



SYRIA 2008

CSI**** -W

AL WAFAA FOR BASSEL AL ASSAD

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

Beautiful; a word continuously repeated during Al Waffa for Bassel Al Assad 2008 event by riders, attendants, trainers and organisers. On Thursday March 20th, the event started with a fairly new equestrian discipline in Syria; Dressage. Very much new to the Arab region, yet becoming very popular, beautiful quality dressage horses were ridden by their owners for practice early Thursday morning. Preparations and guidance were done by dressage trainers and all the participants were ready to perform in the first dressage show ever to be held in Syria.

MANAL AL ASSAD

*Syrian Arab Equestrian Federation Honourary President:
First place winner of the M100 Dressage event
& Second place winner of the M200 event:*

ON DRESSAGE: “dressage is new in Syria and I took the initiative to start it because I wanted its idea to expand here after seeing show jumping move further. Endurance and show jumping have grown in Arab countries so why not dressage? It’s an Olympic discipline, it’s elegant and it’s good for the sport. My participation was not because I wanted or deserved a win, I just sought to see how my training came in because I just started in July 2007. I really thank the judges for honouring me with a win which really gave me a push to continue on training in order to reach higher levels. I also wanted to give an indication to other Arab countries that Syria is really pushing to build-up dressage in the Middle East with specialised dressage horses and trainers helping to encourage them to really specialise in the discipline; if there is competition all around the area, then it will absolutely grow. Arab show jumpers have reached the World Cup and the Olympics, and I hope Arab dressage riders will as well”.

ON TRAINERS: “I have had two trainers for dressage; firstly I was trained by Pia Johansson from Schockemohle stables and then I continued with Paulo Margi from Italy who has had great history in dressage. He helped me a lot in gaining experience. I am also going to try training with a third trainer because varying trainers helps in adding to one’s experience and details of perfection”.



▲ Manal Al Assad, Syria

CHRISTINA RENGEFORS

President of Ground Jury:

“I’m very impressed with the quality of horses as well as the excellent organisation of the show. The show grounds are beautiful and I think we can have an international competition here due to the wonderful footing. I hope dressage will grow in this region because whatever is needed is already available”.

Manal Al Assad ▼



▲ Christina Rengefors, Italy



▲ Carla Kattouah, Lebanon

EUGENIO ROVIDA

Dressage Judge:

"It's my first time in Syria and it has been very interesting. I see so many beautiful horses that are of good quality in schooling. The arena is wonderful and it has the perfect conditions for any show; on the same note, everyone is friendly, the weather is lovely and I'm very happy to be here".

Eugenio Rovida, Italy ►

Firas Jnedi, Syria ▼



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FIRAS JNEIDI

First place winner of the M200 Dressage event & Second place winner the M100 event:

"I think dressage needs a lot of concentration and the rider has to follow all the steps accurately. It is an enormous step for Syria to hold a dressage show; in the upcoming years I am sure we will all see more dressage riders, more competition, more enthusiasm and more higher levels given that this was the first time a dressage show was included within Al Wafaa event. I am very happy with my wins and I hope the upcoming years bring more competition".

◀ Inji Elhamy, Egypt

▼ Erdogan Altan, Turkey



Eugueni Oimtrou, Bulgaria ▲

PAOLO BELLOCCIHI

Italy, Dressage Judge:

"I'm impressed with the horses - and this competition has been a step forward for this region. This is a brilliant riding centre and the competition levels are high enough for me to see future shows just like the ones in Europe; the grounds are perfect and the future of dressage has excellent potential in the Middle East".

▼ Jacques Toffi & Nada H. Abdelmoniem



ON FRIDAY MARCH 21ST, a party hosted by the young and beautiful Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram and the talented Syrian poet Sabah Fakhri was held. No more boots and dust at the party, but elegant gowns and suits worn by everyone coming to participate at the 2008 events.

AFTER TWO DAYS of dressage events and entertaining freestyle dressage by Manal Al Assad, a day off was taken for further preparations for the show jumping events.

MOST of the riders inhabited Yafour Hotel & Resort at Yafour – located opposite the new eight Gate of Damscus Emmar Project, Syria. It was easy to lounge with the riders and get a feel of how well they were prepared for the show. Yafour hotel is not as busy all year round, so the hospitality, convenience, and hosting was quite pleasant. It was a little far from Bassel Al Assad Equestrian Club, but was close enough for a drive-by peek at the beautiful mountains dwelling on the country side of Al Sham (Levant – Syria).

