



**ALL SMILES FROM
ABDESLAM SMIRES**

**MOROCCO'S 2025 NATIONAL
SHOWJUMPING CHAMPION**



ABDESLAM BENNANI SMIRES IS AN INTERNATIONAL SHOWJUMPING RIDER NOTORIOUS FOR HIS INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND RADIANT SMILE THAT LIGHTS UP MANY ARENAS HE COMPETES IN. WITH A PASSION FOR ARABIAN HORSES AND A DEDICATION TO SHOWJUMPING, SMIRES (PRONOUNCED SMEERS) HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A PROMINENT ATHLETE IN THE MOROCCAN SHOWJUMPING COMMUNITY. HIS UNWAVERING COMMITMENT AND SKILL CULMINATED IN A MOMENTOUS WIN AT THE MOROCCAN NATIONAL SHOWJUMPING CHAMPIONSHIPS THIS JULY, WITH HIM CLINCHING THE 'HM KING MOHAMMED VI GRAND PRIX' TOP SPOT. WHETHER IN THE SADDLE OR AMONG FANS, HIS WARM PERSONALITY AND SPORTING SPIRIT ATTRACTS EQUESTRIAN ENTHUSIASTS ACROSS MOROCCO AND BEYOND.

Abdeslam, so you're Morocco's National Showjumping Champion?

Yes, I am! I won the National Showjumping Championships for seniors!

How's the feeling?

It's fantastic, but I'm cautious about celebrating too much. I lost my father just three weeks before the Championships. I worked tirelessly throughout the season to prepare for this, and while it all paid off, I wasn't sure if I was in the right mental state to compete. In the end, I managed to do it - and I did it for him. Everything came together so perfectly, especially with my horse, Mister D'Eclipse. He's an exceptional partner.

So how do you pick up and keep yourself motivated and focused?

I draw inspiration from the values my father instilled in me. He used to say, "Never give up. Life goes on." I trained for this Championship all season. Once I'm in the saddle, motivation just kicks in. I also wanted to win and dedicate this title to him. Honestly, for the first time, I wasn't overly focused on the results; I just let go and trusted my horse. That's when everything tends to fall into place.

Tell us about your champion horse?

Mister D'Eclipse is a 12-year-old BWP stallion by Diamant de Semilly and out of a Caretino mare, owned by the Federation. He had an injury that made many experts think he couldn't compete anymore. I was determined to give him another chance. Over two years, with the help of our national vet, Dr. Sandrine Serfati, and a dedicated team, we worked tirelessly, doing everything from rehab to beach exercises. Now, he's sound and capable of jumping four courses over three days in a championship.

Who is your trainer?

I currently train with Thierry Klein, our national trainer. His methods resonate with me and I find myself aligned with his instructions. In the past, we trained with World Champion Philippe Le Jeune, but his approach was more restrictive. Thierry's style suits me much better.

Who do you turn to for advice?

Well, I joke and say ChatGPT! But seriously, I rely on close friends. I stay in touch with our former national trainer Philippe Rozier. I also work closely with Jerome Guery, as we co-own horses. My stable



neighbour, Ali Al Ahrach, is a good friend, and El Ghali Boukaa is also someone I consult regularly.

Are you always based in Morocco year-round?

The Royal Moroccan Equestrian Federation typically sends riders to Europe for six months during the summer to train and compete. This year I only participated in the Sunshine Tour before returning in March to compete at national shows. I have several horses, and I'm very pleased with the results I achieved this season.

How does the Federation decide which horses to pair with riders?

The Federation owns several horses that can compete at different international levels. Together with the national trainer and President Cherif Moulay Abdallah Alaoui - who's also a former rider and a true horseman - they select the best fit for each rider.

What's your opinion on rising entry fees at shows? Do you think this trend limits opportunities for amateur and aspiring riders?

The sport has become very expensive. Whether you're an amateur or a professional, the costs are overwhelming: entry fees, travel, accommodation, and more. Without sponsors, it's nearly impossible to participate regularly. For example, I own my horses, but to compete with them, I bear all their expenses myself.

If you could own any horse, which one would it be?

There are many I'd love to own, but if I had to choose, it would be Leoni Jei. He's an extraordinary horse; he's powerful with blood to win Grand Prix.

We first met you in 2009 in Morocco, handling an Arabian horse. Do you still breed Arabians?

Yes, I do actually. While I don't show them internationally, I breed them at our Selman Marrakech stables. I prefer showjumping because it's straightforward, if you knock down a fence, it's a fault. Arabian horse shows, on the other hand, can be quite subjective, with judges varying from three to twenty. 🐾

Abdeslam Bennani Smires is married to Yasmine and is father of Ammer and Chams. With his family, he owns Selman Marrakech, a luxury hotel that is also home to some of Selman champion Arabian horses.

