIA GT Championships as well as the FIA European Touring Car Championships and the Formula Renault V Championships. The championships, in their third year, had already attracted a television audience of over 40 million people. The season runs from March to October and before Dubai, races had taken place in Belgium, Italy, France and Germany. The LG Super Racing Weekend at the Dubai Autodrome was the first to take place outside of Europe.

Stephane Peterhansel and Cyril Despres completed a double French victory in the 2005 UAE Desert Challenge held in November, while Spanish rider Marc Coma was crowned world champion and Yahya Alheli grabbed a well-deserved podium finish for the UAE. At the end of a 2260-kilometre trail, Peterhansel scored his third car victory in the event in four years, reaching the finish in Dubai with his Mitsubishi Pajero/Montero Evolution a huge 3 hours 2 minutes clear of the second-placed BMW X5 of Spain’s Jose Luis Monterde.

Again proving himself to be one of the top Arab cross country rallying specialists, Alheli took his ageing Chevrolet Pick-up to a fine third place. While he was 42 minutes further adrift of Monterde, he was almost 11 hours ahead of his nearest Arab challenger, team-mate Ahmed Bin Suqat in seventh place. Dominant again in the battle of the trucks, the Kamaz team celebrated a superb fourth place overall thanks to the combination of Russians Vladmir Chagin, Stanislav Konopko and Eduard Nokolaev.

Securing his fourth Desert Challenge win in four years, Despres won by 11 minutes 20 seconds from a jubilant Coma, who nursed his KTM through the event’s final two stages, knowing that a last-day disaster could have seen the world title slip away.

Dubai Autodrome
A Dh16 billion (US$18 billion) development project, the Dubai Autodrome and Business Park is the first motorsports facility in the UAE that meets FIA standards. Situated 25 minutes outside
The FIA European Touring Car Championships, which changed its name to the FIA World Touring Car Championships in 2005, was brought to a close in Dubai. Street cars such as the Honda Civic, Peugeot 307 and Ford Focus, are souped-up and driven on a track. Going into the final round, Dirk Muller had a 12-point lead over Briton Andy Priaulx, with Jorg Muller trailing another five points, but it was Priaulx who somehow managed to bring the race around to his favour. In the FIA GT Championships, competitors took on a three-hour endurance race in road cars that had been adapted for the race circuit. Dubai was not to play host to the grand finale in this event as the season ended in Zhuhai, China. Drivers not only had to compete against each other, there was also the weather to contend with; the heat made for a tough penultimate round.

Formula X
Shown as a side event at the LG Super Racing Weekend, Formula X racing recently made its debut in the UAE. Currently big in the States, UK and Australia, Formula X enables amateurs to race competitively. For Dh200,000 (US$54,500) competitors can sign up for an entire season, or a smaller fee for a single race, and everything from the car to the mechanics to the transportation of the vehicle is covered. As part of the European Formula X Sport Series, drivers voted to race at the new Dubai Autodrome instead of taking the challenge to Silverstone in the UK. In all, 15 drivers competed, seven of whom entered from the UAE. In the first heat, Lebanese-born Christophe Hisette, who was competing for the UAE, came third, even though it was his first ever Formula X. In the second heat, another UAE resident, Dutchman Roy van der Weijden, also gained a pole position.

Quad Bike Race
Spirited quad bike riders dashed through the sandy track in Al Sa’a’ed desert on the first segment of the Red Bull Reach the Top competition. The two-day event was witnessed by hundreds of spectators sitting on the sand dunes surrounding the 140-metre high sandy hill with a 45 degrees face. Some 78 quad bikers were allowed to take part in the competition from the total 147 registered candidates in the four categories of the challenge. The picturesque venue, located some 30 kilometres away from downtown Al Ain in Al Sa’ad district, was glittering with floodlights.

Organised jointly by Red Bull, Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, and Brown Cruzer3, the contest has two series of contests, including a Quad Bike Race and 4WD Hill Climbing Car Racing Competition. Ahmad Mohammad Al Shamsi was the fastest rider of the first class category at 6.659 seconds. Mohammad Nasser Al Mansouri, with 6.377 seconds, won the race in the open class category. The winner of the second class was Baali Jumah Al Qubaisi, (6.438 seconds) and the winner of the four stroke was Maktoum Salem Al Muhairi (7.869 seconds).