With more than 250 riders and horses competing for Al Bassel Memorial Trophy, the show jumping competitions kicked-off to a very competitive start and ended with much anxiety for the Syrian crowd watching their local riders compete, as well as unexpected, yet wonderful surprises.

ON SUNDAY MARCH 23RD, a loud acrobatic Opening Ceremony with fireworks welcomed 12 countries on Syrian grounds to participate in the event; Jordan, Germany, the UAE, Italy, Turkey, KSA, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and with the host Syria.

COMPETITIONS started with children at 8 am and would continue with Small, Medium and Big tours until 10 pm. On the Childrens Level, the First place win went to Syria's Yousif Anzarouti with a total points of 148 throughout the 4 day event, the Second place win went to Jordan's Taj Al-Deen Barakat with a total points of 142, and the Third win went to Laith Al Shibli, also from Syria, with a total points of 137.



ROB JANSEN

International Course Designer:

"The courses at Seif Al Sham (CSIO-W/3*), the outdoor show jumping event just before Al Wafaa (CSI-W/4*) indoor event, were not too difficult and big because the horses had to jump again in 8 days; if the courses were too big for them in the first show, they wouldn't have jumped well in this indoor arena. Furthermore, the preparations are not yet ready for Al Wafaa courses; when I'm in the arena I get the feeling of how to plan a course, seeing the horses also helps me with the design, so I always wait until the last moment to plan the courses".

Dancer at the Opening Ceremony ►

Yousef Anzarouti, Syria, 1st Leading Child Rider ▼





▲ *Taj Al Deen Barakat, Jordan, 2nd Leading Child Rider*



▲ *Laith Al Shibli, Syria, 3rd Leading Child Rider*

▼ *Rob Jansen, The Netherlands*



ON THE SENIOR LEVEL, some riders would compete with 2 horses in Small and Medium tours but would stick to that and allow the more professional to jump the Big courses. Riders would work their horses before the show in a wide outdoor arena, and then straddle-up in their outfits to perform indoors. With the audience seated very closely to the courses, every time a Syrian rider gallops in with his beautiful horse, the crowd would roar in applause. Quite a very popular rider there was the 2007 Grand Prix winner Saudi's Khalid Al Eid who everyone would watch in complete silence. On each and every day of the 4 day event, dangerous nasty falls would be seen on the arena. The horses were still unaccustomed to the indoor conditions and mischief would be seen through their eyes.

THE FIRST DAY SMALL TOUR (1.20M) ON SUNDAY MARCH 23RD was won by Salim Ahmed Al Suwaidi from the UAE. Second came in Ali Al Khorafi from Kuwait, and Third came in Ibrahim Bisharat from Jordan. The Medium Tour (1.35m) First place win went to the rising skilled Yemeni rider Bassim Hassan Seif, Second place went to Qatari Sheikh Ali bin Khalid Al Thani, and the Third place went to Egyptian/Italian Andre Sakakini. Ending the day with the Big Tour (1.40m), the 3 wins went to gutsy Ahmad Hamsho from Syria First, Khalid Al Eid Second, and once again, Ibrahim Bisharat Third.

▼ *Salim Ahmed Al Suwaidi, UAE*

SALIM AHMED AL SUWAIDI

March 23rd Small Tour First place winner:

"I had a good start coming in First place and I want to thank everyone who has been supporting me. The show is great and the horse and rider levels are also great and I hope we all contribute in making this show more successful in the future. Without any doubt, the show jumping sport has been swiftly and positively developing in this region and this year at the show I see lots of riders and teams coming in with their professional trainers which adds more to the organisation and the preparations of the riders. We are not that far away from the high levels of show jumping in Europe and hopefully we will all reach international ranks".

▼ *Khalid Al Khorafi, Kuwait*
March 23rd Small Tour 2nd place winner





SHEIKH ALI BIN KHALID AL THANI

March 23rd Medium Tour Second Place winner:

"I had good rounds at the beginning of the show even though I had a nasty fall because my horse got a little scared. The competition levels are very high in this show, the courses are very technical and mostly, the performances of riders and horses are very impressive. If this level of riding stays on the same track, then I'm definite that the years to come will bring more competitiveness".

◀ Ali Al Thani, Qatar

▼ Ahmad Hamsho, Syria



▲ Ibrahim Bisharat, Jordan, March 23rd Small & Big Tour 3rd place winner

BASSIM HASSAN SEIF

March 23rd Medium Tour

First place winner:

"I love the show because it has been wonderfully organised. I am also thrilled with my win and I would like to thank Khalid & Fahd Al Eid for supporting my career. If now or in the future I manage to receive any achievements, then that will be because of their support".

