

THE PAN ARAB TOUR

BY
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCESS
HAYA BINT AL-HUSSEIN



Introduction:

Horses have taken me around the world, every corner of it, but I never knew why really...It was a stallion that made me realize after the Grand Prix in Fakra, what 17 years of hard work, tears and homesickness, friends made and lost, happiness and character building lessons was about. I thought the easiest way for you to understand is to know his story.

In Fakra, Lebanon I started the Grand Prix with a stallion that came into my team in late June. I had worked in

Europe for five years with a healthy team of nine horses, four of which were being fine tuned for the sole purpose of this Olympic Qualification. January 1999 my top horse was injured, by mid-February the second and third in line were injured.

May the fourth went. I was left with a team of young horses that I had put 3 to 4 years of work and patience into and could not sacrifice their progress for two minutes of a grand Prix for the Olympic honor. My sponsors told my trainer they would rent, lease buy or steal a horse but that we had to find one for the one event.

This stallion appeared within two weeks to go to our dead line, I was told to play with him for a few days before Paul would ask me to jump him. The moment I sat in the saddle I hated everything about his ride. Slow off my leg, he was so unresponsive to me trying to influence his stride that I felt like I had no control. He needed time in the

air for this big slow scopey jump. When I got the enormous jump he was comfortable with, he left his shoulder straight, and threw his back end in a way that was truly spectacular... Yet it took all my balance, strength, and flexibility to sit. I spent days with my head buried in my bit box and everyone else's bit collections to try and find one that would just give me a little control. Finally when Paul came to see him jump I had my analysis ready for him: I like to think that I can ride any horse, not just 'girl's horses', I like to think that given time I can turn them round my way and get a result. But this one I just can't, I need a place to start, I need just one thing going for me that I can build on, I can't find it. I can't bit him different, his mouth is soft his neck is like a bull.

I don't know but I just can't do this. Paul and Aidan (my groom) were standing there and they both agreed, was the stallion's history, his breeding, was the financial return my sponsor's needed. His mind and his heart were all I had going for me. 'You have to believe in me, you can make this work.'

I rode him in a national grand prix a week later, he finished 6th. The two small classes I rode before each time with a different bit, each time I came out of the ring saying the same thing, 'its not the size of the fences, they could be poles on the ground I have no control.





' Whatever way I got him to the fence he tried, which made me feel worse, I loved him for it. But I could not communicate with him on any level. My sixth place I had to fight so hard for I felt no happiness, no elation, I felt beaten up and demoralized. Monday morning I pulled the horses out to check them after the show, and I was itching after spending all night reliving in my mind the rounds to try something else...Lame, the vet came, and told me ten days the horse walks, you are looking at two and a half to three months to get him to a show again. I did not need a set back when I hated the ride anyway! So we waited, and waited I tried to spend all the time with him that I could and we did get him week by week fitter, soon he looked like a different horse than the one I had been given to ride in June. The Team decided that after the pressures of the Olympic Qualification year and we were about a month behind schedule to hit the top shows on our calendar for August, it was impossible for me not to go to the Pan Arab Games in Jordan. They all agreed I needed to do four or five small shows that I could just enjoy and get fresh, and I needed to get the stallion, and another horse that had been purchased by the sponsors that finally arrived five days before the horses were due to ship. My horse for the Pan Arabs was a seasoned old campaigner with Team Harmony, a speed horse. That was the team I shipped out

with, two basically new horses one old one. The stallion whom was this side of fit and I would work and it was make or break. It was a lonely place to be, especially when all my Arab colleagues were expecting this quiet approach, coupled with 5 years away meant that I had some miracle up my sleeve!

