

AL ZAHRAA 2009

# BEAUTY IN THE EYES OF THE BEHOLDERS

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Nada H. Abdelmoniem

*MW Siensei, 1st place winner of 2 year old colts (Owner: El Gabry & Al Badeia Farm Egypt)*





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Stephanie  
Claude

*"I KNEW THEN I WOULD LIKE IT, BUT I DID NOT THINK I WOULD LIKE IT THAT MUCH. AL ZAHRAA HAS A GREAT SENSE OF HISTORY AND IT FEELS LIKE COMING HOME TO THE FOUNDATIONS OF PHARAONIC CIVILISATION" SCOTT BENJAMIN*

AL ZAHRAA STUD REPRESENTS THE TRADITIONAL PRESERVATION OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARABIAN HORSE STRAINS; THE PURE EGYPTIAN ARABIAN HORSE. WITH MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF SAFEGUARDING BY THOSE WHO PASSED AWAY BUT STILL KEPT THEIR NAMES RECOGNISED, AL ZAHRAA CONTINUES TO DRAW BREEDERS, SPECTATORS, AND ARABIAN HORSE LOVERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD - COMING TOGETHER TO COMMEMORATE A CREATURE THAT WAS DISTINGUISHED BY HISTORY, AND POLISHED BY HUMAN AND NATURAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS. HORSE SHOWS ARE ABOUT LOOKING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF BREEDING HORSES AND SELECTING THAT HORSE; AL ZAHRAA HAS SUCCEEDED IN DOING THAT EXTREMELY WELL BY KEEPING ATTENDEES EXCITED AND ENGAGED.





▲ Ashhal Al Khalediah, 2nd place winner of international 10 year old stallions (Owner: Al Khalediah Farm KSA)

The National and 12th International Championships took place from November 12th until the 15th. Arabian horses paraded their beauty to judges and mostly, breeders who see no beauty except in their own flaunters. For the first time, Al Zahraa 2009 underwent sponsorship by 3 of the biggest names in the business industry; Mercedes Benz, Marriot Hotels and Lufthansa Airlines. The setting of the show was different to that of 2008 along with valuable prizes and titles that any breeder would like to acquire.

If not coinciding with major events in the international annual calendar of Arabian horse events, Al Zahraa would perhaps host up to 1,000 horse entries. Preceded by the Nations Cup in Aachen and the Middle Eastern Championships in Amman, and succeeded by the World Championships in Paris, many breeders keep their horses in Europe due to the tight international calendar as well as transportation. Nevertheless, 360 national and international entries made the 4 day event full with an electrifying atmosphere inviting to those who wish to learn about the legacy of the Egyptian Arabian horse.

With new administration, the development of the stud farm has

▼ Ghayat Al Khalediah, 1st place winner of international 3 year old fillies (Owner: Al Khalediah Farm KSA)





been taking positive directions in the maintenance of location as well as purity in lines. "There has been plenty of development, horse wise and administration wise. We have been working hard on training and conditioning our stud horses along with our local breeders' and our work has paid off this year. The show is getting bigger year by year; we have many horse entries, a big number of local and international breeders, a good show-up by spectators, and most importantly, we have excellent media coverage", says Mr. Ahmed Hamza, Director of Al Zahraa. He continues, "Luxury has also been comprised in this year's event with sponsorship by Mercedes and Lufthansa, and catering by Marriot hotels. We hope to continue reviving the event in the upcoming years."

To international American Judge, Mr. Scott Benjamin, "Gauging the horses here has been outstanding; it's easy to find winners of international quality in every class." Truth to be told, in the eyes of those who attend the event annually, both national and international entries stunned spectators with exquisiteness." International Judge, breeder and Chairman of the Organising Committee Dr. Nasr Marei states, "There has been a great improvement in this year's horse quality through bigger number entries and through the participations of more and fresh breeders. The reason behind the improvement in quality in my opinion is the eagerness from breeders to improve; breeders have been exposed to many international events and so they obtained more education. Some breeders are not welcoming to the education as they may be traditional as well as sceptical about any changes, although on the other hand, non-stagnant breeders have improved their horses through cross-breeding and importation of other blood lines."

