

60 SECONDS WITH KARIM HABASHI

COUNTRY: EGYPT

DATE OF BIRTH: 21/04/1965

STAR SIGN: TAURUS

PROFESSION: FORMER TOURISM PROFESSIONAL AND SHOW JUMPER



Tell us about yourself?

My parents put me on a horse when I was 5 and it was love and addiction at first sight. Thanks to both riding and my job, I was lucky to travel to many countries. I trained a lot with **Paul Darragh** and **Alain Storme** in Ireland, **Samir Mahmoud** in Egypt and more recently **Karim El Zoghby** in Holland. I also had very inspiring lessons with other top riders like Rob Ehrens, Eric Navet, and Markus Fuchs. Then, having enough time for riding and work and other commitments was always a bit of a challenge. Giving more time to riding lately made me realise it's never too late to learn with horses.

Describe your typical practice?

80% is flat work; a horse doesn't need to jump more than twice a week. Your goal is to get your horse to obey to all possible variations you will need in the ring. If your horse is not happy and relaxed at the end of your session then you have achieved nothing.

Where is your favourite place for practice?

Waterside Stud in Ireland; a choice of indoor and outdoor arenas, a track around the whole place, all very green and quiet, horse and rider's heaven! It is quite boring for the horse and the rider to train every day in the same place. A nice facility is one that has different arenas and access to a forest or a track.

Tell us one or two things in your training that contributed to your success.

Adapting your training to the horse is very important. While it is important to have a basic system, you have to be able to identify every horse's peculiarities. Every horse is different with strengths and weaknesses; you definitely have to use the strengths, without abusing them. As for the weaknesses, you definitely need to work on them but eventually you will also need to adapt or compromise a bit. You can impose yourself on a horse to a limit but you cannot be rigid. **Being your own harshest critic will also push you further.**

What was the best advice you were given?

That a horse has to like you and be

relaxed to jump for you and achieve success. Any other formula produces short-lived results, if any.

What advice would you give to young athletes?

Respect the horse. If you don't really love horses, don't ride them! More flat work, less jumping. Work on having a correct position, independence of aids (their trainers might need to explain that to them) before trying to go full speed to win a class. Then another very important rule: blame yourself before the horse! Find one good trainer and listen to him; don't go around asking 20 people what they think of your round!

What is your best achievement?

The Grand Prix in Jardy in 2013. Winning in Europe is not easy; it was also a new horse and it was fast and exciting.

What are the goals that you aspire to achieve?

Having a good base in Europe to produce quality young horses as well as continuing to compete at 2* and 3* level.

Who has been your greatest support?

My parents for all sorts of support and putting up with this horse addiction. Alain Storme in Ireland for advice and guidance throughout my riding career and till today.

What are your greatest motivations?

Just the thrill of being around horses and working with them. Then winning, of course!

Who is your sporting hero?

Marcus Ehning for making it look ridiculously easy. **Roger Yves-Bost** for his unbelievable competitiveness. **Cian O'Connor** for being both a top rider and an incredible businessman.

What is your second favourite sport?

Football, only watching it though!

What is your favourite genre of movies?

Thrillers.

What kind of music do you enjoy listening to?

Pop Rock; I grew up listening to bands like Dire Straits, Chris Rea, and Fleetwood Mac. Nowadays, Coldplay, good Pop, some lounge music.

What is your favourite book and who is your favourite author?

Besides books relevant to my Political Science studies, I spent time reading books about horses and jumping. Most inspiring was Jean D'Orgeix, definitely a revolutionary in his techniques at the time.

What is your favourite food?

Japanese, Thai, Lebanese.

What is the most memorable place you ever visited?

Rio de Janeiro, a stunning city, and Seoul, so different.

What is your strength and what is your weakness?

My strength? Believing that you never stop learning with horses and not being embarrassed about saying so. As for the **weakness**, I would have liked to have more patience with people. Being a perfectionist can sometimes also work against you.

What is the biggest challenge you have ever faced?

Trying to juggle between riding and having another job.

What is the biggest reward you ever got?

Listening to your **National Anthem** when you win a class.

If you had the power to change something in this world, what would you change?

A 48 hour day, having double the time

If there is something about yourself that you would like to change, what would that be?

A bit more concentration in the ring. 🐾