I trained the first two days before the games, and Lasangos felt like he always felt. I worked the horse everyday, felt a little step forward at the end of the hour, only to take two steps backwards the next day. Day before we left for Syria, I put up a course... and two hours later I broke down in tears when I could not figure out how to add a stride on one simple tiny distance. We went to Latakia and I said the horse has two shows if he does not work there, then I sit on him the last time in Fakra. We did jump the first class clear in Latakia. He dragged me into to two fences in the jump off, we finished forth but I was furious. I went check them in the morning and he had an eye the size of a tennis ball. He must have hit it in the stables overnight, whatever it had swollen shut he would not start again that show. By then I resigned myself, put him on a fitness program of beach exercise. I thought if I sell him, I sell him fit. I don't need to jump him again I know the outcome anyway. Fakra was his swan song.... No one said it but we all knew it. We arrived there and the weather made a big difference to the horse. The fitness work had paid off and I took a gamble in a bridle, I was sticking with it whatever.

I jumped him for the first time in the opening class. The horse went from power

to power, all of a sudden all the grueling days, the tears the fights, the cajoling all came together into this partnership I have never known the likes of before. When I compete though I never forget where I am or what is on the cards. Three days I rode the stallion in the ring, I forgot where I was, did not hear anything but the thunder of his hooves hitting the sand, and could not feel anything but awe and wonder at this power. It was like lightening off the ground and we just seemed to soar. I was sitting out side the stable yard after the Grand Prix, the show ground was buzzing. Everyone wanted to buy him, or breed from him, everyone said he was easy, you just have to sit and he jumps. We all looked at each other and smiled... We knew!

I turned to tell someone what it felt like, but how could I say it? What I wanted to say was that when I jumped those fences all that kept going through my mind was wonder, at this magnificent animal, at his power at his majesty. I wondered God for creating these magnificent creatures. I thanked God for giving me the honor



HRH PRINCESS HAYA BINT AL HUSSEIN RIDING CERA

of riding him, of letting me for those few minutes feel totally as one with him. I thought my instructions literally and he responded to the slightest tilt of my body, I felt him prepare for a turn as I turned my head over the fence without even giving him the aids. I forgot everything but that feeling that our two hearts for two minutes beat as one and we spoke the same language.

It was such a simple profound joy I wanted to share it, I couldn't

really turn to anyone except my groom and just say,' I am happy to be alive.' He was nearly in tears ' me too, I felt everything that you did when I watched it, '

I cannot justify that feeling in words I cannot give it or share it but I can say that I think everyone must feel their own version of it when they work with horses. When everyone I met said to me.... You have to help, you have to share what you have learned, you have to debate, argue change this and that.' I kept asking myself, 'Why? I am not indebted to anyone, beholden to anyone, or need to go through all this bureaucratic aggravation. What reason on earth do I have for putting myself through all this hassle?'

However sitting outside that stables and letting go of three weeks of that constant companion called 'doubt' I knew why, if I could give this joy to just one other person from my region it would all be worth it. I spent the following weeks thinking, how?! This article is the outcome. I know enough to tell you that, I don't know much at all in the end. My ideas are as good as the next person you are going to ask.

And above all what I realized when I poured my heart out on paper is that you cannot divorce the past from the present, one part of our sport from the next. It will work one way, and one way only.... If you can accept that one simple point from me I am happy that I need do no more. We all have to work together, all our branches, all our disciplines, all our federations, in all our countries. I mean deeds, not eulogies on Arab Brotherhood, I am afraid we are at that stage already....

The article gives my perspective of the past in the administrative, jumps from what I saw in the three shows to a vision I have for the future. Its all a skeleton of ideas, it all asks for your input, its supposed to provoke your reaction, when we can all throw enough good intent in the air we will get the answers. I can't give them but I think I know enough to push in certain directions. Start with team work, it's the essence of mans involvement with horses, it what they ask of us. Let that be the foundation.



