

HORSE TIMES



no. 41

SPRING 2013

THE LEADING EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



HH PRINCE FAISAL AL SHALAN
DISCIPLINE,
HARD WORK & TAWFEEQ

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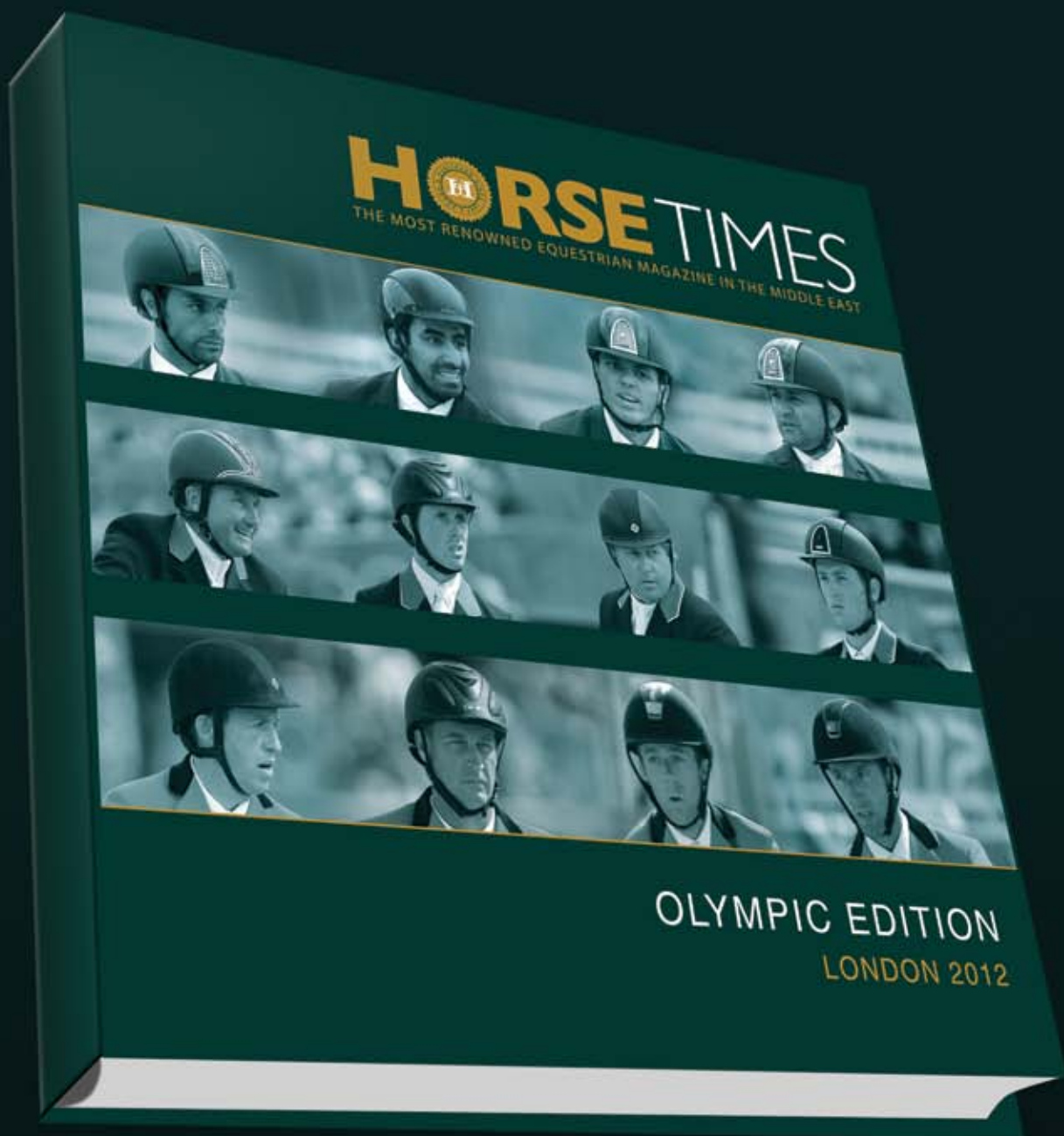

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VIEW POINT

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

do. Diversity has become an integral element in that formula of success, in other words, the co-operation between different countries whether on a national, a team, or individual level has become essential to develop and progress horse sport.

On that note of progress and co-operative diversity, CHI Al Shaqab was an outstanding event by all means, hosting local, regional and international competitors, including several Olympians, so 'hats off' for Qatar. While attending CHI Al Shaqab I met with Luciana Diniz and upon seeing one of her pictures with As Taro, I remembered that I saw that horse two years ago in Verona and just couldn't resist interviewing her about him and more about her philosophy in life.

Our next stop was Dubai, first, for the Dubai Polo Gold Cup and a few words from the mighty Facundo Sola of the winning Ghantoot Polo Team, and then to the Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship & Fair, showcasing heritage, beauty and hard core horse trading.

From Bahrain, we catch up with an old friend. Several years back, I was competing in a Grand Prix in Aqaba and made friends with a young gentleman called Haidar Al Zu'bi, who has since become a true celeb in the Arab horse world. Read the story behind his ascent as a show jumping and endurance judge.

In a thematic change of focus, we include three articles which highlight the horses themselves, the stars of the horse world and some unique breeds with a piece on the golden Akhal-Teke, one on the feisty Camargue horses of Provence, and the horse stars of the GCT, who tell us their side of the story 'in their own words'... and from Lebanon, we feature Carla Kattouah in our regular '60 Seconds' fun-themed piece. On the technical side, I offer training tips for understanding seat and balance and Davina Ray explains in a very helpful account the use of psychology for harnessing the power of the mind in competitive equestrian sport.

Finally, content delivery. In order to offer our readers easy and early access to more information, photos, interviews, and back-story news, we are ramping up our website. Coming soon you can check our website for an online flip preview of our London 2012 Olympic Edition, as well as opening page banners to see more photos from CHI Al Shaqab and the Dubai Polo Gold Cup, and more. Again, we hope that you enjoy this very diverse and robust issue.

Sincerely, **Khaled Assem**

Dear Readers,

In this issue we highlight HH Prince Faisal Al Shalan, one of the prominent faces in the horse world who represents the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; behind this particular face, however, there is a huge story of changes which are taking place in the equestrian world in general and in the Middle East in particular. Following a new sponsorship deal between the FEI and the Saudi Equestrian Fund, the Jumping Nations Cup was renamed and will now be known as the 'Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup Jumping' [Furusiyya is the Arabic word for 'horsemanship']. Under the new rules, the world has been divided into six regions for the purpose of qualifying teams for a world Final. Arab nations never had qualifying teams before, however now.....they officially

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Publisher:

Permanent Press Ltd.
Nicosia, Cyprus

Prepress & Printing:

Headline Printing & Design

On the cover photo:

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HH PRINCE FAISAL AL SHALAN

DISCIPLINE, HARD WORK & TAWFEEQ

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

COUNTRY: SAUDI ARABIA

DATE OF BIRTH: JULY 14 1987

PROFESSION: SHOW JUMPING RIDER, TEAM MEMBER OF SAUDI EQUESTRIAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR AT SAUDI ELECTRONIC COMPANY & C.F.O AT SANA CAPITAL GROUP

ONE OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED AND ELOQUENT TEAM MEMBERS OF SAUDI EQUESTRIAN IS HH PRINCE FAISAL AL SHALAN. GROWING UP WITH THE PRESSURES OF HIS EARLIEST RIDING EXPERIENCES, HE CAME TO WHOLLY EMBRACE AND EXCEL IN THE SPORT OF SHOW JUMPING, WINNING MAJOR INTERNATIONAL TITLES AS WELL AS QUALIFICATIONS TO REPRESENT THE KINGDOM IN TWO OLYMPIC GAMES. A BUSINESSMAN AND A PRINCE, HE IS CONTEMPORARY AND OUTSPOKEN IN HIS OWN STYLE, YET DISPLAYS NOTHING BUT HUMILITY AND DIGNIFIED CONDUCT IN ALL OF HIS DEALINGS. HT SPOKE WITH HIM ABOUT HIS EARLY DAYS, HIS WINS, HIS HORSES, AND HIS ADVICE. HERE IS WHAT HE HAD TO SAY.





With Talan at the stables



Many of us know the story of your first show jumping mount as a youngster, the white English pony Snowdrop. Was that when you caught the ‘horse bug’?

I’ve had previous pony club experiences, but the first show jumping horse I had was Snowdrop and she’s the mare that won with me, so yes. Once you start winning you don’t want to stop, I guess I’m a competitive person.

In your formative riding years, who would you credit most for your development and passion for riding?

I grew up in very loving and passionate family. My dad and uncle are identical twins, so I grew up with two fathers that are the most important and influential people in my life. I’ve learned everything from them and am still learning every day. They

were loving yet tough on me. They trained me as a junior and helped me get introduced to good trainers as a child.

What were some of your early successes in the jumping arena? Which early wins do you treasure most?

I remember winning my first international Children’s World Championships in Abu Dhabi in 1999; that was an eye opener for me as a 12-year-old and for many in the Saudi Federation. Another special year was 2005 when I won two gold medals in the Islamic World Games and boosted Saudi Arabia’s medal count to first place in all sports. Other wins I treasure include:

- 2011 Pan Arab Games, Doha: team gold medal and individual bronze in on Aphrodite van het Texelhof.

- 2008 Beijing Olympic Games: 13th as a team and 58th as an individual on Wido.

- 2007 Pan Arab Games, Cairo: team gold medal and 6th as an individual on Torax.

- 2006 World Equestrian Games, Aachen: 70th as an individual on Uthago. I was the youngest rider to ever compete at the event.

- 2006 World Cup Arab League Standings: 2nd place and helped the Saudi Equestrian team qualify for the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

- 2005 Islamic Games, Mecca: 2 individual gold medals.

- 2005 National Champion of Saudi Arabia

On to the Olympics, we take this opportunity to warmly congratulate

the Saudi Equestrian team on its show jumping team bronze medal win in London 2012. What a stunning achievement! How did it feel to watch your team mates compete even though you had qualified to compete with them?

I was very proud of my team; seeing them reach this level of horsemanship and riding was truly historic. And I was very happy with the support that we got from the Arab world; we are very proud to be able to inspire the youth and show them that hard work and dedication pay off.

HT has just published its hard-cover Olympic Edition, which features the Saudi Equestrian team winning the show jumping team medal. Some claim that Saudi riders have come a long way in a very short time; how would you comment to that?

It's good that people think that. The truth is that we always had top riders who have started riding since the

80s and 90s. They've worked hard for decades and have sacrificed a lot of time and money. The thing that we as Saudi riders have lacked though was a serious budget to buy top horses and more professional infrastructure to take us to elite levels of competitiveness. To be great in show jumping was possible for many Saudi and Arab riders, but the ability to be the best and go to the next level was lacking, and the Saudi Equestrian Fund was the missing piece of the puzzle. That's why to many people it felt as you said – that they have come a long way in a very short time - but in reality it's a lifetime of hard work and dedication for all riders.

Following an agreement reached last year, the FEI Nations Cup has come under the sponsorship of the Saudi Equestrian Fund and has been renamed 'Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup'. This is a big step for the Fund. Can you please tell us how that came about?

Since the inception of the Saudi Equestrian Fund, the essence of its

mission was to preserve and develop equestrianism and the celebration of the horse. We tried to find a way to reach our goals as riders and at the same time give back to our society. It's our duty in the Saudi Equestrian Fund to sponsor equestrian activities for their nobility. Not only in the narrow sense of their history and heritage, but rather in the cultural and behavioural aspects that surround the sport, and celebration of the horse. It instills chivalry, honour, valour, and virtue.

At the Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup Jumping in Wellington, Florida in early March 2013, the United States team won the \$75,000 prize in grand style. The team was prepared and energised and gave its all. You must have felt proud to represent Furusiyya at this event. How was the atmosphere there?

It is a very humbling experience to see the most influential people from the equestrian world and American business world so grateful for what we (the Saudi Equestrian Fund)



3rd place with Talan during the Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup in Wellington, USA



At the second leg of the Furusiyya FEI Nations Cup in Wellington, USA

are giving back to the sport. It says a lot about our character as Saudi people, and emphasises the depth of our relationship with horses. The connection between man and horse is universal, and we are fortunate that the horse is so noble and allows us to share its strength and passion. The sport is a melting pot, and a vehicle to shape those global and diverse ideas. This interaction creates the ideal promotion of cultural diversity and world peace.

We really enjoy watching videos of your competitive rides, for example in the recent Winter Equestrian Festival series, and in particular watching your mount Talan. Of your current and past horses, who is/was your favourite?

My all time favourites are Nonplus Ultra and Rathwan, both have taken me to the 160 level in 2005/2006, and had won and placed in Grand Prix in The Arab League and Europe such as: CSIO5* Lucerne, CSI3* Lummen, CSI3* Munich and many more. Talan is a super horse but he's a very complex one. Once you have everything working for you then he's unbeatable, and I love him because of that. He really does make you think all the time.

