

IN DEPTH WITH SALVADOR PINTO DA FRANÇA

By Aya Amr

I am a 35-year-old Portuguese diplomat posted in Cairo for two and a half years. I started riding in Agadir, Morocco, where I lived at the time in 1991. The club was owned by the army and most of its budget was for the salary of the French riding instructor. Therefore, there was not even money to geld the horses! and stallion fights in the beginners lessons were frequent. My mother used to call it 'an American Rodeo'!



Salvador Pinto Da França, his wife Margarida Flores Pinto da França & their gorgeous baby, Salvador Junior



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Salvador with his horse Panadol

When I was 16, there was no French school in Porto, Portugal, so I had to study by correspondence. The study took only my morning, so **horse riding was a way to keep busy and meet people.** I started to teach kids in exchange for a horse to ride in competitions. When I think back, it was not such a good deal. **I taught at least 100 lessons a month** and the horses I was given were for no more than 1.10m! Unfortunately, my parents never liked the sport and never invested in it, so this was the only way I found to keep going...

During University, I had to give up teaching; I didn't have that much free time any more. I still kept riding and learnt a lot thanks to a **Portuguese international rider, Luís Sabino.** He is a real horse lover and has a property where he prepares horses to sell abroad. Young riders are always welcome and he's always available for teaching, **I owe him a lot!**

After entering the diplomatic service, my first posting was Bissau. I had to stop riding because... there were no horses in Guinea Bissau! In tropical climates, horses die of disease they were not meant to endure...

Since the fall of 2014, I have been riding at Ferosia, with Khaled Assem's team and it has been great

to come back. **My goal is to get to the big classes,** because I never got there with the horses I had 20 years ago! It's funny to be almost the only foreigner participating. Makes me feel quite adapted and has allowed me to meet a lot of interesting people! We have at least three training sessions a week, but I usually manage to ride at least 5 days a week, sometimes more than one horse a day and we jump usually at least once a week. **My favourite place for riding in Egypt is Ferosia,** because it's where I ride and it has so much potential. **But Rabab is my favourite place for competitions** as we feel out of hectic Cairo there! It is so green and peaceful and the scenery of the desert behind is so powerful...

Tell us one or two things in your training that contributed to your success.

Working on the light seat! I am from a time where the deep seat was much more used and it allowed me to get some improvement in terms of time and quality of jump. Also, **shortening my stirrups** allowed me to find a better position for jumping and avoiding touching some poles probably. Last but not least, **regularity of the stride in front of the jump to get the right stride.** What really helped me improve was a great advice given to me by my trainer; he told me to use

my feeling more than calculations in a course.

What advice would you give to young athletes?

To get a lot of experience with different horses and trainers, take different courses, seminars, clinics. Don't accept necessarily everything. Use your judgement to take what is best for you and leave aside the rest. Chemistry between trainer and student is essential. Some trainers work for some students and not with others.

Who has been your greatest support?

In the sport, my trainer, Khaled who had the patience to watch, analyse and work on it and also who could find me horses until now.

In my personal life, my wife for sure who has accompanied me everywhere around the world, always supportive.

What is the biggest reward you ever got?

Everything that diplomatic life gave me. The chance to meet so much different people and cultures and spare some time for my hobbies like horse riding! 🐾