PRINCESS HAYA BINT AL HUSSEIN WITH SHIFAA'



Administrative:

The Middle East falls into FEI Group VII, as recently as the FEI General Assembly in Berlin 1992, the Group was fondly known as the 'trash can' of the International body...it was compromised of the largest amount of National Federations with the least activities. During the Group sessions in 1992 it was agreed that the group should be divided in three ways, into geographically adjacent landmasses. Three subgroups were created. Sub Groups A and B were North and South Africa respectively and Sub-Group C was Arabia, Cyprus, India, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.

It is important to add at this juncture that the lack of activity in this area was still due to one very specific problem, and it was not laziness or lack of enthusiasm. It was practically solely due to African Horse Disease. The ideologies and politics of this fly that that remained adherent to the borders of specific nations and not others that were climatically identical remained an enigma to me and many that I discussed it with. However confusing this concern was its practicalities were clear. We had a handful of countries that were labeled clean all geographically separated by a nation that

w a s 'infected'. The only way to transport horses legally

through an infected area was by plane. How to create a circuit when you had to book a plane, for 4 horses? Some had it, some did not, those who had it really had it more on paper. And it took all I possessed both in charm, cajoling, and eventually threats of quite an extreme nature to persuade those who believed that to fill out the forms, and process the necessary paper work stating that they were 'clean'.... Meant writing to old colonial powers to become 'accepted'. More minor, but prevalent was politics, shows would be planned then competitors who were more often than not friends between themselves would be prevented from competing. Stress levels ran high in run-ups to international

when 8 countries agreed to turn up and 6 cancelled last minute.

The third factor was communication delays in post box pickup, and federations being run on a part-time basis was also a little to do with politics, it was a kind of; optional we are open to business if there is a thing we are interested in doing. But chase a n o t h e r federation to follow up on an u n p l e a s a n t issue, avoiding communication seemed a far more tactful way of turning one down, rather than taking on the issue. For those of us who were trying to ride and support our federations it was tough, in retrospect I can almost understand the policy of selective communication seeing as in those days most of the Arab federations were run by leading quite political figures and not even horses managed to bridge those

gaps at those t i m e s . It was Prince Faisal of Saudi Arabia who b e c a m e

More minor, but prevalent was politics

Group VII leader at that time, who created the sub groups on the advise of his predecessor and the first Arab member of the bureau Saad Khalifa who remained the father of the group in nearly every way, his long history in the sport helped the group steer through not only the political hiccups from within ever promoting the fact that for the sake of the horse we should rise above our problems. But also steering all the members through the intricacies of a stamping ground he knew better than even most of the European delegates, FEI politics. And whether you care to believe it or not I was amazed at the time to come to realize that no matter how complicated the Arab Israeli issue was...

FEI politics seemed to beat that by miles! So for those two men the subgroup idea flew and flew fast. It worked well in elevating the issues that I mentioned in one specific way, the smaller land masses to work with made a solution to the African Horse disease

'conceivable'. A number of countries did gain the status in a very short period of time. The smaller number of countries created a kind of familiarity that superceded national international frictions in many cases,

and overcame even the postman. In their meetings they were also bound by a common tongue, which made the shy members of the group quite verbal indeed, and the initial Bureau worry that the additional five non Arab members of the subgroup would be ostracized was overcome with genuine Arab hospitality and all the necessary flare!

In the year of its conception there was one event that took place in the Arab nations at a level they were comfortable at, CSA Latakia, Syria. There were a number of other events in well-established equestrian nations that were invitational events catering mostly for international riders from Europe. (Egypt, Morocco, Libya.) After the GA in Berlin, the Sub Group organized as its first event a fruitful veterinary meeting in Cyprus to discuss the issue of the movement of horses across borders, In 1993 there were two general assemblies organized that involved the Pan Arab federation members and the FEI representatives in the region. ... In 1993 the number of international events went from the 4 above-mentioned to seven additional International Horse Shows!



The FEI General Assembly in Tampa, Florida was one of the saddest times in my equestrian career. Firstly Cyprus was moved from Group VII to Group II (with Europe and Israel). Undoubtedly a great transfer for the Cypriots, but for me they had been an unbelievably dynamic nation working with very little and making from it so very much.