▼ Bassim Hassan Seif, Yemen



AHMAD HAMSHO

March 23rd Big Tour First place winner:

"Winning something is a great feeling, and to win whilst competing against Olympic riders like Khalid Al Eid & Ibrahim Bisharat is added value for me because it helps me want to become better. A lot of quality riders have come to compete here in order to qualify for the World Cup; these riders are not here with just any horses, but with extraordinary horses that make the levels of competition really high. The sport is really developing in our region and this is due to understanding that it is important to have good horses, important to train & compete as well as important to participate in different international shows. It's a competitive sport and one can have no expectations because in show jumping the elements of winning keep changing".



▲ Nael Nasser, Egypt
March 24th Small Tour 1st place winner



▲ Andre Sakakini, Italy
March 23rd Medium Tour 3rd place winner

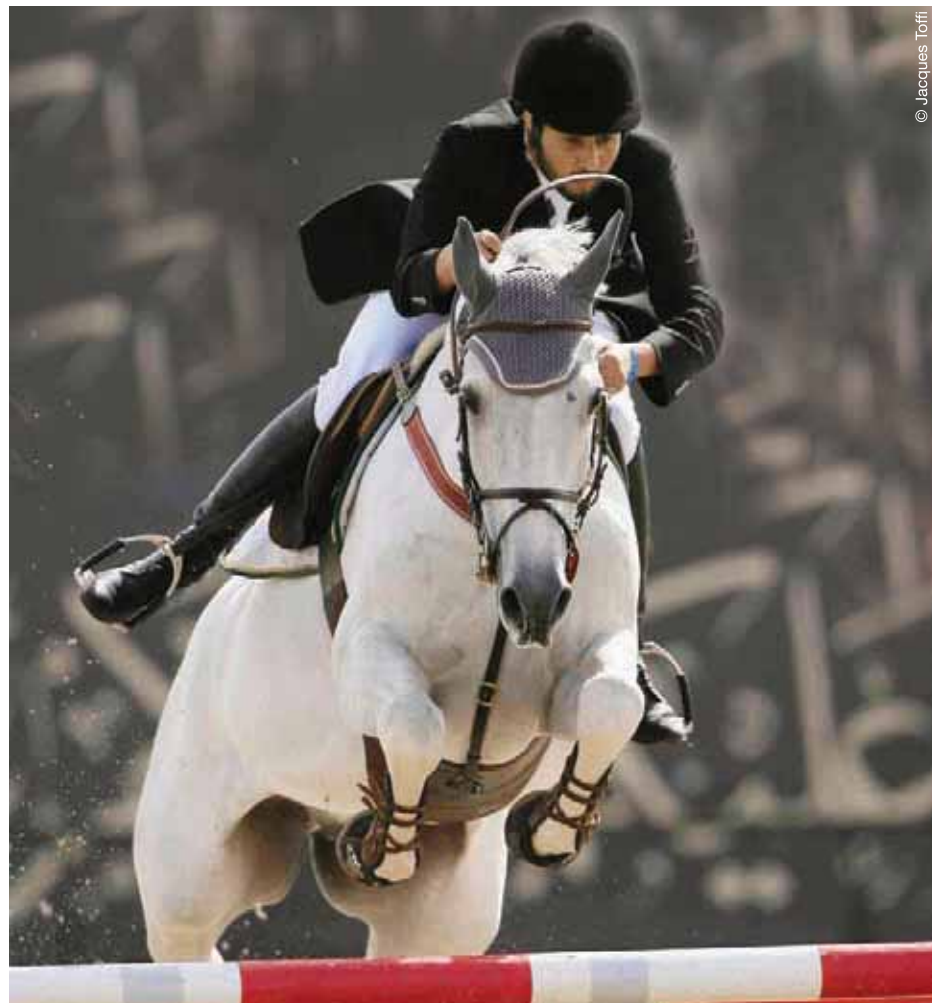
MONDAY MARCH 24TH tours and more anxiety was in the air. Most of the riders were competing to pull-off points in order to qualify for the World Cup. The Small Tour (1.20m) First place win went to Nael Nassar, Second place to Saudi's Moshari Al Harbi, and Third place to Sheikh Shakbout Al Nahayan from the UAE. On The Medium Tour Level (1.35m), Abdullah Humaid Al Muhairi came in First place; Egypt's Karim El Zoghby came in Second, and Ahmed Tolba at Third place. Finally, the Big Tour (Qualifier for the FEI World Cup 1.40m) First place win went to Karim El Zoghby again, Second place win went to Shadi Ghrayb, and Third place to Ibrahim Bisharat. Fadi Al Zbib was leading the World Qualifier and his home crowd was expecting a lot from him. Applause and enthusiasm were all over the arena each and every time he rode at the diverse tours. That day, he was riding smoothly, jumping clear on his horse Tyson and just at the last the Oxer, the crowd cheered loudly and Tyson jumped up and landed in the middle of the Oxer, then collapsed to throw Fadi over; thankfully the heavens intervened with the pair of them rising to the louder applause from the crowd.

