

CSI1* INTERNATIONAL SHOW JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIP AT THE KUWAIT RIDING CENTER

By Khaled Assem

FROM MARCH 20TH TO THE 22ND THE KUWAIT RIDING CENTER HOSTED ITS INTERNATIONAL CSI1* COMPETITION, THE FIRST SUCH COMPETITION SINCE THE EQUINE MOVEMENT BAN IMPOSED FOUR YEARS AGO FOLLOWING AN OUTBREAK OF GLANDERS. THE MOST FASCINATING THING WAS THE FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE AND AMIABLE BOND BETWEEN RIDERS, ORGANISERS AND SPECTATORS. THE GROUNDS ARE VERY ORIGINAL WITH CHEERFUL AND WELL-PLACED DESIGNS THAT MADE ATTENDEES FEEL THEY WERE ALWAYS AT THE CENTRE OF ALL THE ACTION. THE FOOTING WAS VERY GOOD ALONG WITH VERY COLOURFUL AND INVITING FENCES AND THE OVERALL PLAN INCLUDING LIGHTING EFFECTS, BRANDING, AND SPECTATOR AREAS WAS EVIDENCE THAT THE ORGANISERS WENT THROUGH A LOT OF PLANNING AND HARD WORK TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL SHOW. HERE ARE SOME QUOTES AND THOUGHTS FROM SEVERAL ORGANISERS AND RIDERS WHO WERE PRESENT.



Ali Al Khorafi riding Axios



Ahmed Talaat, Khaled Al Marzooq & Sheikh Ali Al Qassimi



Lama Abdul (Steward) & Karim Badaro (Judge)



Gemila Al Mutawa



Dina Al Baijan riding Ulura



Nabila Al Ali (Commentator), Jassim Al Khorafi, Former Speaker of Parliament Jassim Al Khorafi & Khalifa Al Khorafi



Adel Al Qaoud, Noora Al Qaoud & Sharon Al Qaoud



Karim Fares riding For Jump Z

KHALED AL MARZOOQ, EVENT ORGANISER:

“The idea of the whole event came up in summer 2013. We wanted to bring the sport back, with the problem of glanders and how it affected the sport. Some riders were reluctant to ride so we had the OK for the show in October 2013. We were working on national sponsors to resuscitate the sport. Our club was inaugurated in 1996 and we moved to our new location in 2001, we are always trying to develop the sport in cooperation with top riders such as Noaf Bin Essa and Ali Al Khorafi who is proof that the sport can excel and

develop with the support of private companies.

“For this show we had several sponsors including ourselves as the Kuwait Riding Center and we managed to just cover all costs. We built new facilities, arenas and we intend to continue. We realise the money or profits do not come from the first show yet we intend to continue on organising annual events bearing in mind that first and foremost, our main profit is the development of the sport in Kuwait.

“The biggest challenge I faced during organisation was getting all the details finalised with the FEI

and for that, we had to go through our local Federation, all in very little time. I had to spend the last three nights on the sofa at my office. We finally managed to invite around 24 foreign riders and for that I have to thank all the people who lent us horses, and all those who enthusiastically helped to make this show the success that it was.”

NOAF BIN ESSA, SHOW JUMPING TRAINER:

“It all started with Khaled Khalifa and Jasim Al Khorafi; we all put so much time and effort for things to be where they are today. I trained all the kids and new-comers here

at the Center at some point; they are not kids anymore and I am sure they will all make me proud. Nael Nassar and Ali Al Khorafi were basically kids, to see them now doing so well is very touching.

“Regarding the development of the Center, the idea behind its design came from Khaled Al Khorafi as he has plenty of artistic touches; he always wanted something very artistic, different yet practical. We went through years of designs and I actually still have the drawings. As you can see, the hills here where you can sit and view more than one arena and this touch of originality was a statement about

our heritage.