Other Motorsports
Qatar’s Nassir Saleh Al Attiyah won the UAE International Rally 2006 title after a narrow win over UAE’s Sheikh Khalid Al Qasimi, who ranked second. The three-day race was organised by the UAE Motor & Tourism Club. The race saw a fierce competition between Al Attiyah and Al Qasimi. The 564-kilometre rally started from the Hilton Al Ain with participants representing the UAE, Oman, Jordan, Britain, Saudi Arabia, USA, Lebanon, Bahrain, Ireland, Qatar and Germany.

Golf
Immaculate greens, lush fairways, high-tech practice ranges and facility-driven clubhouses make the UAE a world-class destination for golfers (amateur and professional). Innovatively designed clubhouses are outstanding architectural landmarks in their own right, many of the designs being based on traditional aspects of UAE culture. At Abu Dhabi Golf Club, one of the emirate’s distinctive golf courses, the clubhouse is in the shape of a falcon swooping down on a golf ball. Emirates Golf Club, although built from thoroughly modern materials such as white concrete and gleaming glass, has managed to create a series of cool, tent-like structures lying low to the ground, redolent of a vanished era. Meanwhile the clubhouse at Dubai Creek Golf and Yacht Club...
European Tour members were keen to muster crucial points. It also kick-started what has become known as the “Desert Swing” taking the players to Abu Dhabi, then Doha and finally back to the UAE for the Dubai Desert Classic.

The 2006 Dubai Desert Classic, now among the world’s top events on the global golfing calendar, was fought out in cold, brutal but stirring fashion. But in the end it was Tiger Woods who clinched a thrilling shootout victory over defending champion Ernie Els to win the coveted trophy. Guided by his phenomenal ability and digging deep to find extra reserves of fortitude, Woods prevailed on the first extra hole after Els put his second shot into the lake protecting the eighteenth green. It was a finish that could not have been better scripted for a final day’s play.

The playoff was enforced when both players finished on 19 under-par 269, Woods returning a 69 to three-time former champion Els’ brilliant final-round 67. For the second tournament in succession in 2006 Woods found himself in a playoff. But just as he had done on at least 11 occasions in the past, he came through with flying colours. Tiger Woods, Ernie Els, Vijay Singh and Colin Montgomerie are all designing new courses in the UAE.

RUGBY
In the UAE, rugby is played by both men and women and by junior age groups, with the majority of teams made up of expatriate players from New Zealand, South Africa, Australia and the UK. However, more and more nationals are coming through at the younger levels, where programmes are in place for the under 14s, 16s and 19s. Governed by the Arabian Gulf Rugby Football Union, teams from Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ra’s al-Khaimah, Bahrain, Muscat, Kuwait, Doha and Saudi Arabia battle it out each season in the hope of winning the Arabian Gulf League and Standard Chartered Arabian Gulf Cup. The Arabian Gulf also competes in international tournaments such as the IRB World 7s Series.

The Dubai Dragons retained their Arabian Gulf League title in 2006, to complete a trophy double after ending the season with a 100 per cent record. Dubai Exiles claimed second place by defeating...
WATERSPORTS

Sailing

For both nationals and expatriates, sailing plays a huge part in their weekend activities as excellent facilities in all the emirates, including Abu Dhabi International Marine Club (ADIMC), the Dubai Offshore Sailing Club (DOSC), Dubai International Marine Club (DIMC) and Jebel Ali Sailing Club (JASC), enable enthusiasts to take part in numerous activities and competitions. The UAE is able to offer year-round sailing due to its climate and, for a sport that has only officially been around since 2000, boasts a healthy racing season. Established in 1988, DIMC is the main driving force behind the growth of UAE watersports and was the first Arab organisation to be granted full membership of the Union Internationale Motonautique (UIM).

To promote the sport even further, the UAE opened Emirates Sailing School, which is attended by nationals who are eager to meet international standards and represent the UAE. Training covers all water sports but mainly focuses on attaining skills in Optimists, Lasers and Toppers. Currently, the UAE team regularly compete in international competitions in countries such as Bahrain, Qatar, Italy and the UK.

The Dubai Junior Regatta, held in January 2006, attracted 143 Optimist and Laser 4.7 competitors from 18 nations. The Dubai Match Race was launched at the same time as the regatta, which is organised by DIMC in conjunction with the UAE Marine Sports Federation and the ISAF.

