

ABDELKADER SAID

AN EGYPTIAN IDOL

By Mohamed Zeyada

ABDELKADER SAID WAS THE YOUNGEST AND LEAST EXPERIENCED SHOW JUMPER AT THE LONDON INTERNATIONAL HORSE SHOW AT OLYMPIA. COMPETING ON A WILDCARD, HE PUT ASIDE THE WHITAKER FAMILY'S DOMINATION OF THE SHOW WHEN HE AND 'AVENIR' WON THE EARLS COURT OLYMPIA COMPETITION AFTER A SENSATIONAL 13-HORSE JUMP-OFF THAT BROUGHT THE PACKED GRAND HALL TO FEVER PITCH.



▲ Said & Avenir jumped clear in 32.12 seconds

Michael Whitaker on 'Portofino', one of 3 members of the family to win at the competition, was 11th to go in the jump-off and went into the lead with a lightning round of 32.67seconds. When his niece Ellen cleared with 0.13 seconds off his time on 'Equimax Ocolado', her round was greeted as the winning one with prolonged applause.

However, Said answered the challenge with a breathtaking round on a horse he started riding only in March, stopping the clock on 32.12 seconds and bringing the crowd to its feet. Edwina Alexander, the winner of the 2008 Olympia World Cup and ranked 6th in the world, was last into the arena and gave her all on 'Cevo Itot du Chateau' but still failed to catch Said - finishing second in 32.20.

Said started riding at the age of 4 at Alexandria Sporting Club in Alexandria. Now at 20, he soon was able to reach top levels of competition, being a sturdy team member always representing Egypt at major championships. Trained by Emil Hendrix, Said is now based in Belgium - his parents having moved from Egypt when he was a child to help him to further his show jumping career.

How was it like to be present at the Olympia arena competing with top names from the show jumping circuit?

I was a little nervous of course because

I wanted to do my best! The arena is very small at Olympia; it's a tiny ring with big jumps! The nice thing about it is that it was packed with seats of 10,000 people. Whilst jumping, you really feel the crowd behind you. The big jumps in a small and very spooky arena meant that the jumps came around very fast; I needed to have a plan and stick to it.

Did you expect you'd have a clear round in the class – a class where the top riders were unable to jump clear?

Well of course you have to believe you can do it. I was hoping for a clear but I didn't know before the class that I would go clear in the Grand Prix or the big class.

After your first round, did you believe you could win Olympia?

My horse 'Avenir' jumped superbly in the first round, and so I was hoping for a high placing. However when Michael Whitaker took the lead with his niece Ellen beating his time, I got excited when I heard the crowd cheer and went for it as much as I could.

Tell us about your build-up plans to be placed at Olympia?

Before going to London, I was just hoping to do my best and see how far I can go. It was 'Avenir's' first major championship anyhow, so my expectations were realistic.

What gives you motivation and confidence to win?

I have to say 'Avenir' was in fantastic shape; that along with the packed arena certainly boosted my motivation.

How did it feel to stand as the winner at such a big event, hearing the national anthem of your country played?

I was very proud of course. It was a nice moment to see the Egyptian flag raised at the Olympia Grand Hall. It was in way a thanks to all the people who support me and still do until this day. Many thanks go to my family, Team Harmony of HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein, and all the Egyptians who believe in me and show constant support.

Do you have any words of encouragement and advice to the young riders who wish to achieve what you have?


Well I think for one to become a successful rider, it takes more than just talent. I think its management, motivation, hard work and determination. Keep working at what you want and stay with your feet on the ground even when success comes. Always set high goals, have a plan and an objective to work for. 

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