▼ Shadi Ghrayb, Syria
March 24th Small Tour 2nd place winner

▼ Khalid Al Eid, KSA
March 23rd Big Tour 2nd place winner



▼ Ahmed Tolba, Egypt, March 24th
Medium Tour 3rd place winner





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ABDULLAH HUMAID AL MUHAIRI

March 24th Medium Tour First place winner & Al Wafaa Best Foreign Rider:

"The show has been good; the horses jumped outdoors a week ago and now they are indoors so they are a little disoriented. The organisation and footing is excellent, and this League is the second fastest growing league in the world so I think the sport is growing and all countries want to compete and present their best riders; that is good for the sport. I do not have many expectations for the upcoming competitions because the courses are quite difficult, the weather has been changing and so my horses lost a little bit of condition which I hope doesn't affect their upcoming performance, but I wish all the best to everyone".

◀ *Abdullah Al Muhairi, UAE*

▼ *Sheikh Shakhboubt Al Nahayan, UAE*
March 24th Small Tour 3rd place winner

▼ *Fadi Al Zbibi, Syria*

FADI AL ZBIBI

"The show is very strong because we see the best riders and horses competing. All the riders are interested in competing here because the organising committee always tries its best to present a really good show. If we look at the prize money this year, we'll see the highest in all the shows Syria has had before. The grounds are perfect, and the arena is great. We are now at the end of the Arab League and all the riders are a tad nervous especially the ones who want to qualify for the World Cup so we are trying our best to push forward to acquire good results during the Grand Prix. All the horses I see on the big levels are some of the best horses in the world; they are ridden by professionals such as Al Wafaa 2007 winner Khalid Al Eid, Abdullah Al Marri from the UAE, and the Asian Games Gold medallist Ali Al Rumaihi from Qatar. The Syrian team has excellent horses as well because they were brought in from Paul Schockemohle stables".



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▼ *Fadi Al Zbibi*



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▲ Nassouh Khayyali, Jordan
▼ Ahmed Mansour, Jordan



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▲ Aisha Al Qaoud, Kuwait, Small Tour Grand Prix 3rd place winner

TUESDAY MARCH 25TH saw a Consolation day with competitions that included an Accumulator with Joker Small Tour, Top Score Competition Medium Tour, and Accumulator with Joker Big Tour. Small Tour wins went to Ahmed Mansour (First), Kuwait's Zaid Al Marzouq (Second) and Saudi's Abdulrahman Al Hamzani (Third). Top Score Medium Tour wins went to Ahmad Hamsho (First), Egypt's Mohamed Osama El Boraei (Second) and once again, Zaid Al Marzouq (Third). With the day ending, the Accumulator with Big Tour wins went to Nassouh Khayyali (First), the UAE's Hamad Al Kirbi (Second) and also from the UAE – Arif Ahmed (Third).

IT'S THE FINAL DAY OF AL WAFAA 2008 EVENT WEDNESDAY MARCH 26TH. The best Arab riders would perform to display skill and containment of nerves. The Syrian Arab Equestrian Federation Honourary President Manal Al Assad would usually be sitting in the VIP lounge but today she was sitting in the midst of the audience, walking up and down the stairs – excited to see great performances from riders from 12 countries.

THE SMALL TOUR (1.25M) GRAND PRIX winner was Egypt's Nael Nassar again in a display of young and talented riding. The Second place winner was Sheikh Shakhbout Al Nahayan and the Third place winner was Aisha Al Qaoud from Kuwait.

▼ Sheikh Shakhbout Al Nahayan, UAE

SHEIKH SHAKHBOUT AL NAHAYAN

Small Tour Grand Prix Second place winner:

"This is my first time in Syria and the classes have been very difficult. The organisation is great and the judges have been very nice to the riders; they communicate professionally with riders these days and I am happy with this progress in show jumping. There are so many riders here which mean that show jumping is very important in Syria. If the show stays at this rate, the Olympic Federation would probably allow more international shows to be held in Syria, and of course, the more shows, the better for us riders. The sport is developing very fast in the Arab world and years ago the courses were not very big and we never saw a lot of riders. However, today riders go to Europe to receive more quality training and buy excellent horses which makes me see special riders participating here".



