

CSI***-W SHARJAH 2012

AN EMIRATI LED THE WAY

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem



STARTING ON A SUPERB JANUARY 26TH BENEATH THE SUNNY SKIES OF THE UAE, THE WORLD CUP QUALIFIER CSI***-W OF SHARJAH DEMONSTRATED MAGNIFICENT QUALITY COMPETITIONS BY MORE THAN 500 INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS. TO MANY ARAB SHOW JUMPING RIDERS, THE SHARJAH INTERNATIONAL SHOW JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIP AND THE SHARJAH EQUESTRIAN & RACING CLUB (SERC) ARE CERTAINLY A VERY SPECIAL EVENT AND VENUE, RESPECTIVELY, AMONGST ARAB LEAGUE COMPETITIONS AND VENUES, CONTINUING SUCCESSFULLY FOR THE 12TH YEAR THUS FAR. WITH IMPECCABLE ANNUAL EFFORTS DEMONSTRATING PERFECT ATTENTION TO ORGANISATIONAL DETAIL, THE SHOW HAS CREATED A TRADITION OF EFFICIENCY THAT INSPIRES THE RIDERS AS WELL AS THE ENTIRE NETWORK OF PEOPLE AT THE SHOW.

DAY ONE:

Longines as a sponsor kicked off day one of the competitions with the 'Longines Welcome Class', one round against the clock, 120 cm, 46 starts, 15,000 dirhams in prize money, which was eventually won by Lebanon's Toni Assaf on Ashley. The second class, the 'National Contracting 7 Transport Accumulator', 130 cm and 20,000 dirhams in prize money, saw a Qatari winner, Hamad Al Qadi on Gysmo 26.

The final class of the day, the 'Sharjah Tourism Challenge', qualifier for the Grand Prix, 140-160 cm and prize money of 120,000 dirhams, Table A with 71 seconds allowed, displayed some serious competition between 63 starts. Germany's Werner Deeg worked his magic inside the stellar indoor arena and designed a very technical course that afforded very few clears. Although some riders had jumped with two horses, out of the 35 who qualified for the Grand Prix, only seven really grabbed the spectators' attention with their speed to clear the round without faults. Out of the seven, Saudi's Khalid Al Eid cleared the jump-off on Vanhoeve in 61.13 seconds and seemed comfortable to win the class. To beat that time, Ireland's Marion Hugues rode her speedy Crispian and cleared in 60.97 seconds. No comfort for Marion as still, the "show stopper", Saudi's Abdullah Al Sharbatly, was last to go and indeed, he cleared in a breath-taking 55.30 second round on a horse that loves nothing but a "need-for-speed" challenge, Lobster 43.

DAY TWO:

Day two of the championships saw the start of 82 horses in the 'Pioneer Auctions Jump-Off' with 20,000 dirhams in prize money, won by Qatar's Abdullah Braikh Al Marri on Lucas 149. In riders, Qatar and the UAE outnumbered any other country at this year's show. The second class, the 'Longines Challenge' speed class with 30,000 dirhams in prize money, presented three winners who were



▲ Toni Assaf with Mr. Sultan Al Yahyaee & Patrick Aoun
▼ Abdullah Al Sharbatly





so close in time. Placed third was the UAE's Abdullah Marri on Randor K in 51.96 seconds, second was Saudi's Fahad Al Eid on Maureen in 51.49 seconds, and first was Qatar's Sheikh Ali Al Thani on that chestnut mare that jumped tremendously well during the three-day show, Dukhan (Amon).

The final class of day two was the 'Sharjah Record' Puissance sponsored by the Sharjah Islamic Bank with 80,000 dirhams in prize money. The spectators prepare themselves well for this exciting class; a true thrill for any show jumping fan. In 2011, the UAE's Mohamed Al Kumaiti set the record at 205 cm and started this year with a different horse.

With ten riders only to start, including Qatar's Ali Al Rumahi on Maradonna, Kuwait's Ali Al Khorafi on Troongraaf, Abdullah Al Sharbatly on Larkhill Cruiser, Egypt's Diah Beshir on Altaeer, and Al Kumaiti on

▲ Sheikh Ali Al Thani

▼ Ali Al Rumahi



Campanero 15 - only seven from the ten cleared 170 cm. When the fence was raised to 182cm, only six from the seven cleared, while five from the six cleared the next 197 cm upped fence. The fence was finally upped to 210 cm and there were only five riders to go.

Beshir and Altaeer, a likely favourite to clear, decided to withdraw. A personal bet was set on the warmblood Maradonna, a mare with plenty of scope and a lot of jump, and the crowd's bet was set on Larkhill Cruiser, a horse made for speed but who doesn't necessarily have that kind of scope. None of the five cleared 210 cm and were tied at 197 cm, and left to hold the 2011 205 cm record was Al Kumaiti, who on Campanero 15 only cleared 170 cm.

