

NAYEL NASSAR

A STAR IS BORN

PART 1

By KHALED ASSEM

MY PERSONAL HISTORY WITH NAYEL STARTED MANY YEARS BACK; I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF HIM AS A SPECIAL YOUNG RIDER WITH LOTS OF TALENT. HE IS A STANFORD GRADUATE IN ECONOMICS, SPEAKS FOUR LANGUAGES AND STAYS IN TUNE WITH HIS MIDDLE EASTERN IDENTITY. HE HAS A DEEP APPRECIATION FOR HIS HORSES; HE TREATS THEM NICELY AND TREATS PEOPLE NICELY AS WELL. I SAW IN HIM ALL THE HORSEMAN VALUES THAT WE TALK ABOUT BUT DON'T SEE MUCH OF.

AFTER SEVERAL MEETINGS WITH HIM IN EGYPT AND OUTSIDE WE CAME TOGETHER AGAIN TO DISCUSS HIS VIEWS ON HIS EQUESTRIAN BUSINESS, HIS RIDING CAREER AND HIS PERSONAL FUTURE. WE ALSO DISCUSSED THE DECISIONS THAT CRITICALLY AFFECTED HIS CAREER. I'VE SEEN A LOT OF COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION IN THIS GENTLEMAN RIDER AND I AM HOPING THAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR HIM A LOT MORE PROSPERITY THAT HE WELL DESERVES.





for long time, so we know each other very well. He's very fast, very light, understands the game, very scopey for his size, a bit unconventional in how he jumps yet we learned how to accommodate that together.

Being so different, none of my coaches at the time was approving my selection of Lordan, especially as he had already been **returned** by his 1st purchaser! I just had to trust **my own feeling** that I got when I jumped him, and I knew with no doubt whatsoever that this is the one and only horse for me out of the other 20 horses I had tried that December freezing cold day. That I will never forget!

For my next partner, I will always look for **similar characteristics** in terms of lightness, speed but most importantly a good mind; **the horse has got to want to win as much as you do.**

YOUR NEXT EQUESTRIAN GOAL, YOUR NEXT BUSINESS PROSPECT. IS THERE AN OVERLAP BETWEEN THE SPORT AND THE BUSINESS?

There is **balance** between 3 main elements, the sport, training and sales.

Early on, I needed to focus on the sport to establish a name for myself, get some results, and grow my knowledge base before I transfer that to other people. The last couple of years I started to train more.



Nayel and Lordan

WHO WOULD YOU SAY WAS MOST INFLUENTIAL ON YOUR RIDING CAREER?

First and foremost, I have to thank **my parents**, they staged the initial path. I got a lot of good training and was exposed to a lot of diversity with so many accomplished coaches. My first trainer ever, who had introduced horses and horse care to my life, was **Noaf Bin Essa**. She always insisted on having me plat my own horse's mane, while even standing on the highest stool at the stable, my firey 5 year old mare's mane was still out of my reach. However, this taught me the importance of getting so much closer to my mare. I then got the chance to train with **Markus Beerbaum, Jos Lansink, Piet Raijmakers, Jörg Naeve and Laura Kraut**, who was not just a trainer but a mentor as well. Luckily working with such accomplished trainers gave me very strong basics, not just in the sport but in the business as well.

Having all such acquired knowledge and training under my belt at such an early stage of my life, I felt that I can afford to spend some time on my own settling down and trying out what works best for me away from further coaching, especially that I also realized that asking accomplished riders at big events or

during course walks for ideas and help, one gets extra exposure to different strategies and perspectives.

It all started when I qualified for the World Cup final on my stallion **Brutus**; we won the League and we won the following year's League as well. I felt that I was at a point in my career where I had ridden so many Grand Prix, and trained with some of the best trainers in the world, so I realized that neither my ways, nor my outlook on how to do things were going to be altered that much.

The horses continued to develop, and before I knew it, **I won the million!** It was just me, **my mum, Linda and Lordan**. I decided I must be doing something right and the horse I have is obviously very special, so now we need to be doing this more professionally and consistently. That was when I decided to go fully professional and give this a go.

TALKING ABOUT A SIGNIFICANT PARTNER IN YOUR CAREER, WHO WOULD THAT BE?

It's **Lordan**.

He is such a modern type of horse. I have had him



As for sales, at the beginning of my career I started by sourcing my **own horses**. With time I realized that some of these horses weren't going to suit me further down the road, or weren't going to be good enough for the **top sport** that I have started to aim for, yet can still be quite useful to other riders at different stages than mine of their riding careers. Accordingly they had to be sold to such riders. I had good success with developing these horses and later selling them with a marginal profit, but my **prize money** is the main fund to my career, so far.

Basically, all the top riders have managed to balance business and sport together; **diversity pays off when the right balance is achieved.**

AS FOR YOUR PERSONAL FUTURE AND PROSPECTIVE SPONSORS?!

Wait for Nayel's answer in part 2 in our coming issue! 🐾