It looks like you have a pretty busy

schedule this year and in the run-up to the World Equestrian Games in 2014. What competitions do you have coming up?

On my calendar now I have the 3 and 5 stars CSIs of Riyadh, then after we have Rome, Aachen, Gijon and Barcelona. In between these shows I'm going to be competing at other shows as well.

How do you prepare mentally and physically for an important show jumping competition?

Physically, I work out five times a week, three times boxing and twice weight lifting. Mentally, I try to be professional about it and think of it as a small task each class by itself. Trying to concentrate is the most challenging part to me, not the pressure. I do like the pressure as it makes me feel sharp.

Beyond show jumping, are there any other horse sports that you enjoy, such as polo or dressage?

I like polo. It's the closest thing, which I can imagine, to my ancestors' battles on horses. Although dressage is an imperative part of show jumping, I'm not its biggest fan. But I definitely take flat work very seriously.

In addition to being a professional rider you are a professional businessman. How do you juggle all of this?

The key to success in life is discipline, hard work, tawfeeq (Arabic for luck from God), and being very organised. If you're organised this shouldn't be a problem.

With all of your experience and successes, what words of advice would you give young riders?

The biggest gift that I can give to our young riders is to tell them to never give up on your dreams and passions. I want you to thrive on challenge, to reach success. We face challenges as human beings and riders every day, and what separates the good from the less fortunate is your attitude and fighting spirit. Chase perfection and get excellence! 🏆

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See HT's LIVE interview with HH Prince Faisal on: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0uJxSWGmiY>

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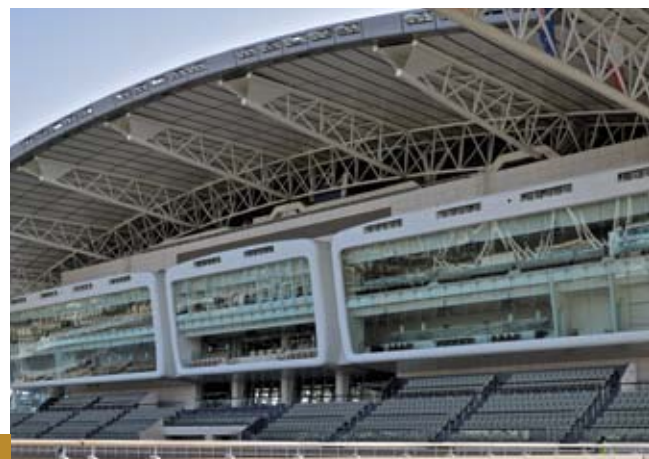
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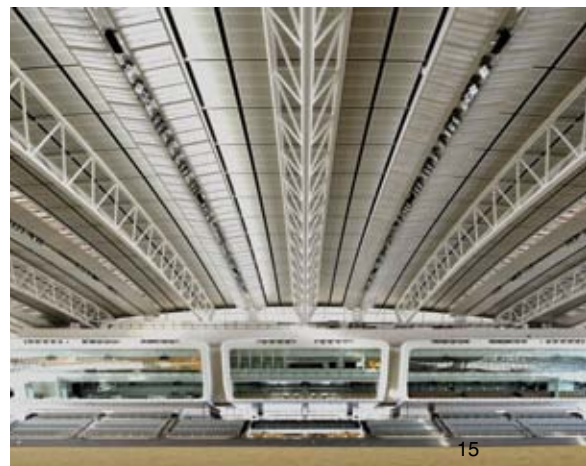
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CHI AL SHAQAB WELL DONE, QATAR

By Khaled Assem

HT WAS INVITED TO COVER CHI AL SHAQAB FROM MARCH 27TH TILL THE 30TH 2013 IN DOHA. HAVING BEEN TO QATAR SEVERAL TIMES, I HAD NO DOUBTS ABOUT THE ORGANISATION THE QATARIS WOULD HAVE IN PLACE FOR THE EVENT. BUT UPON WALKING INTO AL SHAQAB, MY FIRST IMPRESSION WAS SIMPLY “WOW”! WHAT A STRUCTURE WITH AMAZING STATE-OF-THE-ART DESIGN AND ENGINEERING, AND WHAT PRECISION AND EYE FOR DETAIL! A FACILITY FIT FOR THE MIDDLE EAST’S FIRST CHI EVENT.





During the competitions before the Grand Prix, media personnel were invited to see the facilities at Al Shaqab, including the hospital, the pools, the walkers, and the boxes - and again, the experience was simply amazing. I asked myself “why” build this facility to such a standard that is beyond any such facilities in Europe and the Middle East, to be found maybe only in the USA, and even that is doubtful. That question kept occupying my mind until I realised the answer was simple, “vision”. The amazing Al Shaqab complex is neither about today nor about the next few years; it is about Qatar’s cultural heritage with an eye on the future, the 2023 World Equestrian Games. It is about possibility and hope. Here is our report about the event, the facilities, and the winners.

Arab horses have such a strong presence in Qatari tradition and CHI Al Shaqab, the first festival of its kind in the Middle East and Asia, was born from this tradition. Both national and international equestrians gathered in Doha to take part in this exciting and historical event, under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Thani and Her Excellency Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani. The festival was also supported by the Qatar Foundation. The “vision” of Al Shaqab is to build on Qatar’s heritage with the Arabian horse to be a leading global centre for equine professionals and provide an engaging experience for the community. Its mission is to be global leaders in preserving, improving and promoting the Arabian horse breed through setting the highest standard in breeding, show, equestrian arts and equine welfare, and encouraging community participation.

The Director of Al Shaqab, Fahad Al Qahtani, described the idea and the mission of Al Shaqab and this important event:

“His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, established Al Shaqab in 1992 to enjoy his passion for Arabian horses, to honour courageous horses ridden by victorious Qatari knights of the past, and to ensure this noble breed would continue to play a leading role in the cultural heritage of the Qatari people.

“Today we can proudly state that Al Shaqab has grown beyond this vision and is about to become a true landmark for equine passion and equestrian success. Under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Thani and Her Excellency Sheikha Mayassa bint Hamad Al Thani, and in cooperation with Qatar Foundation, CHI Al Shaqab 2013 will put Qatar on the map of world class equestrianism.

“We want to share our pride and invite all generations of the community to marvel at the excitement of equine sports, and encourage everyone to enjoy the competitions and family activities.

“The event shall engage, inspire and educate the community about the fascinating variety of horsemanship – another keystone in Al Shaqab’s mission to establish itself as a global leader in breeding and show, equestrian arts and equine welfare.”





**CHI
AL SHAQAB**
DOHA 2013





Fahad Al Qahtani



Alia Bin Drai Humaid



Pius Schwizer



Day 1 Small Tour winners



Sheikh Al Al Thani & Jan Tops



Khaled El Emadi



THE WORLD-CLASS AL SHAQAB FACILITY:

Many of the world's most prestigious equestrian venues are identifiable by their unique locations, from the magical backdrop of Port d'Hercule in Monte Carlo to the glitzy and glamorous streetscape of Cannes. But Al Shaqab adds something new to the mix – an equine facility so out of the ordinary that it looks set to redefine equestrianism, as it establishes itself as a premier destination for international events.

Vision, foresight and a passion to preserve the heritage of the Arabian horse in Qatar led His Highness the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani to establish Al Shaqab in 1992. In honour of his ancestor, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al Thani, he established the Arabian breeding farm at the landmark Al Shaqab battle site where more than a century ago the Bedouins fought a pivotal battle that led to Qatar's independence.

Within a short period of time, Al Shaqab bred three World Champion stallions, Gazal Al Shaqab, Al Adeed Al Shaqab, and Marwan Al Shaqab. Today, champion offspring of these stallions enhance the pedigree of Arabian horses in Qatar and worldwide.

In 2004, Al Shaqab became a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, with the mission to promote the highest standards in breeding and showing of Arabian horses and provide innovative, educational and competitive opportunities in all of the equestrian areas.

Now, just over two decades later, the country's reputation as a global sports destination is burgeoning, thanks in part to Al Shaqab, which has been developed into a major international equestrian facility encompassing multiple equine disciplines and CHI Al Shaqab 2013 bears testimony to the success of this mission.

The 100 by 60-metre indoor arena is the centrepiece of the stunning 980,000 square metre horseshoe-shaped complex. It is within this fully air-conditioned, approximately 6,000 seat stadium that the world's finest dressage riders converged to battle it out for glory over four days of world-class competition.

Al Shaqab has many other distinctive architectural elements including a central water feature and abundant green areas. The expansive outdoor arena, which measures 120 by 80 metres, is adjacent to the indoor ring and is semi-roofed. Also nearby is a 17,000 square metre spectator plaza, which has been designed with families in mind.



International commentator, Nabila Al-Ali

On a day-to-day basis, Al Shaqab is home to a riding academy, equipped with the infrastructure to teach all levels of rider, from beginner to national team level. Also on site is a state-of-the-art equine hospital, clinic and laboratory, providing unparalleled veterinary care to horses from Qatar and beyond. There is a separate breeding unit comprising 142 air-conditioned stables, ancillary service units, and paddocks for stallions, brood mares, young stock and foals. Additionally, there are separate stable blocks for the competing dressage, show jumping and endurance horses.

Across the way is an air-conditioned, equine hydrotherapy and exercise unit; the ultimate equine gym. Horses are exercised on the large, spacious horse walker, while cleverly enclosed within the centre is an integral lunging unit. A swimming pool, equine Jacuzzi and dry treadmill also feature in the complex.

And it is not only the horses that are afforded five-star treatment. There is ensuite accommodation for competitors and attendant grooms with communal lounge and dining areas, a meeting room and parking.

CHI AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHI AL SHAQAB FESTIVAL:

CHI (Concours Hippique International - International Equestrian Competition) is the official title given by the FEI (International Equestrian Federation) only to international equestrian competitions with three or more equine disciplines.

As a CHI international equestrian event, Al Shaqab hosted competitions in three disciplines over four days, including show jumping, dressage and endurance. The preparations, overseen by the CHI Al Shaqab Local Organising Committee, headed by Al Shaqab Director and CHI Al Shaqab President Fahad bin Saad Al Qahtani, included setting the stage for the hosting of approximately 200 horses in Al Shaqab’s stables, and over 5,000 spectators in its stands.

Omar Al Mannai, CHI Al Shaqab 2013 Event Director said, “We are simply thrilled at the sheer number of riders, officials and horses that we hosted. As the first international equestrian event in the region of this calibre, we are proud that so many globally renowned riders entered our arena.”

“We are confident that Al Shaqab provided CHI’s riders and their horses with an experience that exceeds their expectations,” he added.

In addition to competition preparations, the spectator plaza, designed to celebrate Qatar’s rich heritage in equine culture and sport, informed and entertained the members of the public. The enormous 17,000 square metre plaza featured an array of family-orientated activities, including a fashion exhibition and trade market, a dedicated ‘kids zone’, a food court with several different kinds of cuisine, a Williams F1 simulator, and a multitude of cultural presentations and events. All very ambitious, but pulled off without a hitch, a remarkable and laudable achievement. 🏆

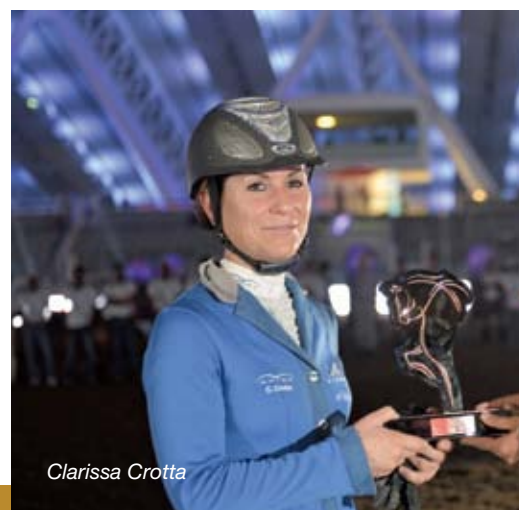


Ludger Beerbaum



Gerco Schroder

ExxonMobil



Clarissa Crotta



Harrie Smolders



Hamad Al Atiyah



Roger Yves Bost



Vaulting



Laura Renwick



Sheikh Ali Al Thani

AND THE WINNERS ARE:

Day 1 Small Tour: Khaled El Emadi on Michael Jackson, Qatar
Day 1 Medium Tour: Roger-Yves Bost on Nikyta D'elle, France
Day 1 Big Tour: Roger-Yves Bost on Castle Forbes Cosma, France

Day 2 Small Tour: Hamad Ali Al Attiyah on Levicci, Qatar
Day 2 Medium Tour: Pius Schwizer on Ulysse, Switzerland
Day 2 Big Tour: Harrie Smolders on Exquis Powerfee, Netherlands

Day 3 Medium Tour Grand Prix: Patrice Delaveau on Ornella Mail Hdc, France
Day 3 Dressage Grand Prix: Princess Nathalie Zu Sayn–Wittgenstein on Digby, Denmark

