





# GOLD FOR DRESSAGE

By Dr. Mohamed Elshirbini

A DREAM CAME TRUE when I saw the Egyptian flag high in the sky while listening to the national anthem, not only once but 3 times in 15 minutes for the 3 gold medals in dressage!



## IT'S THE CHAMPIONSHIP DAY AND FIVE ARAB COUNTRIES ARE COMPETING IN DRESSAGE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE GAMES COMMENCED IN 1953

Preparations for the 11th Pan Arab Games, the third held in Egypt, started months ago in spite of the fact that there was a possibility of not having the competition if less than five countries were to participate. Being a member of the board of the Egyptian Equestrian Federation (EEF) and the head of the dressage committee, I received daily phone calls from the enthusiastic riders enquiring whether there would be a competition or not! My usual answer was, "I'll plan and work my schedule as if there will be a competition and if not, all the participants in the training programme (riders and horses) would fully benefit from training".

Due to the fact that the EEF has been running a dressage league on annual basis for the past decade, the process of the continuous training of the riders and horses was established. Trainers such as Soha Elebiary, Emmad Zaghloul, Armel and Amr Fawzy were taking good care of the riders and the horses all year round. The training plan included a primary selection of the best pair (rider and horse) out of the 2006/2007 season in levels (A) and (B). Some of the experienced riders such as Col. Ayman Fahmy and Maj. Yasser Assar were selected but waiting for the right horse! 'Troy', a horse that belongs to the President of the EEF, solved Maj. Assar's problem. 'Amber' another mare that also belongs to the President of the EEF was a supporting horse for the team and ridden by Maj. Hany Rafei.

In September, the first clinic for level (A) and (B) riders was completed over two weeks by an international expert. The second clinic was done in November after selecting the teams (A) and (B) with five pairs in each team just before the competition's fine tuning. Two substitutes





◀ ▲ Ahmed Hamsho



▲ Major Yassir Assar

## MAJOR YASSIR ASSAR

Individual Dressage Gold medallist (Class A)

On dressage: It is a big step that this event has included dressage for the first time! The dressage sport level here is somehow away from the international level, but it is certainly on the right track!

for each level were on stand-by (the 5th pair); Aline Kopalian in (A) on her German dressage horse 'Sommelier' and Omar Sweelan in (B) with 'Hanco'.

It's the championship day and five Arab countries are competing in dressage for the first time since the games commenced in 1953. The 20 x 60 meter sand arena assembled in Cairo Equestrian Stadium was nicely prepared and the Egyptian crowd was there awaiting medals. Three judges were judging the event; Mr. Peter Bonhof (international FEI judge) whom was also the President along with Mr. Nicolas Verwer (Dutch judge and dressage expert) and Emmad Zaghloul (experienced Egyptian judge).

Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya and Egypt were to prove who deserves the honours to receive the first medals in the Pan Arab Games dressage event. The Lebanese rider Carla Kattouah had a problem which was discovered by her German trainer Pia (trains the Syrian team as well). Carla studied the wrong test! Pia discovered this after the first 2 riders competed and

Carla was the third rider to come out. As the Director of the show, I consulted with the judges and we decided to give her a chance to study the correct test instead of eliminating her. She started as the last competitor in level (A). All the riders were real champions even the substitutes Aline and Omar were there to encourage their team members. The results included 7 medals!

A gold medal also went for the team of Ingy Elhamy and Aga Zohair while Syria's Ahmed Hamsho and Firas Jeneidi received silver. Iraq's Saad Sohail and Aly Fadel received the bronze medal.

Our confidence in dressage to be important for all types of equestrian sports, has led the EEF, with my continuous effort, to support and develop the discipline. The federation is looking forward to more achievements by getting better horses for the team and training them in preparation for international levels. Arab countries now have a new discipline in equestrian sports to work on, and I hope that this will promote dressage in whole region.



## Individual Results

### LEVEL (A):

#### **GOLD:**

Maj. Yasser Assar on TROY

#### **SILVER:**

Randa Barakat on PANCHITO

#### **BRONZE:**

Ayman Azab on POWER

#### **4TH PLACE:**

Amr Fawzy on PACIFICO

### LEVEL (B):

#### **GOLD:**

Ingy Elhamy on LOS ANGELES

#### **SILVER:**

Aga Zohair on NAPU MUK

#### **BRONZE:**

Maha Adel on ALY THE KING

#### **4TH PLACE:**

Maj. Hany Rafei on AMBER

## KHALED ASSEM

*Former member of the Egyptian National Showjumping team:*

"This is the first time for dressage to be included in the Pan Arab games and that in itself is a good start, I hope to see more professional levels of performance as has been in show jumping."

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## AGA ZOHAIR

*Individual Bronze medallist (Class B) and team Gold medallist:*

On the win: "We trained so hard and I feel we deserved a medal.

On dressage: The federation needs to focus more on supplying trainers and better horses, with that I'm sure we'll do even better."

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## RANDA BARAKAT

*Individual Silver medallist (Class A):*

On her win: "This is the best day of my life! I owe this to my wonderful private trainer Armelle Ruesche who motivated me so much. I feel absolutely great!"

On the dressage: "This is an achievement and the federation should concentrate on dressage a bit more. It has been an individual effort on individual expenses and we as riders need support for better horses."

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Aga Zohair ►

Firas Jeneidi ▼



▲ Carla Katoa

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## CARLA KATOA

*Dressage rider competing for Lebanon:*

On dressage: "Dressage is very important for the equestrian sport because riders seek perfection and precision which could be achieved through dressage as the basic work for any equestrian sport."

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▲ Inji Elhami

## INJI ELHAMY

*Individual Gold medallist (Class B) and Team Gold medallist:*

On her win: "I was waiting for the team to win, but individually?!! No!! The win was so unexpected."

On dressage: "I'm thrilled to see the first dressage event to be held during the Pan Arab Games. I hope the federation realises the need for this sport to further develop."

## MAHA ADEL

*Individual Bronze medallist (Class B):*

On her win: "It's a weird and unexpected feeling having won a medal!!!"

On dressage: "We don't have the greatest horses but we trained very hard for this event."