DAY THREE:

Day three of the event was the Grand Prix, a World Cup Qualifier. Leading



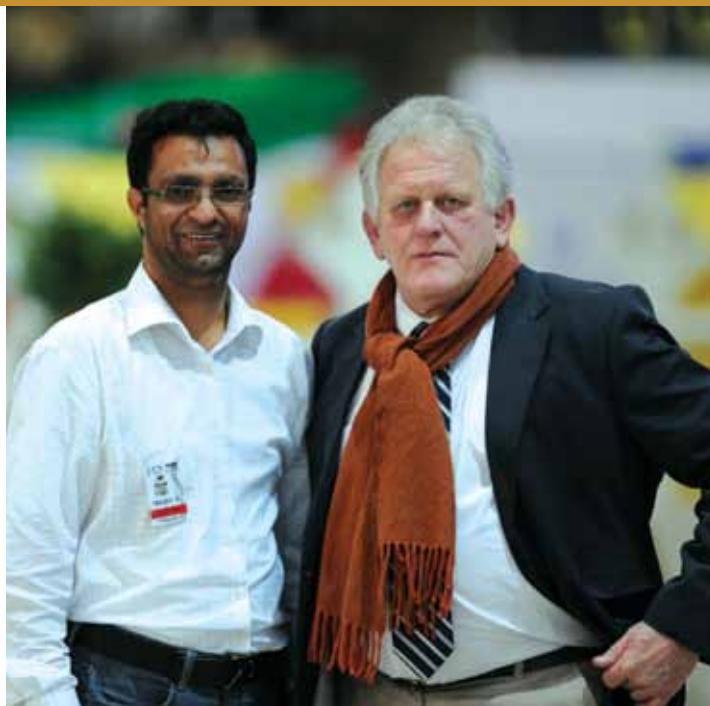
▲ Sheikh Ali Al Qassimi

▼ Khaled Al Eid

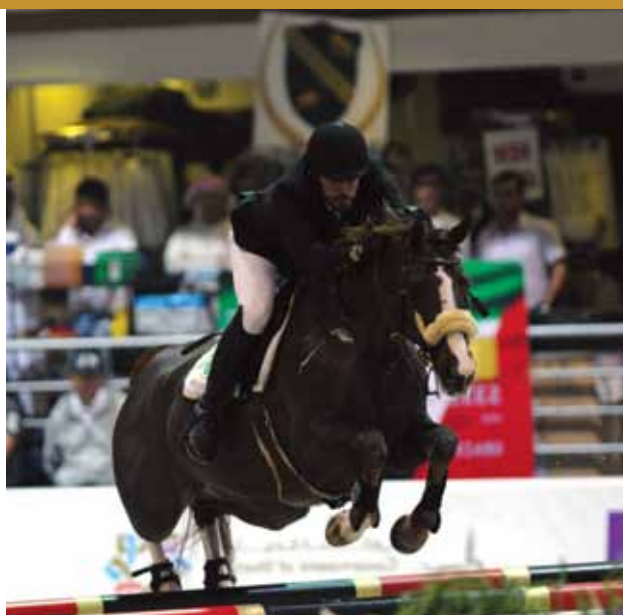




▲ Ferenc Sztiermai
▼ Jorg Naeve



▲ Yousef Al Mahmoudy & Werner Deeg
▼ Mohamed Al Owais



the Arab League standings is Khalid Al Eid with 85 points followed by Al Sharbatly with 71. Al Eid together with Vanhoeve didn't have many fences down during the event, and both he and Al Sharbatly were the crowd's favourite to win the 250,000 dirhams.


The two phase 'Sharjah General Contracting' small Grand Prix was won by the UAE's Abdulla Al Marri on Alaska. The 'Sharjah Tourism

Cup' medium Grand Prix was won by Ireland's Lucy Buchanan on Kofi Anan. Left to end the Championships was the Longines Grand Prix, with two different rounds, 140 cm to 160 cm, and 32 starts.

Werner Deeg designed a very technical course with many twists and turns; very tricky and intimidating to any who wished to win that generous 250,000 dirhams. Out of 32 riders, only ten made it through

to round two.

Khalid Al Eid and Vanhoeve were the first to start; they cleared only round two and were placed fifth, with 17,500 dirhams in prize money. The Ukraine's Ferenc Sztiermai on Corenso was placed fourth with 27,500 dirhams in prize money. Many felt that Germany's Jorg Naeve on his careful horse Calado 2 would win the class after clearing the first round, but they ended up with faults in the second and came in third place, with 37,500 dirhams in prize money. The "show stopper" Al Sharbatly on Lobster 43, winners of CSI***-W Dubai just two weeks before Sharjah, came in second place and won 55,000 dirhams.

No one would have guessed that an Emirati would win the Grand Prix as Saudi horses have been stealing the limelight for quite some time, but Mohamed Al Owais and Tolita cleared round one in 73.18 seconds and rode a fantastic second round to clear in 64.10 seconds. They were the surprises of the final, with no bets set on them. They were the Emirati crowd's favourites, the Emirati crowd's pleasers, and the winners of 250,000 dirhams. 



▲ Mohamed Al Owais
▼ HH Sheikh Abdullah Al Qassimi

The SERC was established in 1982 as the first equestrian club in the UAE. It was built at the initiation of HH Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah. The continuous support and guidance of HH has led the SERC to its present state as the leading UAE equestrian centre whose riders have achieved distinctive results both locally and internationally. The comprehensive establishment covers an area of four square kilometres, contains one of the largest indoor riding facilities in the Middle East, and has been at the forefront of encouraging equestrian sport within the UAE. The Sharjah racetrack was the first track constructed according to global specifications and has many memories of early horseracing in the country. Periodic races are organised at state level, the show jumping arena has witnessed numerous championships, and many UAE and international riders are alumni of these shows.



All photos by Hossein Nedaenia