Day 4 Endurance race 120 km: Saif Ahmed Saeed Al Ketbi on Aldjani Safinat, UAE
Day 4 Small Tour Grand Prix: Jur Vrieling on Sissi Van Schuttershof, Netherlands
Day 4 Dressage Grand Prix Freestyle: Princess Nathalie Zu Sayn–Wittgenstein on Digby, Denmark
Day 4 Big Tour Grand Prix:
 Gerco Schröder on London, Netherlands
 Denis Lynch on All Star 5, Ireland
 Clarissa Crotta on West Side V. Merputhoeve, Switzerland
 Ludger Beerbaum riding Chiara 222, Germany
 Sheikh Al Thani on Cantaro 32, Qatar



Saif Ahmed Saeed Al Ketbi



Denis Lynch



Princess Nathalie Zu Sayn–Wittgenstein

PRIZE MONEY:

Dressage		
CDI 4*	Grand Prix	€ 80.000
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	Small Tour	€ 17.000



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Mubarak Al Rumaihi



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Kevin Staut

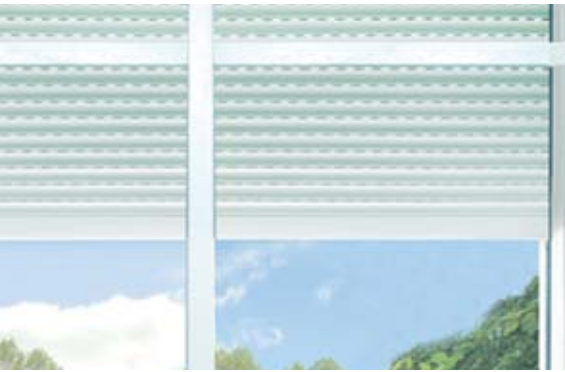
Equicare Company

Nice

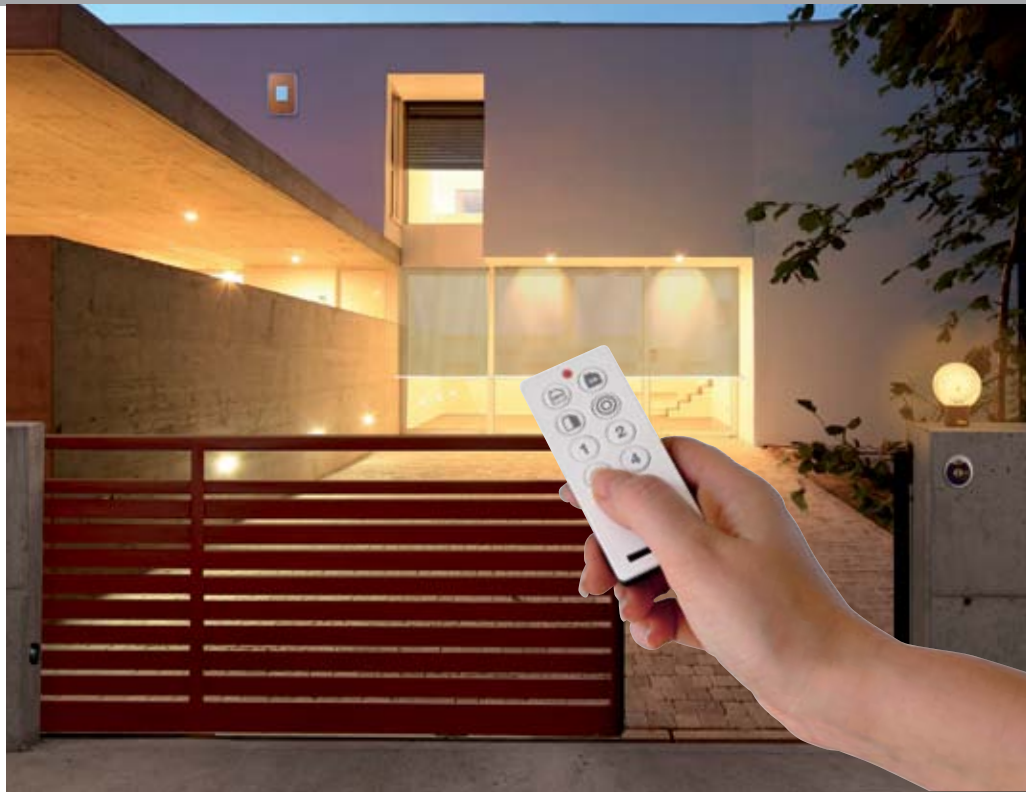
Home Automation



Barriers



Rolling shutters



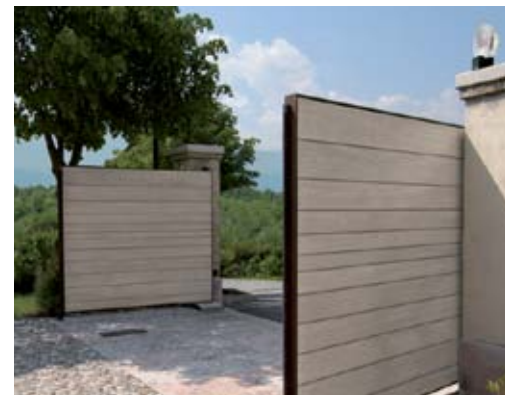
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LUCIANA DINIZ

G.R.O.W.ING

A HAPPY BALANCED LIFE

By Khaled Assem

LUCIANA DINIZ IS A VERY QUIET RIDER WHO WOULD RATHER SPEND TIME WITH HER HORSES THAN IN THE SPOTLIGHT. SHE HAS A VERY PEACEFUL DEMEANOUR, IS ALWAYS FOCUSED, AND NORMALLY CARRIES A GENTLE SMILE ON HER FACE. HER HORSES ARE ALWAYS IN GREAT SHAPE AND, CURRENTLY, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HER AND THEM IS PRODUCING GREAT RESULTS. HT MET WITH DINIZ DURING CHI AL SHAQAB IN MARCH AND DISCUSSED HER PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE AND HER PROJECT 'G.R.O.W.'; HERE IS WHAT SHE HAD TO SAY.

Tell us about G.R.O.W?

G.R.O.W. is an informal educational philosophy which I developed in Germany. Its definitive novelty is the transposition in our daily lives of important experiences and values, in order to educate and to become better individuals, therefore the name G.R.O.W. Everything began with my horses, my partners and faithful companions, and after more than twenty years on the international equestrian and competition scene, I decided to develop this project aiming to help people and society, thus sharing my life experience at a worldwide level. The mission of G.R.O.W. is to educate for the integral and sustained growth of human beings in five dimensions: (a) physical, (b) spiritual, (c) emotional, (d) ethical and (e) social, in three environments: (a) family, (b) work, and (c) society. To summarise the concept of G.R.O.W., it's a space for reflection and for the development of inclusive and encompassing activities in the pursuit of a better and more fulfilled life. The letters stand for: Goal.Reality.Option.Work. One of the categories of G.R.O.W. is 'G.R.O.W. HORSES' which is also driven by the same principles of help, quality improvement and personal support of the concept. Living in the world of the top international equestrian sport, I have a deep knowledge of all processes



▲ Riding without bridles with As Taro

involved in the world of horses and my goal is to find solutions to shorten the path to achieving best results and overcoming difficulties, improving techniques and minimising difficulties. Having the right riders mount the right horses for them is my motto.

How do you manage your busy schedule?

I compete at a show nearly every weekend, three to four times a month. I try to do one to two weekends with my children at home. I have twins, eleven years old. They go to school

in the morning and I go riding so my morning is for horses and my afternoon for them and G.R.O.W. I have divided the time I have in my life for things that give me power; my family, my horses, and my project.

Given the time you have made for all the things that make you happy, do you feel you have achieved in them?

Funny you ask! Actually, right now I'm reading a book about time organisation and how to divide time. I'm not only a rider, I'm a business woman and a mother. Sometimes it all becomes overwhelming. As such I also need to make room for





I saw you competing on a horse without a bridle. Who is that horse and please tell us about your connection with all your horses?

The horse is 'As Taro'. Many riders can ride horses automatically because they are trained that way. I need a connection and I need to understand the horses. I have a horse whisperer lady that speaks to the horses; she comes every month for a visit. She tells me how they feel and what they need. I need this in order to be able to succeed with them. Given all this, I develop a relationship with them. I don't have many horses, just five, but we are "together". 'As Taro' was always a difficult horse and always shook his head, until we found out he had problems on the head and neck. What could we do, I asked myself? We thought, let's try a new bridle! But he still shook his head! We then removed the bridle and he worked better. Unfortunately, he had another problem so we had to stop. Having said this, it was an experience and he gave what he could. Basically, I cannot ride without having a feeling of harmony and confidence. My horses are there for me and I'm there for them. I need to make them feel happy in the ring. Sometimes we have great rounds or not, but they need to feel happy. 🐾

meditation and my personal trainers who keep me in good shape and form, which needs time too! I think I have found some good balance now; even if nothing is achieved, I'm still working towards a good quality of life and that achievement.

Your performance shows that you are harvesting the rewards of your investment in putting things together the right way, and also in a way that works for you, wouldn't you agree?

Since I was young, I learned that "what we do we have to love". My children, my horses, my family in Brazil; we were always united and

close to each other. I give to all the people around me what I can, otherwise I won't take anything. I know my horses love when I give them a banana and in return, they give me their best. My philosophy in life is to respect and to show gratitude, and if I can divide and share this with the things I love, then why not?

Have you thought about writing and publishing a book?

I've started to write. I'm writing my own philosophy. I believe life is a journey and I want to share it with everyone.



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Mohamed Al Habtoor, patron of Silver Cup 2013, photo by Brad Fawcett

DUBAI POLO GOLD CUP 2013 FINAL A COMMANDING GHANTOOT WIN AT THE MIDDLE EAST'S PREMIERE POLO EVENT

By Bridget McArdle McKinney



HT RETURNED TO DUBAI AGAIN THIS MARCH FOR THE DUBAI POLO GOLD CUP FINAL ONLY TO BE DISAPPOINTED. YES, DISAPPOINTED THAT WE WERE NOT THERE TO SEE THE ENTIRE SILVER CUP SERIES OR THE QUALIFIERS AND SEMI-FINAL OF THE GOLD CUP SERIES, WHICH WE LEARNED WERE 'OMG!' THRILLING, 'IF ONLY YOU HAD SEEN IT!' THRILLING, 'BOY, YOU MISSED IT, TOO BAD!' THRILLING.

Held as usual on the stunning grounds of the Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club at Arabian Ranches, this series is the most anticipated and prestigious open in the Middle East, bar none. There is really nothing like it and the effort taken to make it not just happen, but to make it special for participants and spectators is enormous.

You may recall our reports on the Dubai Polo Gold Cup from 2011 (Issue 35) and 2012 (Issue 39) where we felt a trend developing in the presentation of this incredible series. In 2011, the event was a solid polo tournament, but with a lot of bells and whistles catering for the casual observer. 2012 was the year that took a serious polo tournament to a more serious polo audience. And this year saw the evolving annual tournament try to find its feet with a combination of a chandeliered VIP tent and a catch-as-catch-can atmosphere on the lawns with toddlers and rowdies, coolers and beach umbrellas. Not entirely certain that this is the right combination but trial and error will, we're certain, result in a tournament presentation next year which is not too hot, not too cold, but just right.

THE FIRST AND THE BEST:

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Maktoum bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai, the chairmanship of Mohammed Al Habtoor, and Polo Management for the Cup Series of Santiago Torreguitar, this was the highest handicapped polo event in the Middle East, Africa or Asia, a genuine 'first and best' in a country of superlatives, the 'largests', 'tallests', and 'most expensive'.

"I am proud to see Dubai playing host to yet another top polo event," said Mohammed Al Habtoor, the Chairman of the Dubai Polo Gold Cup Series. "Each year the event reaches new heights. Dubai has quickly gained popularity and found its place on the polo world stage. In 2012 the Dubai Gold Cup Series was recognised by the World Polo Tour (WPT). We have been privileged to attract some big names to the event year after year. Of course it is lovely to see many familiar faces (players, officials and spectators), but it is also great to see new faces on and off the field. This year we have upped the stakes by

increasing the handicap from 15 to 16 goals. This means the Dubai Polo Gold Cup Series (Dubai Open) is now the highest handicapped tournament in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. A great achievement! Last year I was fortunate to lead my team to victory.”

Six teams took part in the Dubai Polo Gold Cup Series this year: Habtoor Polo, Mahra Polo, Zedan Polo, Bin Draï Polo, Abu Dhabi Polo and Ghantoot Polo.

