



## DR. ABOUBAKR HASHEM HOME IS WHERE THE HORSES ARE

**By Nada H. Abdelmoniem**

EGYPT HAS HAD LONG HISTORY IN SHOW JUMPING SPORT DATING BACK TO THE LATE 50s AND EARLY 60s. SADLY, THAT MOMENTUM HAS DIED DOWN OVER THE YEARS AND CURRENTLY, WHAT REMAINS OF THE COUNTRY'S GREAT EQUESTRIAN LEGACY ARE NUMEROUS TALENTED RIDERS AND BEHIND-THE-SCENES INDIVIDUALS OF THE OLDER GENERATION WHO CONTINUE TO WORK HARD TO BRING THE SPORT BACK TO ITS FORMER GLORY.



years. "It was a new challenge for my brother and I and we took it on with all heart. Omar retired from riding in 1989 due to back injuries which put extra responsibility on me where I fought and rode for myself and also for him", Dr. Aboubakr explains. Starting in 1987, Dr. Aboubakr represented Gezira equestrian team in the National League, winning many trophies. He competed in a few international competitions and was selected for the national Egyptian team in 1993.

He continues, "I was also a member of the first equestrian committee that was established in the Gezira Club in 1989. In its early years, this committee together with the late Dr. Hashem Fouad, former President of the Gezira Club, never spared any expense to provide equestrian facilities such as jumping grounds and horseboxes at the club, paving the way for many young riders to create a great team which engraved Dr. Hashem Fouad's name in the sport. I remained a committee member until 2002 when I was selected by the Egyptian Equestrian Federation's officials to join both technical and tournament committees where I remained for eight years. In 2004, I joined the FEI Judging course and passed the exams to become an International Candidate Judge. In 2009, I passed the second exam and I was then promoted to an

International FEI Judge in jumping. In 2010, fellow riders from Ferosia Club board asked me to join them one more time in the development of the Club. As such, we all adopted a plan to revitalise it and were capable of achieving plenty of developments through hard work, some of which included establishing state-of-the-art jumping grounds and vet clinics. In 2011, I nominated myself to become a board member of the Club where I got the highest number of votes. My colleagues and I have a clear vision for the Ferosia Club to play a sportive and social role for all its members, and our goal is to upgrade the club's performance to the highest levels in both fields."

Dr. Aboubakr says he has three homes: the first is where his family is, the second is the Ferosia Club and the third being Gezira Club. Why has he chosen equestrian sport to be so involved with and why does "his heart dwell where the horses are"? He answers, "I always loved all kinds of sports, but horse riding is related to my ancestors. Prophet Mohamed PBUH quotes, "In the forehead of horses are tied-up welfare and bliss until the day of resurrection." Also being a Hashemite descendant – an Arab clan known to have produced fursan [horsemen], played a big role; it is like horses are simply instilled in our blood. Being around horses has also helped me understand

One of those individuals, Dr. Aboubakr Hashem, has been involved in the horse scene in Egypt for many years. Along with his twin brother Dr. Omar, they started to ride in 1977 at the Ferosia Club under the supervision of Captain Ibrahim Abdullah. The twins started to compete for the Club's team from the time they were eleven years old and continued until age 18. Due to their remarkable performance, by 1987, Gezira Club asked the twins to establish a show jumping team for the club. With the support of visionaries, such as the late Dr. Hashem Fouad and Gen. Ahmed Adnan, Dr. Aboubakr and Dr. Omar were able to establish a team that Dr. Aboubakr headed for many



life; it taught me patience, wisdom, courage, and perseverance. As such, I perceive horse riding as a “way of life”.

Dr. Aboubakr is a father of nine-year-old Ali, who has just started riding, and a full-time dentist. How does he balance between that and being fully involved with horses? He states, “The resemblance between dentistry and equestrian sport lies in the fact that both need a lot of patience, accuracy, dedication and commitment.” He continues, “And as mentioned, I come from a family that loves horses, and I incidentally come from a family of medical doctors; medicine is part of my family’s tradition. My father was a Gynaecologist and my grandfather was the Chairman of the Pathology department in Cairo University. I work at my dental office and I am also an assistant lecturer at the Dental School. It is definitely difficult trying to balance between being a teacher, a doctor, a board member as well as taking care of my family, but I believe that God has always helped me to succeed.”

Given the setbacks in the Egyptian horse scene, how does Dr. Aboubakr see the sport developing in the next five years? He responds, “Well, we always keep trying to put the Ferosia Club on the map by keeping it developed. In 2010 the President of the IOC Jacques Rogge was present at the Club during our hosting of a show jumping event honouring the 100th anniversary of the Egyptian Olympic Committee, and just this year back in April, we hosted another international show jumping Festival, HORSES & HOPES. Consequently, and as slow as it may seem, we are trying our best to move in the right direction of the continuous development of equestrian sport in Egypt. I have two equestrian dreams that I wish to see come true for Egypt: firstly, I dream that we win another team gold medal in the Mediterranean Games. We won that 25 years ago and it is about time we win it again! It is a regional Championship and a must-win. And secondly, a dream which will require plenty of logistics, I dream that junior Egyptian riders are given the chance

to train and turn professional in Europe and gain much experience in preparation for the Olympic Games [2016]. I salute the Saudi Team for winning a medal in London 2012 for the plan that was in place for them prior to the Olympics was solely established just for that. They came ahead of many top teams and deservedly won that medal because they followed a plan, and again, because I believe that horses are part of Arab heritage, it’s in our blood and breed. Finally, with feeling, Dr. Aboubakr concludes, “for the time being, our role, my generation and I, is to bring back our horse legacy to Egypt.”

*About Dr. Aboubakr: B.D.S Dental & Oral Surgery – M.D.S Dental & Oral Surgery (Fixed Prosthodontics) - Former show jumper (1987 – 1999) - Former member, Egyptian Equestrian Federation Technical Committee - Former member, Gezira Club Equestrian Committee (1989 -2002) – Board member, Ferosia Club - International FEI Judge*

