

SELECT INTERNATIONAL EQUESTRIAN SPONSORSHIP

PART 4: KARIM ABDELFATTAH

By Khaled Assem

IN HT'S SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH FOUR EGYPTIAN SHOW JUMPING RIDERS SPONSORED BY SPSS, WE CONTINUE WITH THE FOURTH RIDER, KARIM ABDELFATAH. SPSS EGYPT, AN IBM COMPANY AND A LEADING GLOBAL PROVIDER OF PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS SOFTWARE AND SOLUTIONS, STARTED SPONSORING LOCAL RIDERS IN 2009 AND HAS BEEN DOING SO EVER SINCE.

You are being sponsored by SPSS; what does it add to your training programme?

The agreement includes the provision of riding gear.

While being sponsored by SPSS,

how do you feel about social exposure?

I think yes. It is quite socially enriching and the idea of publicity is useful.

Why do you think you were chosen

to be sponsored by SPSS?

It's friendship as much as anything else. Riding is not only about results, it is also about behaviour; I could add value to the team and to Shady's vision. I have been riding in the A-Class for two years now and it



Abdelfattah riding Dina



could be that Shady possibly aimed at picking hard-working riders who invest in their training programmes, aspire to achieve results, and were able to prove themselves in such a short time.

What were some of your best results to date? Not necessarily big wins, but courses where you felt that you and the horses did very well?

The World Cup Qualifiers in Jordan two years ago was my first big win where I was placed 6th; this was one good moment for me in the sport. Also, during the 2012 CSI1*- Cairo HORSES & HOPES International Show Jumping Festival, the Big Tour was one of the biggest classes I had ridden and I was proud of my results as I only had one down.

What are your plans for the future?

Riding to me is an inspirational process that changes my life for the better. I would have loved to

achieve big results but it needs time and mileage. Of course I'd love to compete in Arab League events, however due to the ongoing horse ban I am unable to travel with my horses. I had planned two years ago that after I go to Germany with my horses, I would compete at the Arab League, however that has not materialised. Now I've sent my horses abroad through Jordan and they're currently in Belgium. I'm hoping that next year I'll be able to fulfil my initial plans regarding competition.

Tell us something about your family?

I have a seven-year-old daughter, Nazly, and two sons: Taymour who is five years old and Mansour who is two. They all adore horses and so does their mum Sherifa. I hope that my three little bundles of joy take on professional riding in the future.

Tell us about your breeding programme; is your programme

more a business or is it more for the love of the sport?

It's for the love of the sport; it wasn't a financial initiative at all. Sherifa loves horses and she wanted to breed them, so I got her two horses and she started from there. Having said that, now with horse prices abroad so high, I am planning to locally produce good horses for the future as currently I only have two young good ones. This will also be a great investment for the kids.

Do you feel that the sponsor is getting good response – and if not, what kind of improvements would you suggest?

To tell you the truth I had hoped that the idea would spread and more sponsors would appear. The idea of sponsorship is a great one for the sport and to develop it, more companies could potentially appear on the sponsorship scene, sponsor other teams and riders, and competition between them could



Abdelfattah's young ones, Nazly & Mansour



Mrs. Abdelfattah

take place. This could be progress of a different kind for the local industry.

What do you think of this year's season and what would you suggest to improve future ones?

Well, to be honest, this year's season did not show the dynamism we were looking forward to and I would like to see more progress with the sport even though I understand that Egypt is currently going through an unstable political and economic phase. However, the sport must continue and more international events should be organised. This year's season was as stagnant as that which took place two years ago; unfortunately, nothing was added to the sport this season.

Are you saying that the Egyptian Equestrian Federation (EEF) should give the private sector a chance to organise events?

Yes, this is what happened when SPSS started this sponsorship initiative. The EEF supported the concept and was going to organise two annual events for teams between companies that have a sponsorship programme. It was a great idea and

it was going to attract more people.

What would you like to say to young riders competing in C and D classes?

I would like to tell them that this sport is not like any other sport, it's you and the horse together. Enjoy it whether you win or lose. Be dedicated and stick to your plans

Would you advise people to go attend clinics abroad or get someone to train them here?

Both have to be done. In the past we had two Arab League events in Egypt; as such many international riders and trainers would be present. But once again, due to the ban, we have to try our best to travel, as persons not even as riders anymore, in order to gain basic exposure and experience. The world is advancing, however due to current circumstances we aren't.

What's your message for the management of El Gezira Club regarding equestrian sport?

It's an expensive sport and the rider has to be able to afford it to achieve

what he wants; so the club can't do anything about the rider's personal expenses, but they should provide more facilities. There was a plan before to develop and improve the place, and to make the riding arenas bigger to be able to hold international events and this should be carried out. There is some kind of progress but we still have a long way to go. 🙏

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