The line-up for the series was:

Abu Dhabi Polo		
Name	Country	Handicap
Faris Al Yabhouni (Patron)	UAE	0
Manuel Elizalde	Argentina	4
Juan Jose Storni	Argentina	5
Juan Ambroggio	Argentina	7

Bin Draï Polo		
Name	Country	Handicap
Saeed Bin Draï (Patron)	UAE	0
Ignacio Ithurburu	Argentina	2
Salvador Ulloa	Argentina	7
Juan Jose Brane	Argentina	7

Ghantoot Polo		
Name	Country	Handicap
HH. Sheikh Falah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan (Patron)	UAE	
Ali Al Merri	UAE	0
Pelayo Berazadi	Argentina	4
Juan Zubiaurre Canal	Argentina	4
Facundo Sola	Argentina	8

Habtoor Polo		
Name	Country	Handicap
Mohammed Al Habtoor (Patron)	UAE	0
Ignacio Bello	Argentina	3
Guillermo Cuitino	Argentina	6
Martinez Ferrairo Ezequiel Eduardo	Argentina	7

Mahra Polo		
Name	Country	Handicap
Rashid Al Habtoor (Patron)	UAE	0
Guy Gibrat	Argentina	4
Augustin Canale	Argentina	6
Fernando Papi Bourdieu	UK	6

Zedan Polo		
Name	Country	Handicap
Amr Zedan (Patron)	KSA	0
Matias Logioco	Argentina	3
Rodolfo Ducos	Argentina	4
Nachi Heguy	Argentina	9

BRILLIANT QUALIFIERS:

Exciting qualifiers threw up the semi-finalists, pitting Habtoor Polo against Abu Dhabi and Ghantoot against Bin Draï.

One particular qualifying match, with Bin Draï facing Zedan, merits mention. In its qualifier, Bin Draï defeated Zedan by 7 goals to 6 in an exciting match, showcasing a high level of polo expertise and action. Zedan made a great start taking the score to 3 goals to 1 but a quick response by Bin Draï with Salvador Ulloa, the MVP of the game, tied the score at 3 in the end of the first seven minutes of the match.

Amr Zedan’s team, with Nachi Heguy (the monster 9-goaler whom HT interviewed in its issue 39) leading the action, maintained a one goal difference through the second and third chukkas until Bin Draï managed to tie the game and start the last chukka with 5 goals apiece. Juan Jose (JJ) Brane, with two goals gave Bin Draï the victory and the ticket to the Semi-finals of the Gold Cup.

HABTOOR AND GHANTOOT WIN THE SEMI-FINALS IN STYLE:

Both semi-final matches displayed a high level of polo with plenty of goals in the two games. The first match between Habtoor Polo and Abu Dhabi was a close game. In the first three chukkas both teams maintained a small goal margin between them. The first chukka Abu Dhabi led by 3 goals to 2, and in the second period they ended with 4 goals apiece. The third chukka gave Habtoor the advantage at 6 to 5.

The one goal lead was very important for Mohammed Al Habtoor’s team who played the fourth chukka in a very clever way and with an early goal by Mohammed managed to control the game and earn the victory.

In the second game of the Gold Cup semi-finals, Ghantoot played a superb match, with two great initial chukkas that were crucial for the final result. With a great performance by Facundo Sola, who scored four goals, Ghantoot went several goals ahead in the first half of the match

(5-1 and 7-2) to control the game in the second half. Despite Bin Draï reacting in the last chukka they couldn't manage to catch Ghantoot who finally won by 9 goals to 5.

GHANTOOT WINS THE GOLD CUP!

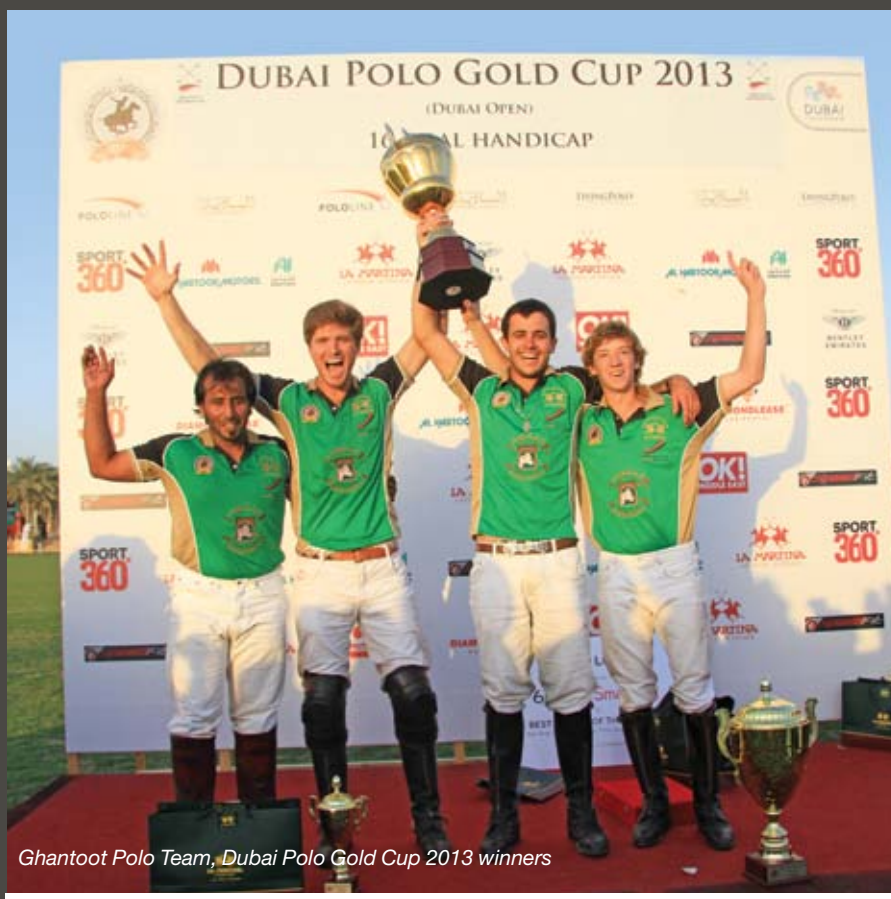
What a match! Ghantoot mastered Habtoor Polo in the Gold Cup Final by 14 goals to 6 to win the most important trophy of the season, Dubai Polo Gold Cup Series 2013. Bin Draï Polo Team won the Subsidiary Final after defeating Abu Dhabi by 10 goals to 7.

The team of Ali Al Merri, Juan Zubiaurre, Facundo Sola and Pelayo Berazadi played a thrilling and technically superlative match from beginning to end and took a deserved victory. After two tied chukkas, Facundo Sola, the MVP of the tournament, led Ghantoot in the second half of the game to a comfortable win. Sola scored 9 goals for his team and also was the top scorer of the tournament, Habtoor Polo tried hard, with patron Mohammed Al Habtoor and Captain Guillermo Cuitino playing a good game, but couldn't stop the excellent performance by Ghantoot.

While my heart is somehow always with the Habtoor teams, due to their patrons' and teams' personal dedication, investment, and vision, this time we had our eye on Ghantoot and, in particular, the young Facundo Sola.

Well, there he was – the true Most Valuable Player of this tournament – highest scorer, strong, skilful, energetic and humble, what we would call a true ambassador of the sport of polo. Facu, as he's known, is coming into his prime. For the 2013 polo Triple Crown, following a dazzling performance as part of the Magual team in the Qualifying Tournament and also in the Hurlingham and Palermo Opens in 2012, Facu's handicap was raised from 7 to 8 goals and he has been lured to join the La Aguada line-up, replacing Guillermo Caset, to wear the violet colours.

In 'PoloLine' he is quoted as saying: "This is a huge chance for me, I have to take advantage of it and give my



Ghantoot Polo Team, Dubai Polo Gold Cup 2013 winners



best for the team...I got a call from Javier (Novillo Astrada), before Christmas, and he told me about a chance to join the team. At first, I didn't want to be under an illusion so I didn't take it too seriously, but the truth is... I was completely excited about it!!!!!"

Well, we've been watching him for a while! As we wrote two years ago in our spring 2011 issue when Sola was playing for Abu Dhabi:

"If I could hazard a guess, the most valuable player of the tournament was the skilful Argentinean Facundo Sola, the charger of the Abu Dhabi team. He's been a player for 17 years and he is only 21 years old, so, yes, that means that he's been playing polo from the age of four! With a

seven handicap, he's earned his place to give advice and his advice for young players: "Work a lot with the horses, ride a lot, practice a lot and train a lot." His father once told him that every time you step onto the field it is to win, never give up. "Even if it was my father or brother on the other side, I always played to win, and after the match we were all just family again."

Before we end, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge Pelayo Berazadi's "El Pibe", the "Best Playing Pony" of the Final. Well done!

Congratulations to the winning Ghantoot team and to Habtoor Polo for bringing the sport of polo to new heights in the UAE. See you all there next year! 🏆

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HOW TO KNOW THE BODY CONDITION SCORE OF YOUR HORSE

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
1	<u>Poor</u> – The horse is extremely emaciated. The backbone, ribs, hip bones, and tail head are all very prominent. The neck is hollow, and the bones of the shoulders, withers, and neck are easily noticeable. Individual vertebrae are clearly seen and easily felt. No fat can be felt anywhere.
2	<u>Very thin</u> – The horse is emaciated. The backbone is prominent and the ribs, tailhead and hipbones stand out. There is a slight fat covering over the vertebrae in the spine, but individual vertebrae are visible. The bones in the shoulders, withers and neck are faintly noticeable.
3	<u>Thin</u> – The backbone is prominent. The tailhead is evident, but individual vertebrae cannot be seen. Ribs are easily visible, but a slight fat layer can be felt over the ribs. Hipbones appear rounded, but they are easily seen. Neck, withers and shoulders are emphasized.
4	<u>Moderately thin</u> – The vertebrae produce a slight ridge along the back. A faint outline of the ribs is visible. The prominence of the tailhead depends on breed and conformation, but fat can be felt around the tailhead. Hipbones cannot be seen. Neck, withers and shoulders are not obviously thin.
5	<u>Moderate</u> – The horse's back is level. Fat around the tailhead appears spongy. Withers are rounded, and the shoulders and neck blend smoothly into the body. Ribs cannot be seen, but are easily felt.
6	<u>Moderately fleshy</u> – The horse may have a slight inverted crease along the spine as fat is built up along the back. Fat around the tailhead feels soft. Fat over the ribs feels spongy. Small deposits of fat are over the
7	<u>Fleshy</u> – The horse has an inverted crease along the spine as fat is built up along the back. Fat around the tailhead feels soft. Individual ribs can be felt, but there is noticeable filling between ribs with fat. Noticeable fat is over the withers, behind the shoulders and along the sides of the neck.
8	<u>Fat</u> – The horse has a noticeable inverted crease along the back. Fat around the tailhead feels very soft. Individual ribs are difficult to feel due to the fat in between. Noticeable thickening of the neck. The area over the withers is filled with fat. The space behind the shoulders is filled in and flush with the barrel of the horse. Fat is deposited along the inner buttocks.
9	<u>Extremely fat</u> – The horse has an obvious inverted crease along the back. Fat appears in patches over the rib area. Bulging fat appears over the tailhead, withers, neck and shoulders. Fat along inner buttocks may rub together and the flank is filled in flush with the barrel of the horse.

NUTRITIONAL TIPS FOR HEALTHY HORSES

- Horses should consume 1.5 to 3.0% of their body weight per day. At least 50%, probably more, of caloric requirements (80% of feed by weight of feed) of this should come from forages (grass and hay).
- Ample turn-out and grazing time is important and will help keep your horse from getting bored. If his digestive system is working as nature intended, however if pasture is limited or unavailable, you can minimize the effects by feeding several small meals per day. Stabled horses should never be fed only one meal, but two works well for most horses. Three meals a day is better for horses under strenuous work such as endurance riding and three-day eventing.
- Don't ride your horse right after he finishes eating. Give him at least an hour after a big meal. Also don't feed him right after riding. Give him at least half an hour, longer if he is still hot. It is okay to ride a horse that has been eating hay or out on pasture.



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Kambarbay, photo by Solaris Sport Horses Ltd.

AKHAL-TEKE THE HEAVENLY HORSES OF CENTRAL ASIA

By Akhal-Teke Horse Association ASBL





OUT OF THE MISTS OF PREHISTORIC TIMES, A BREED OF HORSES APPEARED IN CENTRAL ASIA THAT HAS MAINTAINED ITS CONFORMATION AND PURITY UP TO THE PRESENT DAY. IT IS AN EASILY RECOGNISABLE TYPE, THAT OF AN ELEGANT, LONG-LINED HORSE, SOBER AND COURAGEOUS, ENDOWED WITH GREAT INTELLIGENCE AND STAMINA, AND A LOYAL, MAN-ORIENTED CHARACTER. THE ANCIENT CHINESE DESCRIBED THEM AS HEAVENLY HORSES LONG BEFORE THE RISE OF WESTERN CIVILISATION; THE GREEK HISTORIANS KNEW THEM TO BE UNWAVERING IN BATTLE AND ATTRIBUTED THE ANCESTRY OF BUCEPHALOS – ALEXANDER THE GREAT'S FAVOURITE HORSE – TO BE, AT LEAST IN PART, FROM THE STEPPES OF CENTRAL ASIA.

