




McDonald's sponsor Sakakini in the 2004 Olympics

"We don't have a specific budget for it, the budget will be whatever Andre spends during this period" **Mohamed Mansour**, Vice President of Manfoods co.

 anfoods hosted a press conference on Sunday 7th of March, in McDonald's "Merghany" on the occasion of signing a contract with Andre Sakakini. They agreed to sponsor Sakakini in the upcoming Olympics held in Athens on August 2004. The key speakers were Andre Sakakini, Mohamed Mansour (Vice President of Manfoods Company), and Caroline Greiss, Senior Marketing Manager of McDonald's. The conference was attended by a lot of journalists and was covered by the Nile Sports satellite channel.

Asking Mansour on the budget they specified for this sponsoring plan he said; "We don't have a specific budget for it, the budget will be whatever Andre spends during this period".

Sakakini's program for the Olympics starts on April. He has a brief tour of competitions in some of the European countries. He is then planning to go directly back to Germany since his horses should be traveling on the 17th of August on the last plane with the Dutch team. It definitely takes a lot of work, money, and efforts to pass the qualifications and to earn your tickets to Athens- to the Olympic Games. Still, according to Sakakini "the problem is that, we can't promise you medals in horse back riding, because it is not in my hands alone, there is an animal involved. So you can come as far as the final day and things could change with the horse. Since we entered the qualifications and actually passed them, this obliges us to go, try, do our best and if everything goes well we could earn a medal".

This would be the forth time for Sakakini to participate in the Olympics. His main sponsors in this Olympics, beside Manfoods, will be the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and he is still negotiating a deal with another Italian company.

The Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr. Aley El Din Helal never hesitates to help horseback riders in Egypt. "In the last three years he did a lot for the equestrian community, he supported the talented young riders, and he helped me a lot too" Sakakini stated.

Sakakini owns thirteen horses in Germany; four of them are competing internationally, and are all representing Egypt. One of them "Casper" is owned by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Two of these horses, including Casper, were qualified for the Olympics. The Minister, Dr. Helal, was the one who gave Sakakini the funds required to buy Casper three years ago. After the problems Sakakini faced in the Olympics held in Sydney four years ago, he talked with Dr. Helal and convinced him to buy a young horse to be trained for this year's Olympics. Dr. Helal did not hesitate in helping him and they bought Casper for sixty thousand U.S dollars.

During the Olympics held in Sydney, Sakakini was sponsored by Sheikh Fahd Zahed from Saudi Arabia, who has been a lot of support for him. Unfortunately just before this Olympics started Sakakini faced a setback with the horse he was supposed to ride. And he entered the Olympics on a young horse called "Careful", who was only nine years old. Sakakini did not plan to win a medal in Sydney because he was professional enough to know that his horse was too young for this kind of competition. However, Sakakini and Careful went all the way to the finals but "the last round was extra hard for the horse, I don't mean Physically but Psychologically," Sakakini said.

As for the qualifications for this year's Olympics; Egypt sent a team to compete in these qualifications. It was composed of Sakakini, Karim Al-Zoghby, Sameh Hattab, and Alaa Maysara. They all entered as a team but unfortunately they didn't qualify. However, still Egypt was fortunate enough that Sakakini qualified individually. The other qualified riders were two from Saudi Arabia, one from Japan, and one from New Zealand. As for the teams, the qualified ones were from Korea, Japan, and New Zealand.

Sakakini believes that there is lot of very talented riders in Egypt; "They are all very good riders but the problem is that; they have a lot of outside burdens like their education and work, while show jumping is very time consuming," Sakakini stated. He also thinks that the Egyptian Equestrian Federation should develop a special office that works as a mediating body between the sponsors and riders. This office's main responsibility would be "marketing the sport" and helping the skilled riders get more funds and advance more.

Sakakini initially developed an interest in show jumping at the early age of 10 while still residing in his home country Egypt, and rapidly progressed to develop and perfect the skills of showmanship to participate in international shows by the age of 28. His latest achievements were winning second place in the Grand Prix of Spangenberg, Germany, and winning first place in the Grand Prix of



Mohamed Mansour, Vice President of Manfoods Egypt



Mohamed Mansour (Mimo), Vice President of Manfoods company, sole agent of McDonald's Egypt



Donaueschingen, Germany in the year 2000. We all wish him the best of luck in the upcoming Olympics.

We would also like to take this chance and thank Manfoods-McDonald's and Mr. Mohamed Mansour, for their most appreciated contribution to the Equestrian world in Egypt, signified in their sponsoring of Egypt's celebrated rider, Andre Sakakini.

Manfoods has a very influential role in the sports industry in Egypt. In the year 2003 they sponsored a lot of football tournaments, like the Gezira Sporting club tournament, and the Shooting club tournament during Ramadan, plus sponsoring Shooting club's junior football team. That's beside their agreement with the Egyptian Weight Lifting Federation to sponsor the Egyptian national Weight lifting team in the upcoming Olympics.

Furthermore, Mohamed Mansour, Manfood's Vice President, is also one of the important members of the Egyptian equestrian society. In show jumping, Mansour's latest accomplishments were winning third place in season 2001 - 2002 National Championship "C" class, and Fifth place in the 9th International Movenpick Championship. He is currently competing in the A2 and B classes, and he is qualified for the A2 national finals in April. Mansour also participated in a lot of international shows; to name a few: "Basel El-Asad" Horse Riding

Championship in Syria, and "Princess Alia" Championship in Jordan. Mansour felt very positive about Sakakini's achievements and expected that he would "perform very well" in the Olympics.

As for Sakakini's upcoming schedule in preparation for the Olympics; It includes the following tour: Manheim (May 1st), Aach (May 13th), Hamburg (May 20th), Wisbaden (May 28th), Rotterdam (June 16th), Hachenburg (July 1st), Reolefin (July 8th), Spangenberg (July 22nd), and Gera (July 29th).

Beside winning the trials of the Olympic qualifications in Aachen last year, Sakakini won approximately 30 competitions and tournaments sponsored by internationally acclaimed companies in Italy, France, England, Sweden, Belgium, and Germany ■

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Andre Sakakini