They crowned this transfer in style when they qualified one rider Antonis Michael Petris for the world cup finals 1995. His father Michael Petris, is one of the vets in the subgroup who had been the greatest moving force in the eradication program of the disease. Then, to make matters worse, having seen how well the subgroup idea had worked the further subdivision of the subgroups was lobbied. Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya, next Jordan Syria and Lebanon. And the last subdivision was the gulf all grouped together.



However the motion was passed and at loss for what to do next I turned to Saad Khalifa. What we had achieved was only done so because the stronger countries had carried the weaker ones for advise and what he said that day was to change my life and give me some of the happiest times I ever had since then, "Why don't you just ride, not in the Middle East as you have been, but go to Europe. You have an Olympic dream, what is stopping you?"

That was my last day in equestrian politics, there was a gradual decline in events, and until this Pan Arab Year we were back to 3 international shows in the region.

A number of other positive things did happen though. Prince Faisal commissioned the most beautiful series of books that celebrates the history of the region and its involvement with horses. Its called 'Al Furusia' it shows photos and texts that date as far back as the Hittites... He sent his books and an exhibit around the world and educated many whom looked upon the region as basically ignorant. The movement to sanitize the area continued, and there are now only

Urgently needed ! !

This whole article could actually be summarized into one very simple sentence.... Sorry to put you all through this painful reading but (!) all the Arab world really needs is shows! The rest of this is all subjective supportive debate to this fact. No more and no less at all. Not random shows but a circuit that suits all the Arab countries which in fact is something that no matter how much we all enjoy arguing and debating has to be in the end dictated by the climate. Quite simply the question is to start firstly a permanent outdoor circuit because there are actually very few good indoors in the area, on top of which the rhythm that a rider needs to ride indoors is actually very different from your outdoor rhythm, and while we still are undecided which course builders are our favorites it is actually much more difficult to cause riders serious problems outdoors in a larger space. My idea is so as to avoid running before you can walk and build on the things we have.

So if there is simply an outdoor circuit that

one country to create a serious championship, but regionally we would.

From my point of view it would create a very important asset, it would also allow people in our region to go in the show ring and for the primary objective to be that the horse jumps nicely and not for them to win, going full speed at suicidal rates...learning how to produce a horse and manage it is the objective of horsemanship, and if we can teach that in a very subtle, indirect way, create that psychological mindset, that would be one of the biggest steps forward that this region could take. To take this heroic, idiotic frightening approach away from riders ethics and teach them that allowing the horse to best express himself in the way he performs is the ultimate is the biggest battle. I can't see any other way of telling kids that their approach just is not cool... except for taking the pressure off them and putting the spotlight on the horse. Also you create a very important market, buying and selling horses is a lot different when you have a label, to the package. Even if one or two good horses were produced in the region and got out to Europe word travels really fast, believe me. The gold diggers would be here in no time, and when you can say "This is the Arab 5 year old champion" it's about 5 zero's different to your price!

The spring is obviously a low time for crowds but the idea is that for a breeding event and one that focuses on the sport horse you are catering for the enthusiasts anyway, why push hard to get the crowds?

If you could aim to get two or three years into the event the major European dealers and breeders and all of the Arabs it a real big step forward, spring is also the European dead season and it would be ideal. Europe is in front of the equestrian world because it offers such a huge amount of equestrian events, and actually to be realistic, in all of our lifetimes that is not going to change. But on another note the Europeans are also in front because they have the market. Americans, Mexicans, Arabs, everyone goes there to buy horses...

The sellers hold the cards if you are not beholden to the dealer you are buying from himself, you are beholden to the agent, or the 'friend' who for 10% or a favor somewhere down the road who will give you some totally irrelevant advice that makes you decide yay or nay. We can do that too. No I am not kidding you in two years we will not be a Holland or a Germany producing sport horses in the thousands. I see countless good horses in Europe every day in my workplace, but I noticed that no Arab has ever asked me "How many bad horses do you see?" If they did they would be surprised to know I see as many bad horses per capita as I have here in the Arab world for sure.