“As for this event, we’d love to host it annually as the glanders issue pushed everything back. Without the right financing we couldn’t go to the Arab League Tours. This show is a still a good start to show local sponsors that it can be done without involving the government. And this is just a one star show but it’s a good door opener and a good beginning. We’ll move on as people are getting the exposure of what it is to host an international show, while building it up to hopefully, be a five-star show. I am very satisfied with all the work as all the students and parents were

involved in organisation and that builds the identity needed for the riders such as Khaled Al Marzooq and Khaled Al-Kulaib”.

ALI AL KHORAFI, RIDER:

“We have been aspiring to have an international event here in our club for a while. There are difficulties, as you may be aware, yet we felt it was about time to join hands and get this show on the road. With people like Khaled Al Marzooq, the General Manager of the show, we were able to take on more challenges. Also, our sponsors were really keen on seeing a successful show. As such, we delivered a



Linn Skjetne with Robin



Kai Ottens & Laila Al Hanbali



Sheikh Yousef Al Sabah, Walid Mourad, Wael El Rewainy & Khaled Al Marzooq



Patricia Elizabeth Chan



Walid Mourad representing KDDC & Holland's Arnold Borekamps



Winners of the class with dignitaries & sponsors



Ali Al Khorafi, Shahad Al Moulah & Gemila Al Mutawa



Grand Prix winner Noora Al Qaoud riding Uranda B

good return on their investment as this was the first international event to take place here. We had to research what was done in the Middle East and we tried to be competitive in terms of quality. Our riders were the greatest inspiration; everyone helped and shared in the responsibilities, including the provision of horses, all to make this work. We are hoping to keep this an annual event even though this year we invested in the club's structure and in our contact with sponsors. Hopefully, next year the show can develop further."

NADIA AL MUTAWA, RIDER:

"At the first Asian Games where we

won three medals, we were 16, 17 and 19 years old – Sheikha Barah Al Sabah, Gemila and myself. It was the first big competition we went to and we were basically kids and girls at that time, we still had to carry weights so that was a different time all together. The year after that, the FEI discontinued that. Everyone here is working hard to achieve international results because compared to other countries we count on our own finances and nothing else; it's harder here."

AHMED TALAAT, COURSE DESIGNER:

"The footing here is great, the

fences are very good even though a round arena is not the easiest to work with, yet mostly the people are very friendly and that is what makes a show more remarkable.

"When coming to a new show and not being familiar with riders' and horses' levels, plus the fact that the horses are borrowed for foreign riders, I always have a trial on the first day. I never build it big but I ask some technical questions to the riders. I go for a bit of technicality, but mostly I go for safety. On the second day I design the courses to be less technical but a bit bigger so I can test the quality of the horses. I don't reach the technicality of the last day or its height, but I have a

pretty good idea of what I will build for the Grand Prix.

"Other factors I take into consideration include the entrance to the arena as it is a possible factor of difficulty. If you have a difficult line in the direction of the entrance gate it is more encouraging for the horses to jump it because it is towards home. The opposite is more difficult. Similarly, the water jump towards home is easier than the opposite.

"We are definitely here for the sport and for entertainment, so some jumping lines have to be in front of the audience or next to the VIP area. The ground is a vital

factor because it can affect the stride of the horse if it's deep and heavy, it will also affect the spring where his power will be dispersed rather than more bouncy. Whereas if the footing is solid then I tend to put bigger distances and possibly, heights. Moreover, I put a small upright next to the screen on the first day to introduce horses to it so that I can be free to put fences anywhere during the Grand Prix. I care very much about building safe courses that are fun to ride yet still show the ability to define better riders and better horses."

