



KSA'S RAMZY AL DUHAMI AT THE 2008 OLYMPICS

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

THE VETERAN SHOW JUMPER OF THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA RAMZY AL DUHAMI REPRESENTED HIS COUNTRY FOR THE 4TH CONSECUTIVE OLYMPIC SHOW JUMPING GAMES WITH A GREAT RESULT OF FINISHING 22ND AT THE FINAL INDIVIDUAL ROUND OF THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS.

During the 1996 Atlanta, 2000 Sydney, and the 2004 Athens Olympics Ramzy competed as an individual and a team member, showing his best achievements so far during the Beijing games. Along with Ramzy, HRH Prince Abdulla bin Miteb Al Saoud, Kamal Bahamdan, and HRH Prince Faisal Al Shalan, the team finished 13th and are yet to achieve better results in further Olympics.

Born January 5th 1972 in Riyadh, Ramzy began riding at the age of 10 in his father's farm which eventually turned into a stable. Ramzy discovered his love for horses after first jumping with one of his fathers Arabian horses.

Ramzy's past training & achievements include:

Training

2006-2008 Stanny Van Paeschen Training & Equestrian Centre, Belgium

1998-2005 Nelson Pessoa Training & Equestrian Centre, Belgium

1994-1996 Paul Schockemöhle Training & Equestrian Centre, Germany

1990-1994 Berni Trures Training & Equestrian Centre, USA

Equestrian Achievements & Awards
2007 Pan Arab Games Egypt - gold medallist, bronze medallist

2006 World Equestrian Games - Aachen
2004 Athens Olympics

2002 World Equestrian Games - Jerez
2003 Pan Arab Games Algeria - gold medallist, bronze medallist

2000 Sydney Olympics
1999 Pan Arab Games Jordan - gold medallist, bronze medallist

1997 Pan Arab Games Lebanon - gold medallist, silver medallist
1996 Atlanta Olympics

1991 Asian Athlete of the year
1991 Amateur World Cup winner - California

1991 Pan Arab Games Syria - gold medallist, silver medallist

What was it like for you when you arrived in Hong Kong?

As it was my 4th Olympics I have to admit that I was excited to be there with my team but I certainly was not expecting to feel the excitement I did when I reached the finals. Of course to be at the Olympics is a great honour and so you can not but help be

proud of representing your country, and I am sure this applies to all riders.

What is required for preparing for the Olympics?

I would have to say that the first element is and always will be the HORSE. Once the horse is there you then devise a programme for that particular horse and rider. You also have to take into consideration the difference between preparing as an individual or as a team rider. Once you have your horse and programme you also have to think about your horse's and the riders' fitness. My advice will always be to give your self at least 2 years preparing for an event such as the Olympics or the World Equestrian Games.

How long did it take for you to prepare for the Olympics and achieve the results which you did?

Unfortunately in my case I only got the horse 'Allah Jabak' 2 months prior to the games due to my late selection as part of the team. This opportunity was only possible with the generosity of HRH Prince Abdulla bin Miteb who was not only kind enough to lend me his horse but also tried to familiarise me with some of the horse's jumping habits. As you know people train for years with their horses before such a prestigious event and so I was in a little bit of a disadvantage. However Prince Abdulla's support and my intense training with Olympic medallist Stanny van Paesschen, I had the confidence to go on and be part of Saudi Arabia's team.

On the same note, my results during the event were achievable because of the full support of all my team members and the moral support of the President of the federation HRH Prince Nawaf bin Faisal and the Vice President of the federation Prince Abdulla bin Fahad. They were with me every step of the way and their words of encouragement were inspirational to all the team.

What's missing between being an international rider residing and training in the Middle East and another international rider residing and training in Europe?

Of course Europeans have been experienced in this sport for much longer than Middle Eastern riders, and so their experience and discipline is far more advanced than ours. Hence a rider residing in Europe will probably have more opportunities in excelling his skills due to the availability of different trainers, the abundance of horses as well as shows. However I think the sport is excelling in such a grand level in the Middle East with



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regards to the riders; we are not far behind in our ability to compete with Europeans and the rest of the world. Especially with the constitution of the Arab League circuit which has helped in upping the level, not only the rider's level but the events themselves. This is evident with the Al Maktoum Challenge that started in the United Arab Emirates and was followed by the shows in Qatar such as the Global Champions Tour. I think the levels of these shows are of the highest standards, and it is this level of sport that will encourage our riders to excel to top levels.

What are the greatest challenges you face?

As I rider I think the challenges we face are never ending (smiling)! But it's a great feeling when you overcome any obstacle. For example in this sport the greatest challenge is always finding suitable horses for each rider. There are many great riders out there but as they say: "No Horse No Rider." I also believe that the relation between each horse and rider is so important that it creates the winning formula. These days I find myself looking at younger horses; firstly because of the continuous

rising prices of horses in general and secondly because of the joy that comes from building a relation with a younger horse who will evolve into a grand prix show jumper. This is what makes all the challenges and obstacles that one faces well worth the effort.

How would you personally develop show jumping in the Middle East?

I'm a firm believer in good training for all riders in all aspects of riding. My contribution would be in helping and developing the training of aspiring riders. I enjoy it and I feel I can learn from my students as well as them learning from my experiences. In the future I would also like to be part of organising show jumping events to develop furthermore the skills of our riders and the levels of our events.

How did it feel to qualify for the Individual Round?

Of course it was an honour and a privilege to be included in the final individual round especially since I honestly did not think I was going to get that far. I can only say it was because of the support that I had from my team mates, the federation, our Chef

D'equipe, my groom, and the whole management that was working with the Saudi team.

Do you have special plans for London 2012?

It's my love for horses and this sport that keeps me going. I'm sure every rider feels the same way, but I would love to have the opportunity to represent my country again in the London Olympics and before that the World Equestrian Games in Kentucky. My aim is to always be prepared as a rider or as part of the team management. If I have a horse you can be sure that I will be ready!

What can you tell us about the Saudi team?

I think our performance and our success in the past has shown our dedication and admiration for this sport. We are a team of brothers with the same goals to excel to the highest standards. My generation of riders and the new generation of young riders work closely to keep our standard of riding rising which is the formula to success. **HT**