Dhow Racing

Al Zeer, skippered by Mohammad Rashid Bin Shaheen, who has often been described as a ‘sailor by day and fisherman by night’, emerged the overall champion of the traditional dhow (60 feet or 18 metres) 2006 sailing series. Dahees, skippered by Khadem Rashid Al Muhairi, won a silver-plated dhow trophy and Dh200,000 (US$54,450) after finishing in second position, while Gazi, which had not performed very well through the season’s three heats, was third overall. The Sir Bu Nuair races were first held in 1991 and Abu Dhabi in their final game, finishing a point ahead of rivals Dubai Hurricanes in third position. Meanwhile, the Arabian Gulf Ladies team competed bravely at the Asian Championships in Uzbekistan but returned home without a victory.

The Arabian Gulf team suffered a 20–5 defeat in their Asia region World Cup qualifier against Korea in Al Ain in May 2006. The home side made a slow start against a side 20 places higher in the IRB world rankings, turning around 17 points to 0 down at the break, Korea then extending their lead with a penalty early in the second half. Despite pressure from Arabian Gulf, they only managed one try and it was Korea who were celebrating at the final whistle as they secured their passage to the third and final round of qualifying games for France 2007. The match attracted an estimated crowd of 1,200 and was sponsored by the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority.

The UAE is able to offer year-round sailing due to its climate.
dominated the series. Tzanov and his crew won each of the three remaining races of the fourth and final round at Dubai International Marine Club to complete the series with a comfortable winning margin over 2005 champions, Horizon FCB. The series is being given a new ten-day format for 2007 in a deliberate move by DIMC to attract more overseas competitors and usher in a new level of competitive fleet racing in the Gulf. Entrants for the event were a mix of racing yachts and cruisers, with a handicap system in place to balance out the individual boat capabilities. Crews of international and national level battled it out over a course of ‘around the marks’ style short races and the 365-nautical mile Dubai to Muscat race.

Just as dominant in the 2006 Class 2 series, Gill Smith took Blitzem to the title for the smaller boats, taking two out of three race wins on the day to complete an almost flawless series.

Powerboat Racing
First appearing on the Arabian shores in 1989 when the region’s initial race took place off the coast of Mina Seyahi, the UAE has since held the UIM Class 1 World Powerboat Championships a staggering seven times. The UAE powerboat Victory team is classed as the most successful in the history of UIM World Championships, with driving legend Ali Nasser himself picking up 14 world titles in 13 years.

UAE’s Rashid Al Merri and co-pilot Salem Al Hamly, on board the boat Al Masoud, emerged winners of the first round of the GCC Championship for Offshore Powerboats Class III in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in January 2006. The race, organised by the Abu Dhabi International Marine Sports Club (ADIMSC), was delayed for 24 hours because of the strong winds. Al Merri led the race from the start, Amdid was close behind and Al Hamly followed third at the early stage of the competition. Al Hamly overtook Amdid in the third lap of the race, which was held over six laps and represented a stronger challenge to the leaders who were successful to end the race in first place.

Success came back to the Victory Team at the closely-contested British Grand Prix, the fifth round of the World Powerboating Championship, at Plymouth in August 2006. Victory 77’s first
place represented their maiden win of the season, and one that propelled them to the second place in the world championship standings. Victory 77’s triumph capped a stunning weekend for the Dubai-based team after Victory 7 took the third spot.

Swimming
Semi-Olympic swimming pools are under construction in four Dubai sports clubs at a cost of Dh47 million (US$12.80 million). The clubs are Al Ahli, Al Wasl, Shabab and Al Nasr and the pools are expected to be ready by August 2007. The project includes a comprehensive swim-training facility in each of the four clubs, comprising a semi-Olympic swimming pool with a total area of 312.5 square-metres, a stadium with a capacity of 340 people, health club, cafeteria, changing rooms, toilets and administrative offices. The buildings are to be centrally air-conditioned and fitted with state-of-the-art water treatment systems and electronic score boards — all in line with international standards set by authorised sports bodies.

These and other initiatives helped Dubai its bid to host the tenth FINA World Swimming Championships in 2010. The 25-metre world championship is held every two years and attracts the world’s best swimmers in all disciplines who compete in a ten-lane pool.

EQUESTRIAN SPORTS
Emirates Racing Association is the internationally recognised body overseeing horse racing in the UAE, over seeing rules and regulations, registration of horses and the licensing of trainers, jockeys and officials. Races of thoroughbreds and the legendary purebred Arabians take place in some of the region’s top equestrian clubs, including Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club, Ghantoot Racing and Polo Club and Nad Al Sheba. The highlight of the season is the Dubai International Racing Carnival, which is nine weeks of top-class racing concluding with the Dubai World Cup.