GEMILA AL MUTAWA, RIDER:

"I have three children, two

daughters and a boy, so I am a full time mum and wife. I cannot compete internationally anymore but locally I still am able to enjoy riding and competing. My son has started riding and his father Hamad Al Dabbous and I are behind him to see him compete on the international scene; I have nice horses and Kristian Johannesson is our trainer. The hunting and equestrian club did an international event four years ago when there was no horse ban. Now it's much more difficult so special thanks to all who have put in hard work to make this show possible. We would also like to thank all the foreign riders who accepted the invitation to come to Kuwait and we would



Alaa Al Sultan



Group Picture of Organising Committee & FEI Officials



Sheikh Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah (Former Minister of Foreign Affairs) & Jassim Al Khorafi



Sheikh Yousef Al Sabah



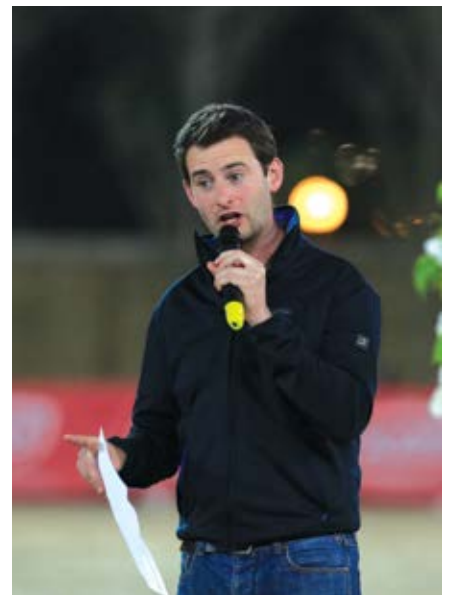
Shahad Al Moulah & her father Hamad Al Moulah



Ali Al Khorafi, Noora Al Qaoud & Karim Fares



Laila Al hanbali, Ali Al Khorafi, Abdulrahman Al Fuzae, Gemila Al Mutawa & Latifa Al Othman)



Frederik De Backer, Belgian commentator

like to encourage our organisers to make this an annual event. And for our young riders, we wish that they always show enthusiasm when riding, get good training, travel and learn different philosophies and become good ambassadors for Kuwait.

“Regarding support for the development of the sport locally, we help young riders as much as we can, and we advise them to keep their calm because some get very anxious during shows. We sponsor some of the local events and we try to educate riders about

various topics such as saddlery, horse and stable management, and all the elements that precede being in the ring.

DINA AL BAJAN, RIDER:

“Due to the glanders issue, my training programme was in decline. I used to be a more active international competitor however I am now focused on local sport. Basically we have around 50 riders in every class and the standard is very good, yet psychologically it is not as motivating when you keep competing against the same

crowd. We have four shows over two days on a monthly basis; surely the more exposure on new grounds against different riders and gaining further experience would help riders get more motivated and start implementing their learnt skills once back at home. This also affects our sponsors and it becomes less feasible to invest in new horses when there are less demands; it’s simply a low tide. We have been trying to highlight this sport, expose it more to the media as you may have seen here at the show.

“We would really love for the horse ban to be lifted. I have faith it will be lifted and feel positive about once again participating in the Arab League. And even though I have two children, I would still like to compete again. In the meantime, I will continue working at keeping my skills sharp through local shows and clinics.”

KARIM FARES, RIDER:

“I am settled in Holland and running my own yard now. I visit Lebanon often where I give clinics and I don’t miss any invitations to the

Middle East because I like being amongst friends. The show has been great and unfortunately the closed borders keep the number of riders for the higher level more reserved, yet the atmosphere is fantastic, the footing is well done and the facilities are extremely good.”

SHEIKH ALI AL QASSIMI, RIDER:

“I am happy to be here in Kuwait with all my fellow riders and friends. You know that some of them have stopped riding in the Arab League due to the ban. And as this is a

borrowed horse event, I am riding two horses, one for the small tour and the other for the big. One really needs to adapt to the horse as they cannot be fully changed in three days. The club is fantastic, the grounds are great and most importantly the atmosphere is very welcoming.”

The Grand Prix was won by Kuwait's Noora Al Qaoud riding Uranda B, with Kuwait's Ali Al Khorafi riding Ulaan in 2nd place, and Lebanon's Karim Fares riding For Jump Z in 3rd place.