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Eng. Hisham Hatab

A NATIONAL PRIDE

THE PRESIDENT OF THE
EGYPTIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

ENG. HESHAM HATAB

By Khaled Assem

ENG. HESHAM HATAB, A FORMER RIDER WHO REPRESENTED EGYPT IN SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL EVENTS BEFORE BECOMING THE PRESIDENT OF THE EGYPTIAN EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION (EEF) AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE EGYPTIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, REFLECTS WITH HORSE TIMES UPON HIS INVESTMENT IN THE EGYPTIAN SPORTS FIELD AND GIVES AN INSIGHT INTO HIS EXPECTATIONS FOR EGYPT'S PERFORMANCE IN THE RIO 2016 OLYMPIC GAMES.

During your term of presidency in the EEF, what do you see as most important developments of the last season?

The last season witnessed immense amounts of effort from the board of the EEF; it's not just one person but the entire board has worked so hard to develop the sport. The harmony and cooperation between our organisations made this season very successful and inclusive. It included different disciplines not only show jumping, but also dressage, tent pegging and endurance. We tried to be as close as we can to the international levels; our age ranges and their integration in the different levels are now almost identical to the international standards.

The number of national shows over the season created a gradual demand on the rider and the horse through a set of guidelines that the course designer adopts from the yearly plan. Similarly the course builder, the choice of the arena used, and naturally the gradual increase in height, not to mention two international shows per year, create the ring craft and competitiveness with foreign riders to raise the bar for the Egyptian riders.

The sport today is infused in our daily life and is part of the political foot print and that is why the EEF held some national and international shows in Sharm El Sheikh and Hurghada to create change as well as to portray the positive image of the safety of Egypt and hopefully aid in revitalising tourism to those areas at least from a sports perspective.

We hosted training clinics and workshops in cooperation with the FEI Technical Committee in various fields: coaching, judging, course building and course designing. Egypt also conducts training of veterinarians and farriers as part of its mutual cooperation with several entities such as the French and German Equestrian Federations.

We are hoping that next season will be even better than the last one. We have an international competition in October and we are trying our best to lift the ban off Egypt so that the horses could travel in and out easily.

Could you explain to our readers the problem of the ban on Egypt?

The ban is a national issue regarding not just sport horses and Arabian horses but donkeys and mules as well; luckily, we don't have any kind of diseases. What we do have is a very strong deficiency in the veterinarian system where the FEI lost confidence in our medical facilities. This is the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and the General Organisation for Veterinary

Tools. I have met 8 Ministers to try and solve this problem but it is very difficult.

Neglect is the main reason behind this ban, and the Europeans won't allow any horses inside their country from Egypt except with the right paperwork, proper tests and a good system. They gave us their standards but no one is moving and they are not trying to help remove the ban probably because the Ministry of Agriculture only gives attention to plants, not animals.

We have held many conferences regarding this matter but we weren't capable of achieving the required results. Recently, we had a deal with a key person who will support our cause, through personal funding and private sector investments, to remove the ban through the required changes. We already have a solution to the problem and we still have a lot of work to do hoping to remove the ban by the end of this year.

What are your hopes for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games?

We are very proud of Karim El Zoghby as he was able to qualify for the Olympics with limited resources at the time that Saudi Arabia and UAE and other countries in the Middle East, with all their resources, weren't qualified. Karim is ranked fourth in the World Olympic rankings. If we had a team we could have had a chance in the team competition and four chances for an individual medal. We weren't able to achieve all that we had planned for, yet there is solid hope for a medal and with a lot of faith and a bit of luck we might pull through.

As for other sports, we have many Egyptian athletes in various sports that were qualified for Rio in international competitions like, swimming, judo, shooting, taekwondo, athletics, weight lifting, boxing and archery.

We can't guarantee getting a medal but we are strongly hoping for one. We did our homework in terms of preparation in accordance with our financial capacity. We've done all the required tests and we prepared our athletes physically, psychologically and mentally.

We hope that God will be on our side, yet if we don't go home with a medal then we still would have come a whole lot closer to one because, as you know, according to the International Olympic Committee, an athlete winning a medal is worth 4 million dollars of investment in all the associated fields around his sport. Moreover, the technology today has gone miles ahead where some of the devices are able to measure the efficiency and length of the muscles and give feedback to address deficiencies as well as strengths and naturally countries in the lead ranking of medals will take full advantage of this technology. 🏆