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▲ Karim El Zoghby, Egypt



▲ Khalid Al Eid, KSA



▲ Ibrahim Sami, Egypt & Sakakini, Italy

THE MINI GRAND PRIX (1.35m) winner was Karim El Zoghby, Second came in Khalid Al Eid, and Third Andre Sakakini after an electrifying 45 second jump-off between them and Ibrahim Bisharat, Egyptians Dr. Sameh Hattab and Ahmed Bassiouni, and Qatar's Ali Al Rumaihi.

KARIM EL ZOGHBY

Beijing 2008 Olympic qualifier, March 24th Medium Tour Second place winner, March 24th Big Tour First place winner & Mini Grand Prix First place winner:

"The show has been disastrous for me (Laughing)!! No! This is the first time I participate here; I am very happy and the atmosphere is great. It's nice to have indoor shows in the Middle East and I am also happy that the organisers allowed plenty of Egyptian riders to participate and gain experience, thus I think other shows should do the same. A lot of Egyptian need to leave Egypt to gain experience and become better elsewhere. Every time I come to the Middle East, I see that it's getting better and better in show jumping...riders are spending more money on their horses which is notable. It's no longer about buying the horse, but it's about training yourself to ride the horse which is very important. I don't have expectations for myself in the upcoming days, but I am hoping that Mohamed Osama El Boraie comes out with another win because he is really competing to gain points for the World Cup, and I wish everyone else the best of luck".

ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS: "I qualified with 2 horses for the Olympics; one of them is a really good horse but lacks a little experience and I am hoping to test him

during the Global Champions Tour in Qatar. The other one has been to big shows and I think he is ready. I am very lucky to be going to the Olympics with 2 horses; I have 10 big shows to attend before which will add to the clarity of matters and I am also trying my best in preparations".

ANDRE SAKAKINI

March 23rd Medium & Big Tour Third place winner, March 24th Big Tour Third place winner, Mini Grand Prix Fifth place winner:

"We do not see a lot of clear rounds because all the riders just came from competing in an outdoor event to compete in an indoor one where the horses are not really relaxed and are not using their bodies in the best way. All the horses are surprised but I think all the riders are well prepared; I think we will see a lot of surprises during the Grand Prix. I feel good about my win and I am happy with my horses because they both jumped well and showed excellent performance".

IBRAHIM BISHARAT

Beijing 2008 Olympic qualifier & March 23rd Big Tour Third place winner:

"This is a very nice show; I've been participating for several years and I am always glad to be here. I've been performing well in the competitions and I hope I continue to do so during the

Grand Prix. It's nearly the end of the season and a lot of riders have gained experience; the levels of competition are quite high and to win a class, the rider and the horse have to be very competitive".

ON SHOW JUMPING DEVELOPING IN THE MIDDLE EAST & HIS PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS: "the show jumping sport in this region is on the right track these days. 2 years ago they started the Arab League and now the shows are becoming bigger in several Arab countries. It's only a matter of time and training and then we will see better levels. I have been trying to prepare for the Olympics; the horses that go with me are inexperienced but they have been improving".

▼ Karim El Zoghby & Ibrahim Bisharat



IT IS 6 PM AND AL WAFAA GRAND PRIX riders are set and ready. 26 qualified riders are wondering what could be the big surprise of the show and 12 of whom qualified for the jump-offs. Syria's National Champion Shadi Ghayb was all clear round on his magnificent horse Sham 7 until a cameraman from the midst of the silent concentrated crowd interfered with a loud "Go Go Go"; an unfortunate refusal by Sham 7, a crash to the final course and a harsh tumble off the horse by Shadi saw the National Champion out of the qualifications to the Grand Prix jump-offs. Disappointment was everywhere but 3 Syrians, Tareq Arnaout, Fadi Al Zbib and Wassim Anzarouti along with the UAE's Mohamed Al Owais and Abdullah Al Marri, Egypt's Daa Omar Bashir, Ibrahim Sami, and Karim El Zoghby, Kuwait's Ali Al Khorafi, Jordan's Ibrahim Bisharat, Qatar's Ali Al Rumahi and finally, the 2007 winner Saudi's Khalid Al Eid would see the 2008 competitions to an end. More silence, concentration from the audience and highly competitive riding from 3 talented riders led to 3 wins: First place to Abdullah Al Marri, Second place to Khalid Al Eid, and Third to Tareq Arnaout.