What the premeditated production of the sport horse would do is simply this, breed a kind of respect that so far is non-existent here, and the most important to me as an Arab is it would primarily breed self respect and conviction in ones own knowledge.



a select few nations that have not gained the status, disease free. Many of the really enthusiastic riders who saw no future in their own region moved to Europe, to train and ride and through solid, reasonable investments started to eat away at the 'Arabs can only buy success' reputation. The Saudi's based a team that competed in the Atlanta Olympic Games, and they were shadowed by this reputation when they against all odds did so well there. They beat the reputation by moving around from Germany to France, now Belgium and notching up results in their wake. The Emirates based in France, again invested well in horses, Oman, Jordan.. What I mean by invested well, is that for reasonable prices they traveled around and found good to excellent horses that is not easy at all. I was talking to one of the most famous dealers recently about the progress and he said "you know, money can buy those horses, but your people know them, that's just horsemanship, you don't find that often." And its true, 'our people are showing the world that horsemanship is not a distant memory of the past, it was a sleeping monster, and now its moving.

could start out by running a sunshine circuit in the gulf countries, as far north as Egypt, for 8 weeks. And run months in the cooler climates of Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon... One could even consider long term looking at a special spring run of shows for say 'star spotters' looking for exceptional young horses that could be a three or four week exhibitional title type competition. An idea that I have always been amazed by is the German young horse championships. It basically runs a qualification system that marks horses all through the summer season of style and way of jumping.

Of course the only people who are interested in watching these competitions are real horse enthusiasts and breeders.. So they always take place at totally unreasonable hours of the morning, all season, and the horses are separated by their respective age groups. Then in the end of the season comes the show piece the championships itself. Out of this you get a three, four five and six-year-old German champion. I am offering this idea as a regional competition for a simple reason, we do not have enough age groups in



VIEW OF THE

FACILITIES

Jordan:

The facility in Jordan is brand new. Actually, from the point of view of the Games that was half the problem, there were magnificent stables 4x4 m, in a well ventilated cement block, in a large horse shoe shape. All separated by a service area for each set of ten stables, with tack rooms and feed rooms. Electricity sockets every second box.

Wash boxes included. Showers and bathrooms for the grooms and riders, and an administrative area. The recent birth of the facility (completion date 11 days before the start of the games. I was that usage quickly illuminated the drawbacks and weaknesses. Unmistakably unacceptable was the ground. The first team in pointed it out, but as the Amman municipality worked around the clock for 4 days and ripped the ground up and replaced it 6 times because every other person had a new idea.... We did end up with an acceptable surface that was unfortunately far from great. The problem being that the sand we have abundantly is just too fine, it lacks some sort of a cohesive agent, that if watered would somehow hold it. What we have slides when the horses take off and rolls away as they land. It was hard to walk in, and if I had not been under so much pressure at the time, I would have laughed with my sister's at the picture of all these Arab riders wandering around the ring with Jordanian stewards and engineers keen to listen and try and understand this weird breed of people who called themselves riders... who were all slipping sliding and stomping around the rings, jumping in the air and trying to demonstrate how horses take off and land. I was actually surprised that the municipality, and the major took this all so seriously, not only that but that they turned up and watched the event, cheered for all their ground experts!

The location was picturesque, in the heart of the city of Amman. The plans were on the books for 15 years now, but it is due to the Federation and its President Princess Alia who finally secured it from the various other 'serious' sports who kept eating little bits away over the years.

STADIUM

I am a fan of consistency though, and the good part was the events ran together all the time, and there was cheering all the time. Actually I did not really notice it the second day! The main thing that I would change is the drainage in the stables, I actually saw the same system in Syria, so I am guessing it comes out of some book like 'ten best ways to build a stables'. But there are these open grid drains that are about 20 cm wide that run directly outside each stable door the full way around the yard.



