

60 SECONDS WITH SAMEH EL-DAHAN

By Engy Adham

COUNTRY: EGYPT

DATE OF BIRTH: 28/01/1985

STAR SIGN: AQUARIUS

PROFESSION: INTERNATIONAL SHOW JUMPER

SAMEH EL-DAHAN SEEMS TO BELONG TO THAT BYGONE GENERATION OF HORSEMEN WHO SINCERELY VALUED DUTY, COMMITMENT, HARD WORK, MORALITY AND A CODE OF ETHICS. HE COMES FROM A DEEPLY-ROOTED EGYPTIAN FAMILY AND THESE ROOTS SHOW IN HIS COMMITMENT TOWARDS HIS SPORT AND HIS COUNTRY. HIS PERFECTIONISM STEMS FROM HIS EDUCATION AS A DOCTOR AND HIS COOL, FOCUSED AND DELIBERATE PERFORMANCE REFLECTS HIS INNER PEACE AND STRENGTH. YET ABOVE ALL, IT IS HIS SMILE WHICH SHINES THROUGH WITH SIMPLE AND GENUINE GOOD WILL AND WARM WISHES.



Egypt's Sameh El-Dahan and Sumas zorro at the WEG2014

Describe your typical practice?

Mostly fitness and suppleness training; we start by walking the track to loosen and warm up the horses' backs, and then we bring them into the sand arena for some concentrated extension and shortening over ground poles.

Where is your favourite place for practice?

The yard's gallop; it is a long sand pathway around the top fields surrounded by natural hedges. It is very peaceful and quiet. The horses really enjoy it.

Describe some of the funny experiences you have had practicing?

I flew out of the saddle once after an explosive jump from a youngster we have. It was the end of the session whilst I decided to give her one more jump and, God, was I wrong as I ended up on the ground and broke my wrist. This happened just before the

lorry was leaving to a big show in Italy where I ended up having to ride with a cast on my arm.

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

Perseverance and paying attention to details; there are so many perfectionists in this sport and to be able to compete with them at that level requires focus and dedication. I leave a lot of the details to Joanne as she is very focused, driven and she helps me a lot so I can focus on the riding. I have also been very fortunate to receive training from the great John Ledingham who has helped me develop and fine tune my style.

What was the best advice you were given?

Always check your girth!

Over the years, I have been given so many great pieces of advice from real horsemen whom I was lucky enough to train

with and be around my show. Basically, you walk the course like you are going to ride it, and then you walk it more than once.

What advice would you give to young athletes?

Follow your dreams and never give up. It is amazing how sport brings people together and how important it is to our country.

It is crucial for athletes to have strong presence on different media outlets. This will help them promote the sport and our country worldwide which I think is really essential in the current situation especially now that Egypt is on the rise.

What is your best achievement?

One of my best achievements is being able to build a team together with Joanne Sloan Allen and Sycamore Stables horse farm. Also, being successfully at the top of the sport with home-bred and home-produced horses is definitely on the list of my

personal favorites. Then comes representing Egypt, individually and with teams, and being a reason the Egyptian flag was raised in so many countries all over the world. Finally, jumping a puissance wall of 2.20 m also has to be high up on my list of achievements.

What are the goals that you aspire to achieve?

Representing Egypt in the Olympic Games, being fair to my team and horses, giving credit where it is due, reaching the highest level of the sport and climbing up the leading riders' rankings as high as I can.

Who has been your greatest support?

I am a very lucky person in that I was supported and guided by many people throughout my career. I am very lucky to have my whole family, the Egyptian equestrian community and my adopted Irish community. Currently, the most supportive is my business partner Joanne Sloan Allen. She is a fantastic person with

a very strong personality whom I learn a lot from. From an equestrian point of view, I am privileged to have great sponsors such as the whole Sloan family, WKD, Blue Chip Feeds and Samshield helmets.

What are your greatest motivations?

Striving for success; to be more specific, I want to win an equestrian Olympic medal for Egypt.

Riding talented horses is a great motivation for me in that it pushes me to get the best out of them.

Who is your sporting hero (any sport)?

Michael Phelps, the swimmer.

What is your second favourite sport?

Football

What is your favourite genre of movies?

Action Comedy

What is your favourite gadget and are you obsessed with it?

My phone and no, I am not obsessed with it.

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

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

What is your favourite food?

Joanne's rice.

What is the most memorable place you ever visited?

Spruce Meadows. It is Disney World for horses. Everything is perfect and well thought out from stabling to the footing of the grass fields. The organizing committee is second to none. It is a horse show with a lot of background and history. This is what a rider would feel every time he/she passes under the clock tower and the gates close behind him/her. 🐾