

KARIM BADARO

A JUDGE... AND POPULAR

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

INTERNATIONAL SHOW JUMPING JUDGE KARIM BADARO IS ONE OF MANY ARABS WHO HAVE ATTAINED THE HIGHEST CLASSIFICATION OF JUDGING. POPULAR AMONGST HIS PEERS, A PEOPLE'S PERSON, AND KNOWN FOR HIS ATTRACTIVE SHOW COMMENTARY VOICE, BADARO GRADUATED AS INTERNATIONAL JUDGE IN 2003 WHEN HE CHOSE THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ARAB REGION TO CONTINUOUSLY OFFICIATE IN. FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, BADARO HAS BEEN A LEADING FIGURE IN JUDGING AND IS CERTAINLY A TREMENDOUS ASSET TO THE FEI.



Badaro was born in Lebanon where he began his riding career at the age of nine. A junior champion of Lebanon at eleven, he stopped riding at the onset of the Lebanon war in 1975, but then picked up his riding in 1990 when the war was over. Married to Tania who hates animals in general and horses in particular, the 49 year old is a father of 3 children, a based in Beirut trader in raw material, holds a Masters Degree in Developmental Economics, has been teaching Finance Courses for seven years at the American University of Beirut, and is the Regional Representative of the Internal Judges Club (Middle East and Arab countries).

Badaro started by mentioning, "Once I graduated as International Judge in 2003 I was asked which territories I would prefer to officiate in. My answer was the Middle East and the Arab region. It was a good choice especially that the Arab League (12 shows per season) kicked-off a year later. Normally, it is the Organising Committee of each show that extends invitations to

officials and it is the FEI that appoints Foreign Judges. I usually get two or three Foreign Judge assignments per season. In addition, I also get FEI odd assignments: FEI Olympic Games Assessing Delegate (2008), the All Africa Games (2007), etc...

Badaro continued, "One of the FEI pre-requirements for international judges is to have ridden at international levels. Not all judges have fulfilled this requisite! I took my first seminar for jumping judges in 1993 with world-renowned Course Director & Judge Switzerland's Hans Briscghi who dedicated a big part of his career to educate judges. The most recognisable names in European judging followed his courses back in the 80's. I then took an International lane in 2003 after having attended a seminar with Belgium's Francis Michielsens, who also happens to be the Chairman and founder of the 'International Judges Club'. In order to stay updated, all active international judges have to attend "refresher seminars"; I have



▲ Badaro & Switzerland's Clarissa Crotta at CSI***** Ghantout, Abu Dhabi 2010

already attended two; 2006 in Zurich and 2007 in Doha."

As a judge, Badaro shared his thoughts on the challenges he faces and whether or not there is room today for development in any of the existing rules of the FEI as we do know them, since there are some amendments that happen annually. "Judging shows is not an easy task; many variables are taken into account. It is not as reading the rules and applying them...it goes beyond this. The saying goes, "a judge has to judge". This is exactly what it has gotten down to. Situations have to be evaluated before appropriate decisions are taken. This is why we are not titled as "referees", but "judges". As for the existing rules, they are constantly under reviewing consequently showing the flexibility of the bodies governing our sport. It is only through practice and experience that a judge can see the broader picture and can foresee possible changes that benefit all performers of this sport: the riders, the horses, the

owners, the show and the spectators. Today, I am happy with the rules as they are written, however some refinement ought to be brought in. It is only through practice that a judge sees the need for such adaptations to modern show jumping."

Spoken about the development of the rules, Badaro added more on the status of judges in the Arab region, "The status of officials (Judges, Course Designers, and Stewards) has evolved with the recent development of the sport in our part of the world. The Arab League has done a great deal, as far as the level of riders, their horses and the level of competitions are concerned. Accordingly, the sport has reached a level of professionalism. Naturally, the status of Arab Officials has followed course. After having many generations of benevolent and very capable Arab Officials, who were there only for the love of the horse, we now have a generation of professional Arab Officials who are in close contact with the development of the sport and are always up to date. This adds a definite "plus" to the sport." 

▼ Badaro commenting at a show