Godolphin has been a major contributor to the UAE’s racing circuit, offering world-class facilities in Dubai’s Al Quoz area. Established by the Maktoum family, Godolphin runs a state-of-the-art operation, having won no less than 117 Group One races in 11 countries. Its headquarters are fully equipped with a private training track, equine pool and a dedicated feed mill in order to regulate and control the diets of the thoroughbreds housed there. Younger horses are broken in to the race season at the specially designed Desert Stables with only the best-bred picked for international competition. Thanks to the UAE’s all-year-round sunshine, Godolphin stables provide a perfect winter retreat until the racing calendar gets under way.

Dubai World Cup
Godolphin’s Electrocutionist came from behind to win the world’s richest horse race in a thrilling encounter at the 2006 Dubai World Cup. Ridden by Frankie Dettori and trained by Saeed bin Suroor, Electrocutionist galloped to take away a cash prize of US$3.6 million. Recognised as the world’s richest race, the Dubai World Cup has become the favourite meeting place for the world’s racing fraternity.

Endurance Racing
The UAE is classed as one of the forerunners in the development of endurance racing, with its riders and horses currently ranked
Athletics Federation. It attracted over 15,000 runners, of both sexes and varying age groups, together with a huge crowd of spectators. A distinct feature of the 2006 event was the participation of international players for the first time in the history of the race.

**RED BULL RACE**

The Red Bull World Series Air Race 2006 got under way on 17 March under the auspices of Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (ADTA). The race includes rounds held in ten cities around the world. American pilot Kirby Chambliss won the Abu Dhabi leg of the 2006 race, pipping his compatriot and 2005 overall winner Mike Mangold. It was a close fight between the two. Mangold had some rough luck, however, as his wing hit an air gate in the last round, pushing him to second position. It was a display of courage, grit and precision. Eleven pilots tested their skills against each other.

**Endurance races**

are gruelling and tough as many exceed the 120 kilometre mark. Endurance races are gruelling and tough as many exceed the 120 kilometre mark. Courses are designed to challenge the horses and mid-race veterinary checks ensure that horses are not over-stretched. The UAE can attribute much of its success in this sport to the stamina of the purebred Arabian horse, which is ideally suited to desert terrain, and the passion of its riders.

Abdullah Khamis Ali Saeed and Sheikh Faisal bin Abdullah Al Qasimi did the UAE proud by winning the Senior and Junior rides at the historic Tom Quilty 160-kilometre endurance ride in Australia in June 2006. Abdullah Khamis Ali Saeed from the Al Reef stables rode *Tora Blar-Zay* to victory completing the 160-kilometre distance in a timing of 9 hours 15 minutes. Sheikh Faisal, who won the silver medal at the World Junior Championship held in Bahrain, finished on top in the junior section, riding *Kaysand Farrah* to victory. Sheikh Faisal took 10 hours 39 minutes to win the junior title. The Tom Quilty endurance event is the national endurance riding championship of Australia and is held annually in a different state. The 2006 ride was held in Boonah in south-east Queensland.

**POLO**

Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club, owned by Emaar Properties, was opened in the spring of 2006. The Club builds on the Middle East’s great equestrian tradition and offers luxurious facilities suitable for young and old and people of all abilities. It is a full-service Andalusian-themed equestrian centre themed with a Spanish style clubhouse replete with lounges and dining areas, riding gear and tack shop, spa and a swimming pool. Members of the Club can also watch a polo match on one of two polo fields, test their polo skills on the practice field, or take riding lessons. There’s something for every skill level, including show jumping and dressage for advanced riders.

**ATHLETICS**

The Zayed International Race, dedicated to the memory of the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, with a prize fund of Dh1 million, took place in April 2006 and was organised by the UAE Athletics Federation. It attracted over 15,000 runners, of both sexes and varying age groups, together with a huge crowd of spectators. A distinct feature of the 2006 event was the participation of international players for the first time in the history of the race.
The 2006 World Aerobatics Show, held in Al Ain, attracted competitors from 40 countries, including 83 parachutists and sky divers.

other, each trying to outdo the other in a bid to log the quickest time through the air gates. Spectators watched in awe as the carbon-composite planes twisted, dived and turned, their pilots willing their machines to be the quickest.

Chambliss won the race in a mere 3 minutes 33.37 seconds and Mangold, despite a ten-second penalty, managed to clock 3 minutes 37.94 seconds to take the second position. The winner of the 2005 Abu Dhabi race, Hungarian Peter Besenyei, had to make do with third position in the event with a time of 3 minutes 41.72 seconds.

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