The Fourth place win went to Ibrahim Bisharat, Fifth to Karim El Zoghby, Sixth to Daa Omar Bashir, Seventh to Ali Al Khorafi, Eighth to Wassim Anzarouti, Ninth to Mohamed Al Owais, Tenth to Fadi Al Zbib, Eleventh to Ibrahim Sami and Twelfth to Ali Al Rumaihi.



▲ Abdullah Al Marri amongst friends



▲ Abdullah Al Marri, UAE
Grand Prix 1st place winner

ABDULLAH AL MARRI

Grand Prix First place winner:

"This is my first indoor event with my mare that has helped me qualify for the World Cup; it's a matter of schooling and teaching her the contents of competing indoors hoping that she gets a feel of how the arena is like - with her also seeing the audience up close. She needs to be concentrating on the fences in order to complete her job, hence it was very rewarding for me to compete here. The first time I competed in the Arab League was last year and the level of competition is getting better and better, and given the calibre of the riders competing here, I wasn't sure who will qualify for the World Cup because it was a close call! The levels were quite high and I am sure within the next year they will get better. I am not sure yet that we have reached the levels of competition that we see in Europe, but the Arab League is growing bigger, we are competing against fellow Arabs and I know we will be able to compete against everyone else in the near future".

ON HIS WIN: "this is the best career win I have ever had in my entire young career (ecstatically smiling)! When I first rode I was just seventeen years old, now I'm twenty-four and this is a huge achievement for me. I am blessed to have a really good horse, I am lucky to have a very good trainer, and I am happy to also have a good sponsor, the Dubai Equestrian Club, which has been supporting us throughout the tour. And with the awareness of HRH Sheikh Mohamed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and his wife HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein whom both know the sport very well, I am thankful to reach such a huge path in my career. They started this team 3 years ago and we have already achieved so much - winning something is the only way we can say thank you to them".

Abdullah Al Marri sporting the UAE flag after winning Al Bassel Memorial Trophy ►





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▼ Tareq Arnaout, Grand Prix 3rd place winner



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TAREQ ARNAOUT

Grand Prix Third place winner:

"The Grand Prix is the most important competition amongst all others; every rider is looking to win Al Bassel Memorial Trophy and it surely isn't easy. Throughout the past days I saw a lot of surprises in the Medium and Big tours, but here in Syria, even though we are under a lot of pressure to win, we only wish that the best Arab riders win, no matter what country they come from. To add to the excitement of the show, the courses were very technical and big for the qualifications; we all saw quite cruel falls and lady luck was not on the side of many professional riders this year. This indoor arena, with the audience seated so closely to the courses, is not an easy location for jumping. 2 years ago, a rider with 4 faults would win, but this year, a rider that has a clear round but with bad timing has no chance of winning any classes. This shows that show jumping is reaching higher levels helping us in having the ability to qualify for more international shows".



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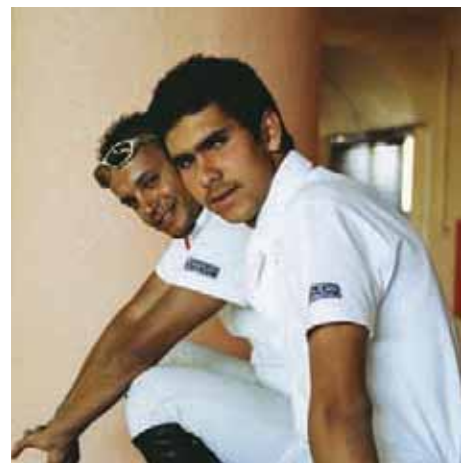
▲ Firas Jnedi, Wassim Anzarouti & friend

WASSIM ANZAROUTI

Grand Prix Eighth place winner:

"I love this show very much and we as Syrians work so hard to compete here. I have had good results that helped me qualify for the Grand Prix with my young horse that's only competing at his second Grand Prix. As I assumed, all the riders and their horses are trying their best to compete at this show; it's an important 4 star show with a lot of prize money. There are around 250 horses competing on daily basis throughout this event and it's very hard to keep up the riding levels. Besides, the very good step that the Arab League has taken was helping riders compete throughout the year in different shows, but shows have to be early in the year so we can have enough time to qualify for the World Cup and as a consequence also add to our development further".

