

New Era for The Omani Equestrian Federation

By Gen. Samy Negm El Din



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The Omani Equestrian Federation is one of the earliest established federations in the Gulf as it joined the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) in 1985.

The early 80's witnessed a strong start and a very daring plan to establish show jumping and dressage disciplines in the country. The regulations were presided by HRH Al Sayed Shabib who is a legendary figure and is the uncle of his Majesty Sultan Qabous bin Saeed. Al Sayed Shabib created, developed and nursed the growth of this federation.

Show jumping was a very progressive activity during this period in Oman. Omani dominated all competitions in the Gulf during the 70's as they used to attend European training camps all through the summer and HRH Al Sayed Shabib brought horses in from Europe, contracted with European trainers and founded an equestrian centre in the Al Seeb called Al An'am, which was graded as one of the best 3 equestrian centres in the world. This centre is still functioning and is in very good shape due to good maintenance and continuous renovation. Dressage was popular and

practiced by military and police riders during that period as well, but it was not paid attention to even with the availability of some good dressage horses brought in from Europe.

Throughout the same time, the Royal Cavalry additionally established a massive equestrian centre on a very high and professional level which contained, besides the jumping and dressage facilities, one of the best race tracks ever and a riding school for ponies and children. The Royal Cavalry has the tradition of organising immense extraordinary exotic ceremonies on different occasions displaying all sporty activities related to horses and camels including dressage, driving, show jumping, musical rides and races. All those displays are performed in traditional costumes with children and young ladies taking playing distinguished roles.

HRH Al Sayed Shabib stepped down from the presidency of the federation when the camel activities joined and the federation was named 'Oman Equestrian and Camel Federation' in an unprecedented act to join the two activities of horses and camels together. Al Sayed Mohamed bin

Before we start speaking about equestrian activities in Oman, we should clearly state that it would have never been possible for any sport to flourish without the enormous personal & financial support of his majesty Sultan Qabous bin Saeed who spared no effort in contributing in and encouraging this noble sport.

Sultan Al Bouseidi, who was an ambassador and now Under Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, succeeded his uncle HRH Al Sayed Al Shabib. However, Al Bouseidi took responsibility for a few years only due to his full time job at the Ministry. Keeping both posts at the same time was inconvenient.

In 2002 and the following 3 years, HRH Al Sayed Asaad bin Tarek Al Saeed, personal representative of his Majesty Sultan Qabous bin Saeed, succeeded his uncle HRH Al Sayed Shabib and became the new president of the Oman Equestrian and Camel Federation. This period witnessed a big leap for the federation especially with regards to camel racing. Many successful races were organised and the budget of the federation grew immensely and the prize money for the camel races became more highly regarded. Horse riding however did not achieve the same growth. The flourishing renaissance did not include show jumping and other horse disciplines, as prize money was still considerably small, moreover resulting in the disappearance of the dressage discipline. Nevertheless, endurance was the new horse discipline that joined the federation with a very good start.

Unfortunately in 2005, the Federation underwent a great loss when HRH Al Sayed Asaad bin



HH Al Sayed Asaad bin Tarek Al Saeed

Tarek Al Saeed left its Presidency. He was once the commander of His Majesty's Armored Forces; a great sportsman, horse and camel lover, and one of the broadest minded true gentlemen I ever met.

Again, this same year witnessed another dramatic change for the federation; it joined its natural place for the first time since its establishment and became a part of the Ministry of Sport along with all the other sport federations. A new temporary committee was formed to run the federation presided by HRH Sheikh Rashaad bin Ahmed Al Hanaei, the Under Secretary of the Ministry of Sport.

It was the time for new blood from the Omani youth to take part in the new structure of the federation as HRH Loay bin Ghalib Al Saeed became the new acting Executive Director of this committee to take one of the most important steps for change. He is a show jumper as well as a very good endurance rider. He started riding when he was 10 years old, finished his university degree in Business Administration in Jordan

and attended numerous seminars and conferences related to the field all around the world. In brief, he is a highly educated and intellectual sportsman, from who a great deal is expected.

Speaking about Equestrian Activities in Oman is never complete without mentioning the enormous support and contribution to the sport from distinguished personalities; and to name one, Colonel Abdel Razzak Al Shahwarzy, commander of the Royal Cavalry, a top person on this list. He was a Board Member since the early start of the federation and is considered to be the most active official in the field; an admirable personality with great love for the sport.

In our next article, we will address other highly appreciated personalities and their important roles. Amongst them, Colonel Farouk Al Adawy, Mr. Mohamed Al Fayrouz and the FEI course designer Mr. Hamoud Al Touqi. Stay tuned. ■



Sayed Loay bin Ghalib Al Saeed receives the trophy as a winner



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