Throughout history these horses have been named after diverse peoples who bred them but since the 19th century they have been known as Akhal-Teke, Teke being the principal tribe that bred them and Akhal, the oasis in the Kopet-Dag Mountains of Turkmenistan, where they were based. The Akhal-Teke's original homeland lay – long before maps delineated national borders – in the barren area of steppes and desert, more or less in what is today Turkmenistan and northern Iran. The isolation of these lands from the outside world guaranteed the purity of a breed that weathered the centuries with little or no immixture of other breeds. It is in this area that the largest number of genetically pure Akhal-Tekes are to be found, out of a world population of 3,000 to

4,000.

The reputation of this horse that above all was bred for its qualities as a fast, hardened cavalry horse, and the fact that the Turkmen nomads - when not engaged in raids and tribal wars - hired themselves as mercenaries to foreign potentates, caused mares and in particular breeding stallions to find their way to foreign lands: to the Middle East, Turkey, and from the 17th century on, to Europe. Of the three founding stallions of the English Thoroughbred, the Byerly Turk and possibly also the Godolphin Barb, were Akhal-Tekes. Turkmainatty was an Akhal-Teke imported to improve the Trakhener horse in Germany. As for the Arab, both breeds come from the same gene pool, the Arab having

wandered from Central Asia south into Arabia some 3 to 5,000 years ago. Through battle, raids and gifts, both breeds have had some later influence on each other.

The subjugation of the independent Turkmen princedoms by the Russian Empire in the 1880's and, half a century later by the establishment of the Soviet authority, gravely threatened the existence of the Akhal-Teke. Tzarist Russia forbade raids and tribal wars, robbing the horse of its main raison d'être; the Soviets forbade private ownership even of horses, herded the nomads into apartment buildings and designated cooperatives and State farms as Horse Meat Production Units. On the other hand, individual horse lovers during both regimes introduced



the discipline, administration and science needed to establish a creditable and reliable studbook along modern lines. No more word-of-mouth from father to son, from generation to generation, but since 1912 a well-documented studbook bolstered by scientific research, gives insight into the bloodlines of the Akhal-Teke founding sires and their progeny, and lays down the standards for conformation and performance.


The Akhal-Teke is bred from a system of about 18 sire lines, a few of which are rare and little known. The object is to breed horses that strengthen the characteristics of the foundation sires and basically fall into three categories of conformation and type:

1. Gelishikly, Kaplan, Posman, and Peren known as long-lined, tall sport horses.
2. El, Fakir Pelvan, Kalrlavach, Skak, and Ak Sakal; a bit smaller but known for speed and ability as jumpers.
3. Arab, Dor Bairam, Toporbai: of a slightly heavier conformation, valued for their stamina over long distances.

By maintaining awareness of these separate lines, and in view of the relatively small population of broodmares, unavoidable inbreeding is kept to a minimum.

In spite of variations between the sire lines, the Akhal-Teke has a distinct conformation that puts it apart from other breeds. It is a long-legged, long-backed horse between 1.54m and 1.64m in height; its head is finely moulded with intelligent almond-shaped eyes, set on a neck that is long and carried high. Their gaits are light-footed and flat, carried forward by strong hindquarters, which makes them not only comfortable to ride but eminently suited for a variety of sports: endurance and eventing in particular but also for dressage and jumping. In 1960 the Akhal-Teke stallion Absent won the Gold Medal for dressage at the Olympic Games in Rome. He went on to win the silver and bronze medals at subsequent Games, which no other horse has ever done. The Akhal-Teke have dry legs and hard hooves, exceptional stamina and quick recovery after heavy workouts. A special feature is the golden, metallic sheen to their coat, no matter what the basic colour. This is caused by the unusually small nucleus of the hair, leaving more space for the medulla, the glassy material that covers the nucleus, thereby reflecting more light from its crystals. The breed allows for a wide palette of solid colours and has a widespread occurrence of the light factor, giving buckskin, palomino, cremello and perlino as well as the basic black, bay and chestnut in all its varieties.

The character of the Akhal-Teke is strongly oriented towards humans and its pronounced intelligence makes for easy training and handling. However, these horses tend to be one-man-horses and will not quickly forget or forgive rough and unfair treatment. They will form a very strong bond with their rider/handler and become a loyal friend for life. In times of warfare, if a horse returned to camp without its rider the tribe knew the man to be dead because the Akhal-Teke would never leave his wounded master in the field.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Turkmenistan claimed sole authority over the Akhal-Teke Studbook but then soon gave the administration back into Russian hands. MAAK was founded, the international arm of the VNIIC which is the Russian Association of Akhal-Teke Breeding and Research. MAAK issues international papers for horses exported or born abroad, based on blood typing, and is slowly making the transition to DNA typing. Representatives of MAAK – usually the Director Mrs. Tatiana Nikolaevna Ryabova – regularly travel to foreign breeders in order to grade their horses according to MAAK standards. 

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CHEVAL PASSION AVIGNON 2013

A PASSION FOR THE CAMARGUE HORSES OF PROVENCE

By Bridget McArdle McKinney

A BREED OF ANCIENT ORIGINS, SHORT, STRONG AND STOCKY, THE CAMARGUE HORSE OF THE RHONE DELTA MARSHLANDS OF PROVENCE, TAKES A UNIQUE PLACE IN HISTORY – FROM PROUD IMAGES FOUND IN PREHISTORIC CAVE PAINTINGS DATING BACK THOUSANDS OF YEARS TO THE BUILDING OF THE SUEZ CANAL IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND TODAY ON CENTER STAGE AT CHEVAL PASSION 2013.



LOOKING BEHIND THE SCENES:

We returned once again this January to enchanting Avignon to attend its annual horse fair, Cheval Passion (for our report on last year's fair, please see HT Issue 38, "A Passion for Horses"). But instead of experiencing the adrenaline rush and excitement of the 'Big Show' on the weekend with the brilliantly lit and costumed horse cabarets and spectacles set to music, the pomp of the National Riding School and the Republican Guard cavalry, and the crowd-awing horse sports, we decided to come by a little early and take a look behind the scenes.

This time we watched the horse trainers, owners, and riders prepare

and practice, groom and polish, fret and fuss. This was the time for the horse breeders and sellers to start showing their wares and striking their bargains and for the performers to get in one more drill, just one more run-through before the big day.

We started in the horse breeders' barns: one for Iberian breeds; one for Arabs, Barbs, Lippizaners, and Sherpa Paca; and one for the home-grown breeds. It was here where we experienced the French love of the produce of the place, like local wine and cheese, lovingly and proudly produced products of their particular *terroir*.

HOME-GROWN FRENCH BREEDS:

Some of the French breeds we saw there in the show barns, which are recognized by the French national stud, the Haras Nationaux, include:

The Ardennes: Probably a descendant of the Solutré breed, the Ardennes is one of the oldest breeds of horses in France. From Roman times to the nineteenth century, this breed has responded to the needs of war and agriculture. Hardiness, sobriety, obedience, strength and endurance are still its main qualities.

The Auxois: Strongly related to the type Ardennais Auxois, it is the result of cross-breeding a local "Burgundy" with the standard Ardennes, Trait du Nord and, especially in the north, with some infusions of Percheron and



Boulogne in the nineteenth century. Today, breeding is limited to the large Ardennais and Trait du Nord.

The Boulogne: This breed of horse is mentioned in chronicles from the seventeenth century and some trace the origin of this breed to the cavalry of Julius Caesar, raised in eastern

the most famous and most successful result of the mating of Norfolk stallion imported from Britain and Leon mares. This cross bore the "Postman Breton" whose fame spread worldwide.

The Norman Cob: The origin of the Norman Cob breed follows the Carrossier line until the mid-

recognized and romantic of the unique French breeds developed. In these fair barns we saw the best that the sea, marsh, dunes, wind and air produced in the Camargue, the sturdy and majestic Camargue horse of Provence.

For many people, the Camargue



Numidia and herded in 54 BCE near Boulogne for the war crossing to England. This breed was then re-tempered several times during the Crusades, the Spanish occupation and the first French Empire. They distinguish two types of Boulogne. The first type called "fishmongers"; lightweight, tough, very popular in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the rapid transport of fish from Boulogne-sur-Mer to Paris. The second is a large and powerful horse, fashioned in the nineteenth century to work on sugar beet land and cartage.

Le Breton: The Breton horse today is the result of a long process of selection made by breeders from old varieties of native horses. Many crosses were made in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to improve these varieties,

twentieth century. In the early nineteenth century the importation of Britain's Norfolk bred to the Carrossière broodstock produced the excellent blood and confirmation of the prestigious Norman Cobb.

The Trait du Nord: The Trait du Nord is descended from the family of the Ardennes crossed with the Trait Belgian, which produced its size, weight, extra strength, and elegance and Trait Boulonnais, which provided its temperament. It was not until 1910 that the northern Ardennes established its independence as the Trait du Nord breed.

THE CAMARGUE OF PROVENCE:

But it was quite near here, near to Avignon, that one of the most

evokes an enduringly beautiful and fantastic image - a herd of wild sturdy greys galloping through the marshlands and over the dunes of the Bouches-du-Rhone. The origin of the breed is lost in the mists of time. It is reliably postulated that the Camargue is one of the oldest breeds in the world, its painted image captured by radio-carbon dating in the caves of southern France as long ago as 30,000 BCE (the Upper Paleolithic period). Its severe environment produced traits of endurance, agility, and strength for which it is known to this very day.

Domesticated by the sea-faring Phoenicians, its development was encouraged by Julius Caesar in the 1st Century BCE. The breed was exploited throughout the Middle Ages in the Rhone Delta area and, later,

Napoleon recruited the Camargue to outfit his large army. It was truly amazing to learn, also, that this rugged breed was put into service in the building of Egypt's Suez Canal in 1865!

The Camarguaise culture revolves around livestock and, in particular,

to adulthood, their hair coat becomes ever more intermingled with white hairs until it is completely white. They are small horses, generally standing 135–150 centimetres (13.1–14.3 hands) at the withers, and weighing 350 to 500 kg (770 to 1,100 lb).[2] Despite their small size, they have the strength to carry grown adults.

horse has long legs which are well proportioned, strong and resistant, with large knees and hocks. Their hooves are hard and tough, with soles that are large and wide, suited to its original marshy habitat.

The calm temperament and



the horses. The Camargue cow and bull herders, the Gardians and Gardiennes, live their ancient traditions in the present day through their food, clothing, music, dance and festivals. I asked my husband why there were so many people at the Avignon horse fair dressed up like Western 'cowboys'. He said that the Western 'cowboys' are probably dressed up like the Gardians, whose leather chaps, wide-brimmed crushed felt hats, lassos, and roweled spurs sailed across to the Americas with the early Spanish explorers.

According to research, Camargue horses are always gray. This means that they have black skin underlying a white hair coat as adult horses. They are born with a hair coat that is black or dark brown in colour, but as they grow

Considered rugged and intelligent, they have a short neck, deep chest, compact body, well-jointed, strong limbs and a full mane and tail.

The head has many similarities to the Barb horse. It is often heavy, square and expressive, with bright, wide-set eyes, a straight profile, flat forehead and well-chiseled cheek bones. The ears are small, short, and set well apart. The forelock is full. The breed has a neck of medium length with an abundant mane. The chest is deep and wide, and the shoulder is powerful and muscular. The withers are defined but not exaggerated. The Camargue horse has a medium length back, well-supported, and a slightly sloping full croup, well-muscled hindquarters, and a low set, full tail. The Camargue

athleticism of the Camargue horse has made it a popular choice for equestrian games, dressage, and long distance riding.

We really enjoy the Avignon horse fair. Every year we see and learn something new and amazing. On our day at the fair before the 'big day' we trod the grounds with the anxious owners, sellers, performers, and traders, marveled over the unique French horse breeds, and ended our day back home on the sea with some wine from our 'terroir'. 🍷

Contributing sources: L'Office de Tourisme d'Avignon, Cheval Passion Dossier de Press, Haras Nationaux, Wikipedia



HORSES IN FOCUS

SERIES FEATURING SOME OF THE STAR HORSES ON THE GCT CIRCUIT

By the GCT

THE EQUINE ATHLETES THAT MAKE THE GLOBAL CHAMPIONS TOUR COMPETITIONS ARE SPECIAL. THEY ARE THE EXCEPTIONAL SHOW JUMPING HORSES THAT CREATE SUCH DYNAMIC, NAIL BITING CONTESTS AT EACH GRAND PRIX THROUGH THE SEASON. MANY OF THESE CHAMPION HORSES ARE FAMOUS AROUND THE WORLD WITH FAN CLUBS IN DIFFERENT NATIONS. HERE IS A FRESH AND OFTEN HUMOROUS INSIGHT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE HORSES - WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THEIR RIDERS OF COURSE!