On sponsorship, Dr. Marei continues, "Sponsorship this year was very beneficial and generally, it's of added value for organisers. Horse owners and breeders were very welcoming to the idea of sponsorship in many ways possible one of which is they themselves are sponsoring classes,



▲ Zakaria Mackary Mercedes Benz Marketing Director, Ahmed Hamza Al Zahraa Director, Mike Nolte Mercedes Benz CEO, Willy Luder President of the ECAHO & Nasr Marei Chairman of the Organising Committee



▲ El Sayyeda, 3rd place winner of international 5 year old mares (Owner: Al Kaherah Farm Egypt)

which we as organisers, are grateful for. We have been working on big sponsorship names and I had the opportunity to speak with Mr. Mike Nolte, CEO of Mercedes Egypt, who incidentally happened to be a horse lover. He was very enthusiastic about the initiative, and along with his good relations with Marriot and Lufthansa, everything just came into effect. Given 3 such big names, the event was certainly organised differently as they sponsored certain essential classes and trophies. In all, I would say the outcome worked out brilliantly and Mercedes is very keen to keep on sponsoring this event for many years to come. Having said so, they

would not cooperate with show organisers if the latter did not have a vision, as the former does have an image to preserve; hence, we are more ambitious to do more together next year."

National championship prizes were won by many highly regarded stud farms of which constantly coming in first place was Al Farida Stud horses followed by horses from Rabab and Al Gabry Stud. On judging the national show, Mr. Peter Gamlin commented, "I have judged the national show for 3 consecutive years. Horse quality has improved tremendously since I first came here,





▲ Tarek Hamdy with Imperial Baaraz, 1st place winner of international 6 year old stallions (Owner: Al Farida Farm Egypt)

organisation is better and the showing of horses done by employing some European trainers, has added to the whole event. There could be more improvement in trotting the horses; instead of lunging them in several circles, it would be better to rack them in straight lines, helping them get a better score in movement."

Prizes of different classes at the International championships were swept off by horses from Alkhalediah Stud Farm. When asked about his opinion on Al Khalediah, Dr. Marei remarks, "Al Khalediah horses do not just do it here - they do it worldwide! They have acquired some of the best horses in the world; they can afford it and they still continue doing so. Their horses are integrated in one solid single programme; they have all the lines and are deservingly winning."

Presenting their characteristics, from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia alone, 20 entries competed with 2 from England, 4 from Kuwait, and several from Qatar and the UAE, in addition to local horses of which more than 150 were improved in quality and produced within an improved breeding programme and better selection category. During the International show, horses were from a

▼ Mike Nolte, along with Ahmed Hamza & international Judges



▼ Gamil Sakr, 1st place winner of national 6 year old stallions (Owner: El Gabry Farm Egypt)





different background; from Russian to Polish to straight Egyptians – horses with a different look. More reflections from Dr. Marei tell us, "our Egyptian breeders did not do too badly in the National show as they competed against horses that are not straight Egyptian Arabians. When competing against each other, one can really tell the difference of course, however in the International show, there was extra strength. Two decades ago the Russian Arabian swept all the prizes, and then came what is now termed as the "Golden Cross", which is the Egyptian, the Spanish and a bit of the Polish lines. We ended up today with what people would term the "universal type" as it includes a bit of the 5 lines we know of; those universal types were shown this year."

Mr. Mutlaq bin Mushrif, Director of Al Khalediah Stud is one of the vocal and enthusiastic spectators during Al Zahraa shows. He says, "Every year Al Zahraa is a different show to me as organisation is better, horses look improved and presence from both local and international breeders is excellent which gives the whole championships a stirring atmospheric experience. Coming here annually is very essential to us as the championships are of essence to the international annual calendar as well as Egypt being our second home."

The Ring Master is defined as the "Chief of Orchestra" by veteran Ring Master and breeder Mr. Hassan Valsan. A volunteering job that requires tolerance and patience, the ring master has to be aware of every single detail happening within the ring; from judge requests to photographers and most importantly, the supervision of horse handlers. Moreover, a position of such sort requires a technical knowledgeable background; from being aware of ECAHO regulations as well as following them, to gaining the respect of horse handlers. Mr. Valsan says, "I have been the ring master for Al Zahraa show for 4 consecutive years, and thankfully, each year I have managed to gain the respect of the various horse handlers. The most important aspect of being in that position is keeping track of the time, as well as being both strict and flexible with all present ring individuals. I have

not faced many challenges during Al Zahraa shows, especially this year as matters were better organised. Communication has been very easy as we use very easy words and signs to get matters going."

For further show developments, Mr. Benjamin adds, "I think Egyptian handlers could learn something from the European ones. They should encourage the horses to move forward; I do not want to see the horse circle and gallop, I want to see it trot and move forward in a straight line. Having said so, even European handlers are circling the horse, which needs some development as well!" **HT**



▲ Hassan Valsan, Chief of Orchestra of the ring

▼ Mutlaq bin Mushrif & Moutaz al Biwaibiya, 1st place winner of international 11 year old stallions (Owner: Al Khalediah Farm KSA)



▼ Saladin Al Qusar, 3rd place winner of international 10 year old stallions (Owner: El Gabry Farm Egypt)