VIEW OF THE STADIUM - LATAKIA 1999

If you follow it its tunneled underground to the sewage down the hill into the main lines. The idea is that any liquids passed by the horses run out of the stables into the drains, out to the main system. Reality dictates though that contractor's should get rid of the book! Any liquids passed by the horses stay in the wet shavings and are removed by the grooms, as they usually are. But what does go into the drains and blocks them creating this frightening still, stagnant, stinking water are the shavings! Easy to fix though, and they did not ever get to the stinking stage but they would have... Block the drains up, as in cover them completely with cement, and have a closed muck heap, at the rear end of the stable yard where the refuse can be collected and does make excellent agricultural fertilizer, in fact in Europe they even go so far as selling it.

If I had three wishes from a genie in a magic lantern I would have said, build me a car park that facilitates the Olympic pool and the Equestrian center on the right hand side of the facility if you stand with your back to the stables. Directly in front of the stadium build me an indoor arena that's 35mx70m including seating for 6,000 people, so we could run our own indoor shows and create a Middle Eastern World Cup League. Extend the seating all around the stadium, as a higher more enclosed entity, that would help block sound and create much more atmosphere and character to the ring itself. And leave room on the long side behind the royal box for underneath administrative offices. And a play area for those children that come with their parents to the shows and love to do things that make your heart stop like, 'lets touch that horsey when you are passing them at full gallop... or scream because you hit a fence, or scream because you did not but they are bored. I don't always blame them, horse shows are boring, but hopefully if they can have fun there they will drag their parents along more often! And this was a generous genie.

Syria:

I took great pleasure in watching the mouths of my German trainer and my groom drop open in awe when they saw the stadium in Syria. It is certainly impressive, and it is an asset to our sport. It is a football stadium that they use for the event, I was told when pushed they seat 45,000 people. Six years ago when Major Basil Al Asad was riding there I remember the stadium being pretty much full, there were a good thirty thousand people at a conservative guess. This year we managed 10,000 for the main event. Besides Aachen and Dublin that is probably one of the most awe inspiring rings I have ever ridden in my career the way that the stadium and public tower over you as you perform makes you feel really very insignificant. It is not a place to take a spooky green horse at all. The nice thing is that they do have a multipurpose athletics track around the football pitch at minimum viewing distance, the crowd is close as they can be to the sport itself,



VIEW OF THE LATAKIA COAST



and horses and riders do not get lost while performing in that ring. The course builder an Italian ***** managed to be build related distances and nice courses in the ring without getting lost by its size. He also used the whole ring in a way that was a nice consideration of space without having courses that felt like marathons to ride.

In all three countries I would criticize the use of fence material, which was basically plain standards with advertising boards and flowers in all three shows. No real special picturesque or cultural fences.

The warm up was a little on the hard side and in both Jordan and Syria there were these watering systems that were actually very dangerous. They look like these little flying saucers that sit randomly in the ground and you don't know they are in your way unless you are about to be or are on top of one. Either way it unpleasant for the horse, if you see it in time, you don't need to send for the horse dentist for a while as you practically rip the horses molars out to avoid them, or else you step on one wrong and get an injury. I think that we should just remember to cover them over.

The stable is a good kilometer from the ring in Syria, and since I competed there last they built a very modern new stable area, which is altogether cooler, better aired, and an organized structure to look at. With a large wash area, and good 3x4m boxes. They created their own sliding door system, with local materials that was very functional, safe for the horses, and would be cheap to duplicate. It didn't look at all cheap, or function cheaply until you really study the materials and look at the design. It would market well in Europe if they patented it!

The show ran four weeks later than its usual calendar date due to the Pan Arab Games. I was worried about the humidity that I remember well from years past, but those four weeks made a big difference. The climate was good to ride, and with a little extra care and notice to the fluid intake of the horses I saw no marked difference in their performance at all.