▲ Cedric

CEDRIC:

At just 15.2 hands and at the age of 15 years, Laura Kraut's hugely popular grey gelding Cedric puts in amazing, fast performances, winning the GCT Grand Prix in September 2012 at the Tour's first ever event in Lausanne, Switzerland and placing 4th in the Grand Prix at GCT Chantilly last summer. Among numerous successes as a combination, Laura won US team gold with Cedric at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and continues to impress with great agility and pace in jump offs. The little Holsteiner grey by Chambertin and Carolus Z attracts enthusiastic support from crowds, always makes a great effort in the arena and has a deceptively fast stride.

What was the favourite GCT venue

of 2012 and why?

Lausanne because I won there but also because I loved standing in the lake there.

Do you like jumping in the day or evening best, hot or cold climate?

I like the evening because there are lots of people there to watch me and see how good I am.

Do you train a lot and how do you prepare for competition?

No, not too much. I just try to stay fit but sometimes Laura likes to practice on me, which is fine, but I also like galloping around my paddock which keeps me fit.

What's your favourite food?

Everything that everybody loves to eat. I'm not too fussy.

Where's your favourite place to exercise and run?

My paddock, then I'm free and I can do what I want.

What are your ambitions for 2013 with your rider Laura Kraut?

To go to Lausanne again and win many Grand Prix's.

What are your likes and dislikes?

I like Itot and Ninja because we are all about the same size and we can watch each other to see how the course is riding. I also love going in my paddock. I love winning and I'm a born traveller, I love to see the world. I don't like my girth being pulled tight!

BIG STAR:

Nick Skelton happily admits, Big Star is "the perfect horse" and one of the best he has ever ridden. The phenomenal bay stallion has added an Olympic team gold medal to his career triumphs after huge success at the 2012 Games in London. In the same year he won the GCT Grand Prix of Hamburg. The Dutch bred superstar by Quick Star and Nimmerdor helped Nick to a healthy 9th place in the overall GCT 2012 ranking. Nick has already said he will be aiming for the next Olympic Games in Rio when Big Star, born in June 2003, will be 13 years old.

What was the favourite GCT venue of 2012 and why?

Hamburg because I won there.

Do you like jumping in the day or evening best, hot or cold climate?

I prefer the day time and warm climate.

Do you train a lot and how do you prepare for competition?

I don't need to train a lot because I'm very good, but sometimes Nick likes to jump me over small jumps.



▲ Big Star

What's your favourite food?

I love my hay, nuts, grass when I can get near it and of course candy.

Where's your favourite place to exercise and run?

My paddock and around the roads in England

What are your ambitions for 2013 with your rider Nick Skelton?

To win many GCT's and also to be European champion because I made a mistake in London and I let Nick down and now that I'm 10 years of age I'm more experienced, so this shouldn't happen again.

What are your likes and dislikes?

I dislike walking through water, but I love going in the field and going to the shows when Nick rides me well of course.

CASALL LA SILLA:

Champion Swedish rider Rolf-Göran Bengtsson and Casall were part of the amazing nail-biting GCT 2012 finale. The Holsteiner stallion jumped brilliant Grand Prix rounds through the season and was placed 2nd in the GCT events in Hamburg, Cannes and Lausanne. The combination also came 3rd in Valkenswaard and scored strong points at other GCT shows. Rolf describes the stunning 14-year-old dark bay by Caretino as an amazing performer and "a nice guy".

What was the favourite GCT venue of 2012 and why?

For me it was Hamburg, because it is always nice to be in front of the home crowd: a lot of Holsteiner breeders and friends were there ;)

Do you like jumping in the day or evening best, hot or cold climate?

Actually it doesn't really matter to me – and at the shows, where it is really hot, we are mostly working in the morning or in the evening, where it is quite comfortable. And in the stable we then have air conditioning ;)

Do you train a lot and how do you prepare for competition?

In daily work I am mostly being taken care of three times a day: once I am ridden, then I go to the walker or the tread mill, and when the weather is good I am in the paddock or I take a walk with Celia (my groom)

For the shows Rolf always has a scheduled plan for some weeks in advance, so before the shows we do some jumps at home.

What's your favourite food?

Müsli with carrots! I simply love that!

Where's your favourite place to exercise and run?

I rather like to work outside in the fresh air.

What are your ambitions for 2013 with your rider Rolf-Goran?

Mainly we will be going to the shows of the GCT – and for sure I will try to help him win the European gold medal again!

What are your likes and dislikes?

I very much like going to the paddock – but I do not like sugar! And I do not really like bad weather with rain, deep ground etc. either.....

LONDON:



▲ Casall La Silla

Gerco Schröder describes London as “a very special horse” and says he knew he would be a champion from an early age. London had a hugely successful GCT season during 2012 and finished 6th in the overall championship ranking. Extremely careful over fences and with a big scope, London won the GCT in Cannes in an amazing jump-off against champions Cevo Itot du Chateau and Casall La Silla. Dutch rider Gerco and Belgian-bred London were 2nd in Abu Dhabi and 3rd in Vienna. Born in 2002, the chestnut stallion by Nabab de Reve added two Olympic silver medals - team and individual - to his list of triumphs in 2012.

What was the favourite GCT venue of 2012 and why?

Cannes, because I won there after



▲ London

an exciting jump-off with Itot and Casall.

Do you like jumping in the day or evening best, hot or cold climate?

When it's really warm, then I prefer in the evening. I like nice sunny weather, but not too hot.

Do you train a lot and how do you prepare for competition?

I come out a few times a day with the walker, in the field and riding and before a show we jump a little.

What's your favourite food?

My normal food and the sugar I get from my groom Lais.

Where's your favourite place to exercise and run?

I love to gallop through the forest next to our stable.

What are your ambitions for 2013 with your rider Gerco?

Gerco and I hope to get some good results in the Global Champions Tour, so that we can improve our overall result from 2012.

What are your likes and dislikes?

I love all the attention I get at home and at the shows and I don't like to stay at home when the other horses are going to a show. 🐾



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HAIDER R. AL ZU'BI
“CONCEPT OF THE RULE...
CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECISION”

By Khaled Assem

COUNTRY: JORDAN

DATE OF BIRTH: JANUARY 3 1969

STAR SIGN: CAPRICORN

PROFESSION: EXECUTIVE MANAGER OF BAHRAIN ROYAL EQUESTRIAN &
ENDURANCE FEDERATION

FEI REGIONAL GROUP VII OFFICE MANAGER - KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN
FEI INTERNATIONAL JUDGE FOR SHOW JUMPING & ENDURANCE

HAIDER AL ZU'BI, EXECUTIVE MANAGER OF THE BAHRAIN ROYAL EQUESTRIAN & ENDURANCE FEDERATION (BREEF) AND MANAGER OF THE FEI GVII CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE IN BAHRAIN, HAS BEEN WORKING IN THIS FIELD FOR NINE YEARS IN BAHRAIN AND IN THE EQUESTRIAN INDUSTRY IN GENERAL FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS. HERE'S WHAT HE HAD TO TELL HORSE TIMES.

BACKGROUND WITH HORSE SPORT:

I'm passionate about horse sport in general and in particular about show jumping and endurance. I'm a father of two children: Hasan five, Faisal four, and married to Rana, who copes very well with my long working hours, absence, and travelling for equestrian events.

I started riding in 1989 at a private farm belonging to a friend of mine while I was in college in Austria. I then began to ride again after returning to Jordan in 1992 at the Arabian Horse Club in Amman; mostly flat work, jumping, endurance, and hacking. Becoming more involved in horse sport, I also became a very active member at the Arabian Horse Club and Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation (RJEF) and for many years I was quite close to our beloved team captain, Hani Bisharat. He succeeded in pulling me into the sport by giving me more challenging tasks and responsibilities such as judging, stewarding and many other administrative jobs within the club. I travelled with the Jordanian team to many countries and gained a lot of experience while accompanying them. We often had long, long discussions and arguments about the concepts of the rules and consequences of the decisions taken, so knowing the rules and implementing/experiencing them became my new passion; at the time there were not many technical people involved in the sport in Jordan.

I was also very close to the endurance community in Jordan, so I started judging endurance races in 1994 with the support and under the patronage of HRH Princess Alia bint Al Hussein. I was also a rider/member in the Royal Institute of Arabian Horsemanship where we used to practice war and military skills and martial arts on horses; we had a couple of successful shows in the Royal Stables in Amman. I managed to lead the technical aspects of many international show jumping competitions in Jordan, and I enjoyed organising big events with all the complications with riders, national federations, horses, officials and sponsors. I was appointed by HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein and HRH Princess Alia bint Al Hussein as the Jordanian Show Jumping Team Manager in 2003 for the preparations for the Athens Olympic Games 2004 and the Olympic Games selection



▲ With Rodrigo Pessoa at the 2011 FEI General Assembly

Trials in Aachen Germany 2003.

Being a judge as well as the Jordan Show Jumping Team Manager for many years, knowledgeable of FEI Jumping and Endurance rules, was an added value for me so I became a consultant for the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation for many years.

I'd like to express a large amount of gratitude and respect to HRH Princess Alia bint Al Hussein and HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein, and of course to Hani Bisharat and Waleed Assaf who had the greatest impact in putting me on track to become an international show jumping and endurance judge as well as an equestrian professional.

EXPERIENCES AS A JUDGE:

I have been judging show jumping sport since 1992 on the national level and since 1994 on the international level. In 2000 I became an International Candidate show jumping judge (Level 2) and a candidate for endurance, and I became an International Judge in 2003 (Level 3) in both jumping and endurance. I had the privilege to be nominated by the RJEF to attend my promotion course to Candidate International judge in show jumping in 2001 in Cairo, and my promotion course to FEI International Judge in Ankara 2003. I have been judging in most show jumping shows within

the Arab Region since 1998, and I officiated in many shows in Jordan and in other countries abroad such as Syria, Qatar, UAE, KSA, Turkey, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, and Germany. I have also officiated as a member of the Ground Jury in the FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) in endurance in Kentucky USA, 2010, the Ground Jury in the FEI World Championship for Young Horses in endurance in Bábolna Hungary, 2012, and as an FEI foreign judge in Doha Selection Trials in show jumping for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The gathering together during any equestrian event for riders, horses officials is an experience by itself; however, the shows I judged in my home land Jordan are the closest to my heart, maybe because that is the place where I started. I am proudly satisfied with the progress and development of the sport in my country, and proud that many people of Jordan believed in me and had a lot of confidence in my abilities and I had really worked very hard to earn this credibility. At the same time, I love to be part of the major shows like the Olympics.

The Doha Selection Trials in Show Jumping (4*) for the London 2012 Olympic Games held in 2011 was a great show and great success for me due to the high level of technicality and responsibilities I had to carry as a



▲ With HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein & HH Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa at FEI Group VII Meeting

foreign judge.

CHALLENGES FACED:

As the sport is developing rapidly, managing a sport federation and especially a busy equestrian federation while organising many big events in a very short season due to the climate constraints is not an easy job, it needs lots of patience and experience.

Some of the challenges are basically associated with day-to-day management such as training the staff to handle all aspects of the sport to be able to serve the equestrian community professionally. Working with the latest online technologies and data management systems such as the FEI Online Entry System, results processing, horse and rider registration system, and FEI Family, is also a very interesting challenge.

OTHER CHALLENGES SUCH AS PREPARING BUDGETS, FORECASTS, AND GETTING SPONSORS:

I faced many challenges at the beginning but I was lucky to work with a professional staff. We managed together to overcome many challenges such as organising mega-endurance and show jumping events, and Arabian horse shows with all the

attendant logistics and fine detail in a very sophisticated and efficient way.

Another challenge I really enjoyed was breaking the ice with the FEI Headquarters. I succeeded in working side-by-side with all FEI departments and staff, which I consider vital for all federations. I managed to do this due to my position in the FEI regional Group VII office, which opened the channel for me, so I personally knew most of the FEI staff and worked with them on a daily basis. I encourage all federations to do the same because some federations believe that the FEI is on another planet.....and I also encourage all federations to attend the FEI Annual General Assembly so they get to know all staff, managers, and directors in person.

The biggest challenge is the FEI Rules changes, revisions and amendments changing almost every year after the annual FEI General assembly, so I always make sure that I'm on top of all the changes not only because I'm a judge but because I work for the Bahrain Royal Equestrian & Endurance Federation and FEI Group VII, I feel I should always be ready to answer any question from any national federations within Group VII, as well as riders, organisers and media and to make sure they are fully aware of general, jumping and endurance rules as this might be challenging

sometimes when a rule is changed or updated.

WORKING WITH THE BREEF AND ITS PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT:

I moved to Bahrain after the 2004 summer Olympic Games in Athens, after I represented Jordan as team Chef De Equipe with our rider Ibrahim Bisharat who participated in the Olympics Games in show jumping.

It has been a privilege for me to serve as an Executive Manager for the BREEF from 2004 to date, and FEI Regional Chairman Group VII office manager with HE Sheikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa since he was elected in 2006. I also need to give him a large amount of gratitude and respect.