▼ Tareq Arnaout & Ahmad Hamsho



IBRAHIM SAMI

Grand Prix Eleventh place winner:

“The show has been very intriguing with all the riders and horses that I see! The competitions are very tough; it’s still always good to see Egypt competing with all these very experienced horses and different budgets paid for them of course! The organisation of the show has been efficient and everything is done to the last detail in this beautiful club. When I also look at the amount of professional riders and horse dealers attending this show, I wouldn’t be surprised that all the attention, all the money and all the Grand Prix shows are going to be happening in Arab countries”.

▼ *Shadi Ghrayb, Syria*



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▲ *Ibrahim Sami, Egypt*



© Jacques Toffi

▲ *Members of the Egyptian team*

ALI AL RUMAIHI

Grand Prix Twelfth place winner:

“This show has been a huge achievement for us Arabs; it’s great to see these levels of riding, horses, and competition. Indoor courses are usually more difficult than outdoors because the arena is smaller, and with the big amount of riders participating, one can never point a finger at a winner”.

Ali Al Rumaihi, Qatar ►

SHADI GHRAYB

Syria National Champion & Mini Grand Prix Second place winner:

“The competitions have been quite difficult and all the best riders are here with their horses beating each other with a few points. Show jumping has been moving on the right track in our region and on a personal view, our Syrian federation has been helping a lot with our development. The courses are very big and technical which adds lots of pressure and the Syrians have been doing very well; I had a good clear round during the Grand Prix Qualifier and I am very proud to come in Second after a very skilled rider such as Karim El Zoghby”.



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▲ *Diaa Omar Bashir, Egypt*
Grand Prix 6th place winner

PRIOR TO THE EVENT ENDING, PARTICIPANTS, TRAINERS AND OFFICIALS HAD TERRIFIC WORDS TO SAY:

MANAL AL ASSAD

Syrian Arab Equestrian Federation
Honourary President:

ON THE EVENT: “the show started well and its getting stronger year after year with different riders and horses coming in to participate. This is very encouraging for us to put more effort into organising the show”.

ON COMPETITION LEVELS: “the levels of riding have improved in the past years and young riders have developed to be able to compete with experienced riders. This gives a good indication that the new generations are reaching the old ones - it’s fascinating and makes us proud. If the sport stays like this in our region, and our riders continue on participating at international shows and the World Cup, the sport will further develop and the riders will actually acquire good results as opposed to just participating. I hope that in a few years and after gaining more experience, more Arab riders are placed in big international shows”.

ON HER EXPECTATIONS FOR A BASSEL AL ASSAD MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNER:

“I am crossing my fingers for Al Wafaa Grand Prix (smiling)! The competitions are very tough and my heart beats faster and faster every time a Syrian rider enters the arena and I bet their hearts beat faster than mine! A lot is expected from them and I understand



▲ *Mohamed Al Owais, UAE*
Grand Prix 9th place winner

fully that they are under a lot of pressure; I wish them all the best and it would be a huge honour for any Syrian to win the trophy. If they don’t, then this is how the sport really is and I wish all the other riders the best of luck. I also wish all Arab riders a good sporting spirit in order to build up their riding skills and to become some of the best riders in the world”.

MOHAMED OSAMA EL BORAEI

Seif Al Sham Grand Prix winner:

ON HIS WIN: “Seif Al Sham was such a good show for me; I competed in different classes and my win was great because it raised the morale of the Egyptian team. I also won the leading rider of the show and I will also try my best during Al Wafaa

▼ *Manal Al Assad*



▲ *Mahmoud Anzarouti, Syria*

event. Syria has been very well organised with their shows in the last 3 years; it was just fine when it started, but now they have upped their levels to become one of the best in the Middle East. The indoor and outdoor footing is also fantastic and the conditions are lovely”.

MAHMOUD ANZAROUTI

Arabian Horse Breeder & former President of the Syrian Arab Equestrian Federation:

“My brother and son have been participating at this show and it been beautiful to watch them because the show has improved a lot both on the technical and organisational levels. The children have really developed and I’m sure the future will show us a lot of skilled riders”.

