

WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES

September 30 - October 11, 1998
Rome - ITALY



By SIMA FARES

Brasilian Show Jumping veteran RODRIGO PESSOA did it again.

At 26, he conquered the World Equestrian Games title - an award his father never acquired, shortly after winning the Volvo World Cup series earlier this year.



This year's show involved 1,000 staff members, 88 show jumping fences, 700 riders, 400 competitors, 33 medals, 18,000 stadium seats and 5 World Team titles and 6 World Individual titles to be won. The Championships included show jumping, dressage, three-day eventing, driving and vaulting. Show jumping took place from October 6th until October 11th. The first day consisted of a training



session with eight obstacles to jump. The next day was the First Championship Class for teams and individuals, fences put up at 1.50m and no jump off. October 8th was the Second Championship Class, team final and second individual competition. Fences were 1.60m and there were two rounds to jump; the first round was open to all competitors and the second round for the best ten placed teams in the first round. The next day was a rest day, followed by the Third individual competition, which consisted of jumping two courses at 1.60m. Finally, on October 11th, was the Fourth and final class for the four best individual competitors. Each competitor jumps the course with each of the four horses at a height of 1.50m and maximum spread of 1.80m.

" Brasilian Rodrigo Pessoa won the Gold medal riding Gandini Lianos, Frenchman Thierry Pommel the Silver on Thor des Chaines and German Franke Sloothaak the Bronze on San Patrignano Joly "

Rodrigo Pessoa:

About his horse "I got my horse at the beginning of this year. I started the horse in January and did some Grand Prix. To this championship my horse returned in great form with more experience. I had some help from Jos Lansik, the former rider."

Preparation "I watched the other horses on videotape to see if I could find out something. Three minutes isn't a lot of time to learn about a horse (Each of the riders was given 3 minutes to school the other riders' horses.)"

Victory (when Thierry Pommel dropped a rail) "I let go of everything inside. It is a long time that you work for this. Everything was very quick. My life was flashing by. It was only then that I realised what I had done. All the hard work to get there. Only someone who has been there

knows the feeling. Eric Navet (winner in Stockholm 1990) said he knew what I was feeling. Before this, I was watching everything and hoping I could one day be in the final. The most important thing is to always try your best. But even if I had been 2nd, 3rd or 4th I knew I tried my best all week."



Father to son

"My father never had a chance to win this title. Everything came much easier for me: the horses, the teaching and so on. At his time, he had no horses, no teacher. Also, that we ride better horses than he did then, back in the old days. It is not because I ride better. I got from my father all the experience. He went through a lot of difficulties and we can learn not to make the same mistakes. I tried to use everything I've learned over the years and put it into the horses I was riding."

Success secrets "In this sport there are no secrets. It's been in the book for hundred of years. You have to stay with the techniques. Now I just want to keep learning and accepting that I'm not good enough."

Andre Sakakini:

About his horse "I got my horse Eastern Night, an 11-year-old Belgian gelding about a year ago from my sponsor Shiekh Fahd Zahed, to prepare him for this event. I competed in various summer outdoor competitions to keep him fit and be ready for Rome."

Preparation "The atmosphere of such an event is very different than any other. To be able to compete in such a competition you need constant psychological support from your trainer and teammates. Being my own soul mate and mentor, I never let that put me off."

The Competition "I had one fence down the first day, and was satisfied with my position so far. Another 12 and 8 faults followed consecutively the next day as well as the water jump, which was the real turning point. It was fatal. My horse jumped right in the middle of it. However, I am pleased with the overall results. From there on I will resume preparation for the Olympics 2000."

About Rome "The Italians organised the event magnificently. The stadium was well organized and they marveled at creating a most welcoming and cozy atmosphere. The event was a real success. No rider or horse were injured during that time, as the courses designed were fair to both horse and rider."

About Rodrigo's success "When I first when to train with Nelson Pessoa, Rodrigo was still riding ponies and competing at a much lesser level. I watched him excel and ride his way to the World Championships. Besides being a close friend of mine, Rodrigo rode like a real champion and deserved to win."

Advice to Egyptian riders

"The level of riding has tremendously advanced in Egypt, but good, effective and professional training is needed. Even though riders have begun to travel and compete abroad, trainers are still needed at home to help and guide the riders. Also, you have to be able to ride well before you think about buying a top quality horse."