The renowned equestrian traditions of Bahrain were further enriched with the formation of the BREEF and my experience there has developed tremendously since the time I joined them. It was the unrelenting efforts and futuristic visions of the President of the BREEF, HH Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, which marked a new dimension as far as equestrian activities in the Kingdom are concerned.

During my tenure as a Manager for the BREEF and FEI Regional Chairman Group VII office, I have dedicated myself to promoting, communicating, mediating and coordinating the development and the activities of equestrian sport within the federation and within GVII Federations.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EQUESTRIAN SPORT IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

In the Middle East, equestrian sports have grown substantially. It is a widely known fact that the Middle East is one of the fastest growing hubs of equestrian sport and, therefore, is one of the most promising locations for sport development too. Veterinary issues, horse transportation difficulties and subsequent quarantines are limiting the number of venues available and participation. There has been a lot of improvement on many fronts, but still some effort needs to be done to achieve the highest standards possible. In my opinion the remarkable development of sport and the equestrian activities in the Arab

Region still need to solve/ focus on the following issues:

The following issues are still to be considered:

- Identifying issues regarding the movement and transportation of horses and the distinction between sport horses and farm horses.
- Finding solutions for horse transportation and movement as well as veterinary quarantine problems.
- Continuing to work with governments while establishing a global communication network to develop and intervene when required, for solutions towards horse movement.
- Addressing the key decision makers worldwide to bring out common solutions in regard to the ongoing problem of horse movement.

FEI WORLD CUP ARAB LEAGUE:

In 2004 I was a believer/supporter, like many good friends in the field, that something had to be done at the level of FEI Group VII participating National Federations in order to consolidate and give direction instead of individually isolated and scattered efforts at organising international show jumping events. Until now, GVII National Federations were content to organise, to a certain success, some regional as well as Pan Arab events and the occasional commemorative CSI. A structured, credible and well organised set of events will surely provide impetus for riders as well National Federations to plan, prepare, organise and participate/compete. The FEI World Cup Series was thought to be the ideal venue, providing clear rules and regulations, a set Calendar and a WC Final most riders would cherish to be part of.

I witnessed the project “FEI World Cup Jumping - Arab League” after the accord of the FEI Regional Group VII participating members was presented to the FEI Jumping and World Cup Committees. The concept was accepted as well as the rules and regulations set to define how the League operates.

ENDURANCE:

Endurance is becoming an



▲ With HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa - King of Bahrain

increasingly popular equine sport in the Middle East. Ever since its start, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and KSA have seen a steep ascension of this fascinating sport. Unlike many other octane powered sports, the equestrian sport of endurance spans history - speaks all languages and transcends age and gender with a contagious spirit. It is family oriented. It demands dedication, courage, confidence and commitment. The recent UAE results in the individual and team gold titles of the Longines FEI World Endurance Championship at Euston Park in Suffolk, UK, where a total of 152 riders from 38 countries from all over the world lined up at the start-line to compete for the prestigious title, proved a great success.


SHOW JUMPING:

Show jumping is a relative newcomer to the region’s equestrian portfolio and the consensus among the top Arab jumping nations is that the Saudis have been doing it the longest on an international level. Back in the 1980s enthusiasts in Saudi, Jordan, Kuwait, Syrian, Qatar, and Egypt were copying European course designs and borrowing race horses to jump them. In 1994, the Saudis formed a jumping federation and two years ago Saudi Equestrian, an organisation that acquires and owns show jumpers for the country’s international riders, was established. With a top-10 team finish in the World Equestrian Games and a team Gold at the Asian Games last year, Saudi Arabia is blazing a trail

for Arab nations in international show jumping.

Riders from Saudi, Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE have now competed at many Olympics, while Abdullah Sharbatly’s individual silver at the World Equestrian Games marks the first time a rider from the Middle East has reached the top four in a world championship. Arab nations, including the UAE, the team silver medallists at the Asian Games, are making great leaps in the international arena, but right now the Saudis are the ones to catch. They are said to have a budget of US \$ 100m (Dh367m) to acquire the best horses to carry them to the very top in the sport and the Saudi team Bronze at the London 2012 Olympics is proof.

I also must praise the significant evolution in equestrian sport in Qatar as they are organising the first CHI (multi discipline event) held at Al Shaqab from March 27-30, 2013. Al Shaqab – the event venue – is an equestrian institution in Doha, which is part of the Education City complex developed by Qatar Foundation for the people of Qatar. It is dedicated to the advancement of the Al Shaqab stud for Arabian horses, education and training in equestrian sports and industry.

I also must praise the huge and tremendous evolution in equestrian sport in Morocco, as they are also working very hard on a new equestrian institution in Rabat. 



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60 SECONDS WITH
CARLA KATTOUAH

COUNTRY: LEBANON

DATE OF BIRTH: JULY 6 1981

STAR SIGN: GEMINI

PROFESSION: HORSEBACK RIDING TRAINER & CLUB MANAGER

What is your best achievement?

Opening my own equestrian school in Lebanon in 2006 and

delivering the French “Galop” diplomas.

Who is your favourite athlete?

Pascal Morvillers, my mentor and Jean Teulere (World Eventing Champions), without forgetting ENE Saumur trainers, to whom I



What is your favourite music record?

Red-Riding Hood soundtrack.

What is your second favourite sport?

Snowboarding.

Do you like to cook?

I like to, but I'm not that good.

What is your strength and what is your weakness?

Strength: highly adaptable.
Weakness: my tolerance threshold is a bit too high.

What makes you happy and what makes you sad?

Happy: galloping towards a challenging jump on my favourite horse. Sad: when one of my horses is sick or injured.

To your close friends & family,

you are known to be?

Fun & active.

If you had the power to change something, what would you change?

I would erase illiteracy.

If there is something about Carla that you would like to change, what would that be?

To eat less chocolate!

Do you support any charitable organisations?

Mainly the Red Cross, though not as much as I would love to.

Do you think there is any other question we should have asked but did not?

Yes! You should have asked if I spend hours talking to my horses! (The answer is no!) 🐾

owe my success.

Do you keep any pets?

Aside of my five-year-old horse Titanium, a cat called Cosmo.

What is your favourite movie?

"Planet Earth".

Who is your ideal celebrity?

David Attenborough.

What is your favourite gadget?

My Iphone!





Special Olympics
Egypt

BE A FAN

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Photo by Cymon Taylor

▲ Riding with correct length of stirrups allows the seat out of the saddle - low centre of gravity - weight consistent above the horse's centre of gravity as seen in this picture of Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum & Bella Donna

TRAINING TIPS

SEAT & BALANCE

By Khaled Assem

A HORSE WILL PERFORM WITH CONFIDENCE WITH AIDS AND BALANCE THAT ARE HARMONIOUS WITH HIS MOTION. A STILL LOAD IS A LIGHT LOAD. THE HORSE'S BALANCE CHANGES WITH THE RIDER'S WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION WHICH CAN EITHER HELP MAINTAIN OR CAUSE A LOSS OF BALANCE.



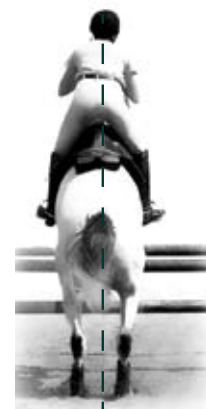
▲ *Correct jumping length - the angle at the back of your knees should be around 105-115 degrees. This position makes it easier to keep the balance through the leg in order to go with the horse's jump*



▲ *Here, the rider's knee is too far forward and the heel too far back with weight in the toes. This will have the effect of tipping the rider forward and the leg aid will be given too far back for the horse to understand it*

▼ *For show jumping, The rider's balance stays the same, with the seat lightly touching the saddle, but still moving with the horse's back*

▼ *The rider's spine should align with the horse's spine*



concept of his weight being taken through the legs on a three-point suspension system that provides flexibility in lowering the centre of gravity. Those three points are the hip joints, the knee joints, and the ankle joints. The low centre of gravity provides a more compact and stable unity with the horse.

This combined centre of gravity of the horse and rider is approximately 10% higher than the horse's own centre of gravity. That proportional disturbance of additional weight on the horse's front and hind legs should not affect the horse's movement, so long as the rider's weight is taken through the legs with some weight dispersed inwardly through the contact of the leg and the rest on the stirrups. So as far as the horse can feel, the rider's weight is just behind his withers along the same vertical line.

The opening and closing of the rider's joints, not only provide balance, but minimise the movement of the head where the rider's "sense" of balance is "felt". This security can only be maintained with the correct length of the stirrup leather keeping the lower leg perpendicular to the ground. During the jump the hip and knee joints need to open on both ascent and descent altering the angle of the body, allowing the horse to rotate around the rider's knees. It is also necessary to maintain a good and natural alignment of the spine. 🐾

In show jumping, the point of most concern on the rider's part has to do with the abrupt shifting in weight - i.e. centre of gravity - which creates a disturbance in the natural movement of the horse and, accordingly, a disturbance in his natural balance.

The seat of the rider has to stay in harmony with the horse's movement by keeping the rider's centre of gravity in line with that of the horse. The light seat created by the rider is based upon the

*About the author:
Khaled Assem is a certified Level 2 FEI trainer. He has been training for 15 years, competing internationally for 10 years and locally for 25 years.*

NINTH DUBAI INTERNATIONAL HORSE FAIR ENHANCES TRADE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUESTRIAN INDUSTRY

THE MIDDLE EAST'S LEADING EQUESTRIAN EXHIBITION HAILED AS THE ULTIMATE BUSINESS PLATFORM FOR HORSE OWNERS, BREEDERS, EQUINE PROFESSIONALS AND LEISURE RIDERS.

A successful 10th Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship (DIAHC) and 9th edition of the Dubai International Horse Fair (DIHF), the Middle East's largest equine exhibition, has concluded with promising trade conducted by industry players with the heritage, beauty and agility of the world's finest Arabian horses showcased. The event, held at Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) from 21-23 March, was hailed as the ultimate arena for all segments of the equestrian industry.

The event was held under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Minister of Finance and Deputy Ruler of Dubai, who inaugurated the event and has provided his on-going support of the Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship & Fair.

"The Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship & Fair has once again demonstrated its role as the region's most highly anticipated event to conduct business, showcase the finest Arabian horse specimens, learn about the latest innovations in the field as well as network among key industry representatives," said Ziad Abdullah Galadari, Chairman, Higher Organising Committee of DIAHC.

EXHIBITORS GENERATE GENUINE BUSINESS LEADS:



▲ HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum



▲ Arabian horse display

First-time exhibitor AlphaOmega, which introduced the Middle East to the unique "Paso Fino" Colombian horse breed ranging in price between AED150,000 and AED7 million, has reported keen interest shown by the regional equestrian industry. AlphaOmega manager Ricardo Avila Pineda said: "During the DIHF, several buyers approached us to buy

specific horses and in the upcoming weeks we expect to develop more leads. I have met with people from Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar who are eager to introduce the Paso Fino breed to their respective countries. This exciting event has certainly met my expectations."

Exhibitors Martin Thirkell,

Implementation Manager and Michael Naughton, Product Manager, of Fine Equinity in the UK said: “We’ve certainly received a lot of interest at DIHF and because Dubai is a window to the world we have had queries from buyers in South Africa, New Zealand and the United States. Our business is only 12 months old, which is why we came here to gain access to people from far afield – on the first day alone we had 10 to 15 genuinely interested buyers from mainly the endurance racing industry.” During DIHF, Fine Equinity introduced an affordable, secure, web-based horse welfare and training tool to the regional and global equestrian industry.

ARTISTS TAKE CENTRE STAGE:

Renowned international sculptor and DIHF exhibitor Carolyn Morton said: “The leads at DIHF have been very positive and of a good quality – I’ve sold pieces and made excellent contacts.” Morton, who is currently based in Portugal and previously lived in Dubai, designed and sculpted the trophies for the DIAHC. Her previous notable commissions include a life size bronze bust of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

In the midst of high stakes horse competitions, horse auctions and the latest technologies and products offered at the Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship and Fair, artists specialising in equestrian art showcased their works to much fanfare. As the event concluded, these artists demonstrated the beauty, agility and heritage of Arabian horses to art connoisseurs, discerning horse owners, breeders, equine professionals and leisure riders across the region. Artists included Ali Almimar, an Iraqi artist who participated for the sixth time in DIHF and will launch an equestrian art book next year, Saudi artist and art lecturer Nasser bin Ibrahim Al-Dibeahy and Chaminda Pereira, a Sri Lankan wood sculptor who resides in Saudi Arabia, among others.

EQUESTRIAN ENTHUSIASTS FLOCK TO DIHF:

Jassem Al Juabeh, Partner and

training club. We have already met with a couple of them and we shall make up our minds soon about where to register my three boys.”



