

HORSE TIMES



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EGYPT'S OFFICIAL EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE



CSI***** SYRIA

The 14TH

Al Wafaa

for Bassel Al Assad

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VIEW POINT

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Dear readers,

Through our continuous strive to develop and innovate we remain so adamant to stay focused on our content in order to enrich our readers. This mission is reflected in our diversified interaction with the real people around the horse, whether they are breeders, athletes of different equestrian disciplines or simply horsemen who know the valuable reward of simply being around the horse; no matter of which nationality, we all are affiliated to the "horse".

Syria between the present and the past with the valuable history of the 1987 Mediterranean Games where the late Bassel Al Assad won the gold individual medal and the present where he is always remembered at Al Wafaa for Al Bassel Event hosted by the Honourary President of the Syrian Equestrian Federation Mrs. Manal Al Assad; numerous aspiring riders compete to the most prestigious trophy.

Horse Times has created communication venues with the Canadian news letter "Breeding News" through which their editor Jean Llewellyn brings us a very controversial article regarding dressage will inspire you to question some of the judging issues involved. Moreover, Edwina Alexander is portrayed for being a perfectionist through Horse Times' collaboration with the famous Horse & Hound magazine from the UK.

Andre Sakakini gives his insight on how passionate he is about horses while the series of the man who whispers/listens to horses, Monty Roberts continues on in this issue.

National Championships, Photography, Art, Training, Vet tips, and Osteopathy in our 28th issue, and most importantly please check our new and improved website with weekly updates on our National Team at the 2009 Mediterranean Games, Arab League tournaments, and more from the international scenes.

Read on and enjoy...

Sincerely,

Khaled Assem

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SYRIA 2009

CSI*****-W



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THE 14TH AL WAFAA FOR BASSEL AL ASSAD EVENT

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem

Step into Syria and a gush of stimulant breeze hits your face. It is beautiful country with beautiful sights and sound inhabited by the most hospitable and beautiful people who cook and serve the “most amazing cuisine”. Simply said; all the required ingredients for a great holiday and an exciting equestrian show!

The name Syria formerly comprised the entire region of the Levant, while the modern state encompasses the site of several ancient kingdoms and empires, including the Eblan civilisation of the third millennium BC. In the Islamic era, its capital city, Damascus, was the seat of the Umayyad Empire and a provincial capital of the Mamluk Empire. Damascus now is widely regarded as one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world.

**“COMING TO SYRIA IS
ALWAYS LIKE COMING
HOME”**

*Rob Jansen, International Course
Designer*

◀ *Abdullah Al Humaid, UAE*

AL WAFAA FOR BASSEL AL ASSAD EVENT:

An event in itself with a colossal opening ceremony held in memory of a very passionate horseman, Bassel Hafez Al Assad, show jumping is currently a sport very much supported by the Syrian Equestrian Federation. The Arab League show jumping season consists of 11 events held in Egypt, Qatar, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and finally, Syria. Accumulation of points from participations at each show

will help Arab riders have the opportunity to participate at the World Cup. Al Wafaa alone hosts up to 300 riders with more than 150 horses. This year's 14th edition of Al Wafaa held outdoor Children Competitions and Jumping Challenge Competitions that would also help riders qualify for the FEI World Jumping Challenge. For the second successful year on the run, Dressage competitions were also held.

“AL WAFAA ALONE HOSTS UP TO 300 RIDERS WITH MORE THAN 150 HORSES”



© Jacques Toffi

▲ *Dancers at the Opening Ceremony*

SAMIR DARWISH,

Former President of The Syrian Equestrian Federation & former Syrian National Team rider:

“Thirty years ago it was a dream for Syria to have a club such as Bassel Al Assad Shooting & Riding Club and it was also a dream for us to host such an event. Looking back, what I see today is really a dream come true. Syria has many equestrian facilities now although this club is the biggest due to the keen interest in developing its facilities.

Al Wafaa event always reminds us of the late Bassel Al Assad’s birthday; March 23rd. This is the 14th year the event is held and every year I think it becomes more international.

I first met the late Bassel when he was 8 years old. He was such a disciplined rider and if I choose a word to describe his

passion for riding, I would say he had a mania. He had loads of energy and I imagine his passion for the sport is what spread the sport in Syria. He was an engineer and he designed this club and supervised all the tiny details of this beautiful arena. Every time I come to this arena, I see Bassel in every corner; I see his charisma and his passion”.