▼ *Karim Hamdy, El Boraei & Ahmed El Naggar, Egypt*



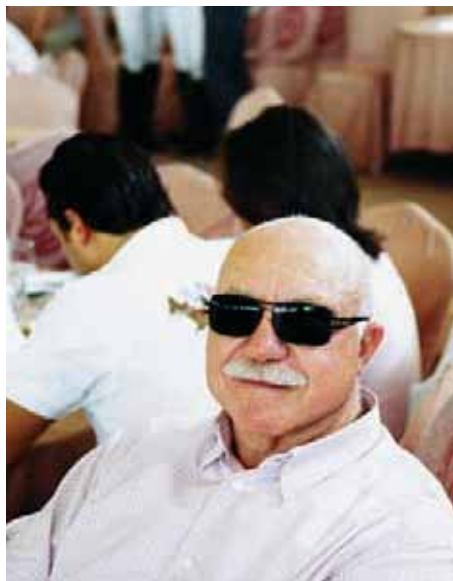
AGHYAD KABBANI

Former rider:

“As we all see, the courses are tough, technical and exciting! I see a tremendous effort done by the riders to jump such big courses and I am also happy with the show because it will bring more excitement in the upcoming days. I wish all the participants success because this is a very difficult contest”.

ON SHOW JUMPING DEVELOPING IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

“after the World Cup Tour, the sport has moved 100% upwards in relation to technicality, and there will be further development in the Middle East due to the best horses and excellent riders I see; this will surely be one of the top major international tours in the next 5 years and we will see a lot of European riders coming to participate because the prize money is huge and there is a lot of potential in selling horses”.



▲ Aghyad Kabbani, Syria



▲ Karim Habashi, Ibrahim Sami & Adham Elias, Egypt

RAGHEB IBRAHIM BASHA

Former trainer of the Syrian team:

“The show has been highly competitive and the Syrian team in specific has excellent horses this year. Our riders have gained a lot of experience and comparing them to other riders, they are doing very well. We have 4 to 5 professional riders participating here who train in Europe and are performing well. We didn't have many shows in this region but now it's growing and I hope the future proves to bring many aspirations for more shows. It's very difficult to point my finger at winners now, but I would love to see a Syrian win this year”.

▼ Ragheb Ibrahim Basha, Syria



▲ HRH Prince Badr Al Seoud, KSA



▲ Mustafa Zindaki, Syria

HRH PRINCE BADR BIN MOHAMED AL SEOUD

“This is one of the best shows in the Arab League; it's very well organised, there are a lot of riders competing, and the arena is beautiful. I see the best horses and the competitions are very strong; one will never know who will win. The sport is doing very well in our region; a couple of year's back it was just the Saudi's receiving the best results, but now it is very difficult”.

ON SAUDI ARABIA QUALIFYING FOR THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS AS A TEAM:

“until now we are not sure who will be going to compete. 3 riders have to go and we only have one ready with his horse. We do not have a lot of time to prepare, but I am sure the team will try its best”.

MUSTAFA ZINDAKI

“I have been training children and it's been so exciting to watch them compete in the same arena where elder riders do. This is a very big show and it adds to their experience. They have had good clear rounds and I wish them all the best in the future. During the Small Tour, the competition levels were really high and a lot of experienced riders participated. The other tours were really competitive and difficult as well. All the riders were under a lot of pressure, but it's good for the sport. A lot of show jumping development and awareness is being enhanced here in Syria, thanks to Manal Al Assad's help, and the excellent financial support we have been receiving from our federation - consequently leading some of the Syrian riders to become some of the best Arab riders”.

YASIR CHARIF

“All the Syrian riders are under a tremendous amount of pressure; we are riding in front of our home crowd and there are plenty of expectations. This is a very important show for us and we are all trying our best; we need to succeed but it's very hard given the amount of good riders participating. We are all experienced riders but we still have to find a way to win and we are all trying to do something for our country. In any way, I hope for the best now and in the future”.



▲ Najib Chami, Lebanon



Leonie Bredemeier, Germany ▲

NAJIB CHAMI

Rider & International Judge:

“The show is very nice and all the riders and their horses have arrived well prepared. If we look at the Grand Prix and the 160 cm courses, we are talking about something majorly serious here; it is no easy task and the competition levels are rising everyday. Come to think of it, the sport has changed a lot in the last 2 years; we see more riders, as teams and as individuals training and participating in Europe and I think it is vital because it adds importance to the show jumping sport. Last week during Seif Al Sham we all had an idea on who would win the Grand Prix, but we all got a surprise and so I have no expectations here at Al Wafaa”.

LEONIE BREDEMEIER

“This is my first time to compete in Syria and I really like it. It is not like the shows in Germany but the people are friendly and I am very much enjoying all this. I was prepared for the show but I was also a little nervous, and I think show jumping will develop further in this region because not even in Germany do I see such good horses in one show”. HT



Yasir Charif & Tareq Arnaout ▼