▲ Rémi Bertoche from Ateliers d'Art Rémi Bertoche



▲ AlphaOmega first-time exhibitors from Columbia

Managing Director of a general contracting company, brought his family for a fun day at the show. “We are visiting the Horse Championship and Fair because we love horses and like to see them in action,” said Al Juabeh. “We have spent two good hours watching the lovely horse shows in the beauty contest and we are now looking for an equine

Fatima Nazzal from Ekermawi Stud in Jordan said: “As a member of a family who owns and breeds horses, I can say that the wide equestrian product offering at the show is amazing, and with the latest launches in feeds and nutrition supplements I think that DIHF is a must-visit event.” 🏠



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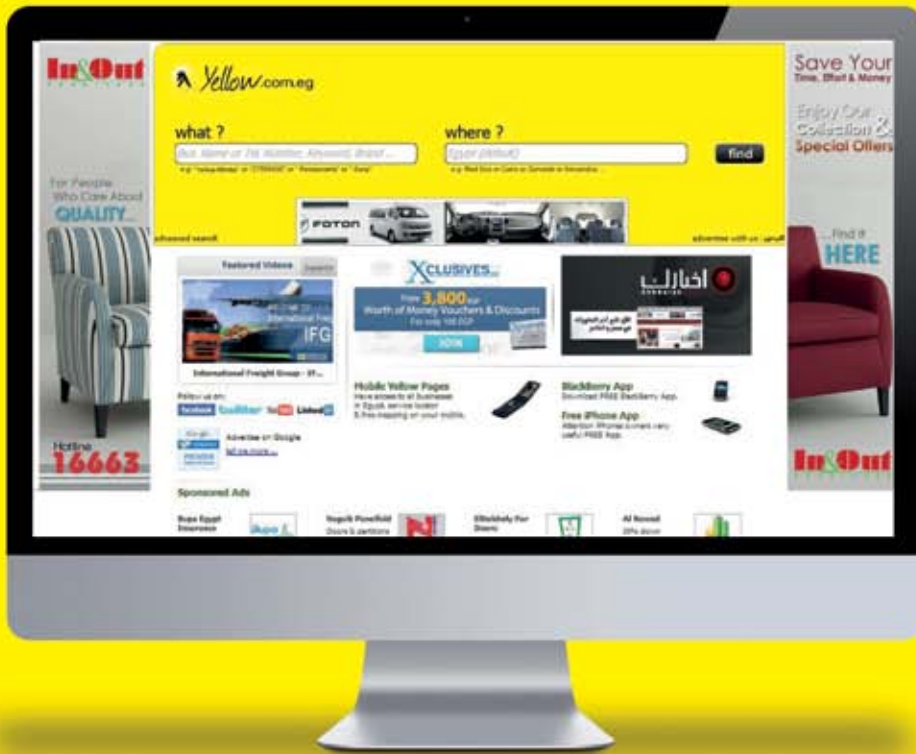
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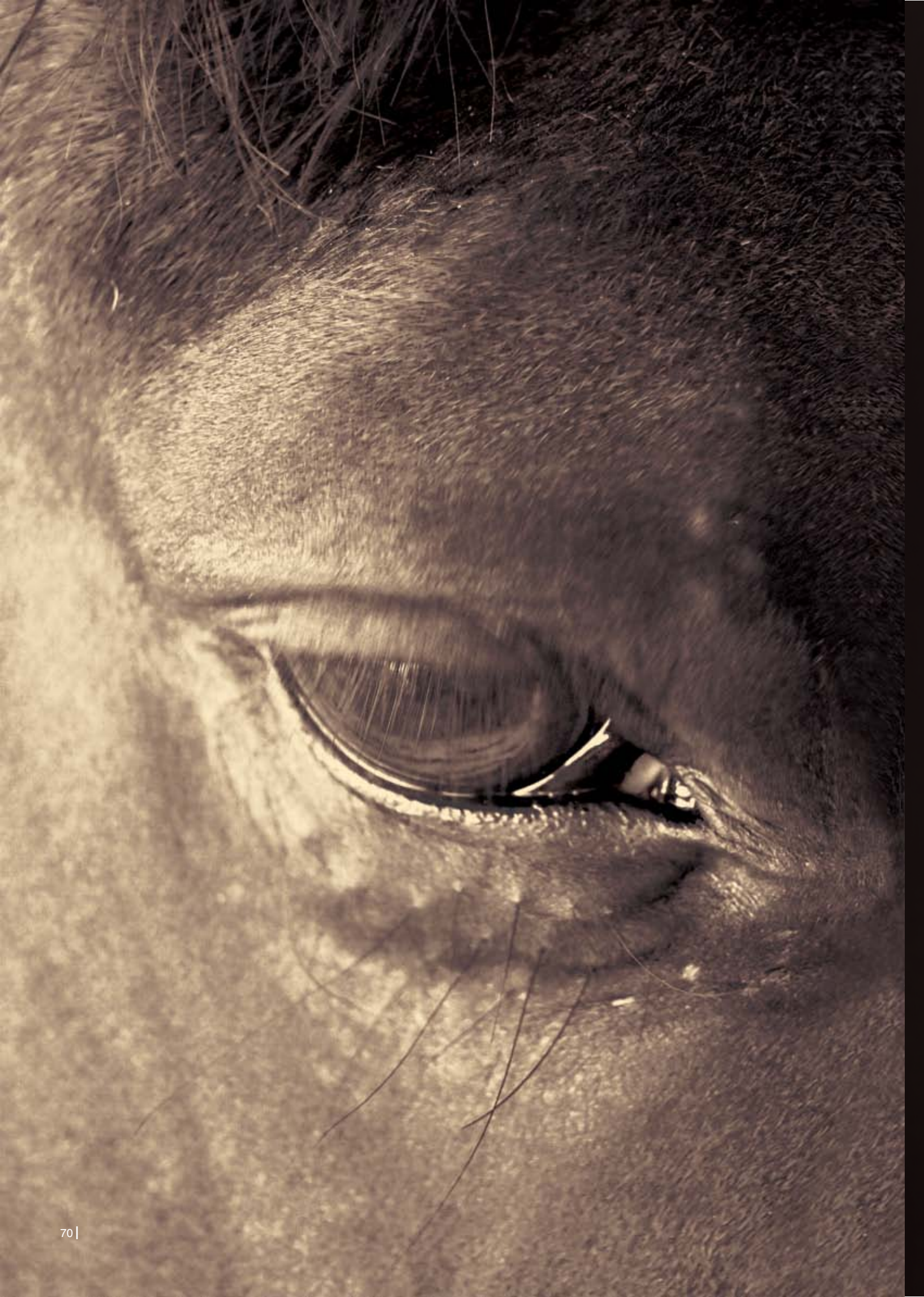


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SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

USING THE POWER OF THE MIND IN COMPETITIVE EQUESTRIAN SPORT

By Davina Ray

MENTAL STRENGTH IS ALMOST EVERYTHING; AND SUCCESS AT ANY LEVEL IS MOSTLY DEPENDENT ON ATTITUDE. THEY SAY 'ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING'.

THEN, THE QUESTION HAS TO BE ASKED WHY SO MANY ATHLETES ONLY FOCUS ON THEIR PHYSICAL ASPECTS, TECHNICAL SKILLS AND FITNESS. WHY IS IT THAT SO MANY TALENTED RIDERS CONTINUE TO IGNORE THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH TO GIVE THEIR SPORT 100%? IN EQUESTRIAN SPORT, ONE CAN BE THE MOST TALENTED RIDER, ON THE MOST CAPABLE HORSE, BUT EVEN WITH THE MOST REFINED TECHNICAL SKILLS AND THE BEST PHYSICAL FITNESS, YOU WILL BE HINDERED IN THE SEARCH FOR PERFECTION IF YOU SUFFER FROM LOW SELF-BELIEF, LACK OF CONFIDENCE OR OTHER EMOTIONAL ISSUES. INDEED, YOUR BATTLE WITHIN MAY DECIDE THE OUTCOME OF YOUR PERFORMANCE. OFTEN, THE THING THAT STOPS ONE FROM PERFORMING AT HIS BEST IN SPITE OF MONTHS OF PRACTICE AND PREPARATION IS UNSEEN AND INVISIBLE – IT IS THE POWER OF THE PSYCHE.



Photo by Cymon Taylor

The field of sports and performance psychology comprises instructing athletes, teams, coaches, trainers, parents, and other agents, on the psychological aspects of their sport. It involves assessment and therapeutic strategies to enhance an athlete's performance and personal growth. Performance psychology may be successfully applied to the world of sport, as well as entertainment. The eventual goal is to achieve optimum performance and enjoyment through the use of psychological skills such as arousal regulation, imagery, goal setting, positive self-talk, and leadership skills with your horse, guided visualisation, overcoming past traumas, and working through fears. Sports psychology may be applied to any sport, but equestrian sport is a little different – it is not just about the rider, but also the horse—the two are a team, a partnership. No matter how much you practice, your horse is never going to visualise the stadium jumping or dressage you have gone over yourself. And coaching techniques that apply the 'one size fits all' approach do not work, because each rider and horse

are different.

The psychological variables that are paramount for riders include:

MENTAL TOUGHNESS: Mentally tough athletes have 4 characteristics – a strong confidence in their own ability to perform a consistent internal motivation to be successful, the ability to focus thoughts and actions without distraction, and maintaining composure under pressure.

SPORT CONFIDENCE: A belief in their self-efficacy and how they will use a technique successfully; for example, 'I will be able to jump the high fence', instead of 'I think I will have a good show today', which is general confidence. Efficacy is related to specific tasks.

AROUSAL: The full activation of one's physical and mental capacities. The rider's perception of arousal as either good or bad is related to performance.

MOTIVATION: The will to perform a task, and the reasons behind it.

Peak performance, therefore needs control of effort, awareness of the self in every area, self-programming, visualisation and cognitive skills. A rider performing at his peak level has learned and mastered these and knows how to apply them in different situations; he can also alter these techniques to adapt them in new and unusual circumstances.

Coaches and trainers may also benefit from sports and performance psychology sessions by creating a more conducive atmosphere for athletes. This is done by enhancing the motivational climate in which to train riders. The motivational climate consists of the factors that influence a person's goals. The two main motivational environments coaches can help create are task-oriented and ego-oriented. Task-oriented motivation focuses on skill building, skill improvement, mastering the task at hand and learning how to give complete effort. An ego-oriented motivation approach deals more with demonstrating competition, superior ability, and showmanship (i.e. other referenced goals). Coaches can

also learn to explore the best ways to teach and lead their athletes, avoiding self-fulfilling prophecies, rewarding and reinforcing behaviour and giving better constructive feedback.

So, what are the methods by which you can be a better rider? There are several, of which we shall discuss the three most important ones in this article. First, it is essential to set realistic goals that you can achieve in consistent steps, provided you already have the necessary abilities, skills and qualities. A sports psychologist would recommend that you set specific performance goals rather than outcome goals. This is because performance goals are easier to control. One cannot usually control the outcome if it depends on external factors or other people, but you do have control over your own actions. Your riding goals should be specific, measurable, written down, time based, difficult but attainable and perhaps also a combination of short and long term visions.

Motor imagery is another method by which an athlete uses multiple senses to create or recreate experiences in one's mind. The more vivid the images are, the more the brain can interpret them as being similar to the actual event; this increases the effectiveness of mental practice with imagery. Good mental imagery uses multiple senses such as sight, smell, kinaesthetic, proper timing, and accurate portrayal of the task. Proper imagery can also help in managing psychological states relevant to performance. This is especially effective a day before an important event.

The third kind of therapeutic intervention in equestrian sport is somatic therapy. This type of therapy integrates the mental, physical, emotional and psychological aspects in every athlete. It does this by helping us become aware of our bodies and the sensations we experience through them. The pains and sensations we have tell us something about what is going on inside us. If, for example, you feel tight in a certain area, it may mean that we are holding onto something traumatic related to that area. In a trauma, we not only carry the memory but also the feelings attached to the negative



Photo by Cymon Taylor

experience. We therefore remember it physically as well. The body also has its own memory of an event and it is expressed through a muscle or tissue contraction or a loss of freely flowing energy in an area which was injured before or traumatised. As a result, some form of physical deregulation stays harboured in the body until it is released. Clients are helped to move to a state of being deregulated to a state of regulation and better balance. Sometimes, an athlete's body can be deregulated symbolically and not associated with a real trauma (i.e. fear, anxiety, and tension).

Other psychological training techniques for peak performance include relaxation therapy, visualisation, mental rehearsal, focusing and positive affirmation, cognitive training exercises, positive affirmation, training negative thoughts, addressing unspoken fear, learning positive self-talk and enhancing pre-performance routines.

If you have been thinking that your most important riding aid is your horse, or the level of your own physical fitness and training, think again.... the most important riding aid at your disposal is your mind and if it is not providing you with the results you wish for, it may be worthwhile to focus on your 'battle within' and emotional state rather than getting distracted with other things. Your training will take on a whole new meaning and dimension. Harnessing the power of the mind in being able to enhance your performance will be one of your most potent tools. 🐾

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