Lebanon:

I never in my whole life saw use and cohabitation of nature and landscape combined with human design as I did until I saw this facility. The rock formation in the hills around Fakra is practically comparable to stagnates and stalagmites that grow in caves from the ceiling down as systoles. Except these rocks grew from the ground up in huge closely coupled formations. It was beautiful and very rugged landscape, if someone where to take me up there with no buildings in sight, I would have thought

that man could never carve or build in these mountains. So raw and so stunning. However the Lebanese did, they created an area of chalets a hotel, and the riding facility and I understand that they are completing golf courses and other resort facilities. In complete contradiction with the landscape in a way that was truly charming their facility is neat, tidy, compact and very very civilized. There is everywhere you look from the outskirts of the bring that are made up from the cut away piles rock totally symmetrically laid, but totally in character with the scenery. To the ring the nestles into the mountain side, to the tiers that on one level have the warm up ring and the next two levels have pine and cement stables there is total undevoted attention to detail. So much so that I could hardly manage to study it all, and could not hope to do justice to it in words. The facility matches any and every international specification and would honor any rider to ride there. The climate is fantastically fresh, verging on cold they told me 4 weeks after the show the area would close and horses moved down to Beirut because the snow would claim it. Indeed the fog threatened rain, and I was not the only one who frowned from the saddle and glanced at the sky, but we got none.

Judges and stewards walked around pulling out highly obscure rules that really were not relevant to anything at all, but just gave them something to say. While at the same time they ignored basic safety like having 20 people who really had nothing special to do but interfere in the warm arena and alternately either nearly got kicked or run over by riders, and amazingly still were not more careful.

There was also this attitude that really was un stomachable were administrators ran around with their FEI rulebooks and whipped them out as soon as you greeted them. Every sentence began with, "According to article.... YOU CANNOT..." I am used to it, but I found it the hardest thing to come back to after Europe, my trainer made me laugh though when he looked at me in our last show and sighed, "I just cannot figure it out, **THERE IS NO SPORT HERE.**

THERE IS NO SPORT! There are less than 16 horses in the big class, why do they keep throwing out rules, these shows can't even be classified as International. Are you guys trying to make a sport or kill it?" He is right, so right its not funny. So many people are just caught up in their own self-importance walking

around, surgically attached to the FEI Rules and Regulations, it was scary. They change the category of the show itself, in order to find another rule that suits them better at the time. I think it's clever actually, in Europe they would probably be less imaginative and say something uncouth like its cheating. There was such a thin line though it was hard to separate all the time. I think that there is one really important sentence in that book, it says "translate the above mentioned rules in a sporting manner."

The thing is we have got to build the sport before we

throw the rules around, I am sorry that is the only way I can say it. Again, not I or any other expert can help the region unless that is faced. If we can't see where we are then we can't take any step forward.

If you were a professional trying to do your job, it was grueling, hard, and very unpleasant.

I humbly suggest that the Arab countries invest in marketing companies like BCM or SEPA, to organize one or two or three years worth of events, riders have to train but organizing committees too. Its actually in the organizers interest to invite an unbiased third party to do that job for a while so that they can learn, and they unpopular job of saying to complaining delegation heads that they should just , "Shut up and enjoy the show..." as well as just professionalize the whole event and more importantly prioritize changes, so that its not such a big daunting mess, but we have achievable, progressive goals.



SUMMARY

All three facilities matched international specifications.

None of the three facilities organized their events up to international specifications. All three had their charming Arab hospitality, and if any rider had asked for dove's milk the organizing committees would have bent over backwards to provide it.

None of the facilities had one or more serious or even half-serious professionals running their show. It's not a personal criticism at all, just an observation.

All three had hours of technical meetings that involved discussions over the most irrelevant issues, classes did not start on time, start lists appeared or did not at all only moments before the classes.