“FROM ALL THE INTERNATIONAL TOURNAMENTS I HAVE PARTICIPATED AT, THIS IS MY FAVOURITE TOURNAMENT AS IT IS VERY SPIRITUAL AND EXCITING”

Egypt's Daa Amr Bisheer

Al-Agghar indoor Arena ▶



▲ *Anwar Hnedi*

BASSEL AL ASSAD EQUESTRIAN CLUB:

Hosted at the Sheraton Hotel, riders and officials would have breakfast and head off to the club, located 30 minutes away from the capital Damascus. A short drive in from the gates would lead you to what would be thought of as initially a striking and well looked after flowery park! Step out of the car and to the right, see riders warming up with their horses in an outdoor warm up arena and just on the side a riders lounge where trainers and chatters are enjoying the cool breeze and sunny day over a cup of very sweet Syrian tea! Grooms running around and horses being bathed, 3 tiny terriers and Lassie the collie dog looking for some attention, and finally a familiar scene, Mr. Anwar Hnedi, the Syrian Equestrian Federation Show Jumping General Steward furious about riders who should be

attending their horses for the vet check but are not there, adds intrigue to the experience of being at the club.

Walk further and on the left, see the beautifully constructed outdoor grass arena that held the first outdoor competitions for Children and qualifications for the World Jumping Challenge. For a quick coffee or bite, enter the Damas Village, constructed right in the middle of the club where tasty and luscious sweets as well as authentic nibbles are available for a peckish stomach. Across from the Damas Village, a huge brass monument of the late Bassel Al Assad stands in front of the horse shoe designed doors of Al Wafaa indoor arena.



Sheikh Shakhboot Al Nahayan, UAE



COMPETITIONS:

Sixteen participating countries competed at Al Wafaa: Jordan, the UAE, Bahrain, Bulgaria, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Iraq, Palestine, France, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and Canada to overall total prize money of nearly 220,000 US dollars.

FRIDAY MARCH 20TH:

At noon, the first competitions of Al Wafaa kicked off with the Medium Tour of a Table C 125cm height with the UAE's Salem Al Suwaidi coming in 1st place, Jordan's Hani Besharat coming in 2nd, and the UAE's Sheikh Shakhboot Al Nahayan coming in 3rd. The tour saw a very startling crash by Syria's Firas Jneidi's horse and a somersault-like air flutter for Firas; attended to and only a swollen hand would not stop Firas from

competing again. Following the tour, an entertaining and very colourful opening ceremony kept a huge crowd captivated to the sounds and music of poetic Syrian harmonies. In the evening, a Big Tour competition over 2 phases Table A 135cm height was also held with Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Al Sharbatly coming in 1st, Syria's Shadi Ghrayeb coming in 2nd, and Kuwait's Ali Al Khorafi coming in 3rd.



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▲ Shadi Ghrayeb, Syria



© Jacques Toffi

▲ Hani Besharat, Jordan



© Jacques Toffi

▲ Ali Al Khorafi, Kuwait



© Jacques Toffi

▲ Salem Al Suwaidi, UAE

SATURDAY MARCH 21ST:

The second day of the event held the 1st FEI Children's International competition over 2 non-identical rounds. A rainy and very cold day made it very difficult for the children to jump clear with the slippery grass; luckily they jumped safely. More outdoor jumping with the 1st World Jumping Challenge Cat A. Simultaneously at the indoor arena, a Dressage Elementary event was in display won by Turkey's Erdoghan Altan and a Dressage Advanced event won by the Honourary President of the Syrian Equestrian Federation Manal Al Assad. Trailing Dressage, the afternoon held the Medium Tour which also shocked the crowd with a horse leg getting caught on one of the arena railings! Horse and rider make it out fine; the tour goes on with once again, the UAE's Salem Al Suwaidi coming in 1st and Abdullah Al Humaid coming in 2nd, and also from the UAE Rashid Al Rumaithi coming in 3rd. More riders from the UAE with the Big Tour 1st place going to Mohamed Al Hajri, 2nd place going to Syria's Wassim Anzarouti riding Katakrit Laganscho, and also 3rd place to Wassim riding Katakrit Cyberboy.

SUNDAY MARCH 22ND:

Held early in the morning, the 2nd FEI Children's International Competitions started without any rain delays and with Syria's Hadi Nizam coming in 1st, Iraq's Hamza Al Khawaf coming in 2nd, and also from Syria, Mohamed Al Jabri coming in 3rd. To end the morning session, the 2nd World Jumping Challenge Cat A and Cat B competitions

illustrated a display of very beautiful riding with CAT A wins going to the future Ludger Beerbaum Egypt's Nael Nassar 1st. Kuwait's Khaled Al Marzooq 2nd, and the UAE's Sheikh Ali Al Qasimi 3rd. CAT B wins went to Jordan's Taj Al Din Barkat 1st, Syria's Abdelwahab Mansour 2nd, and Syria's Mohamed Al Hayek 3rd. Also indoors, simultaneously during

the outdoor jumping, the second and final Dressage Elementary and Advanced competitions were commenced with Turkey's Sevilat Cetin Camur coming in 1st place and Syria's Hazar Sabouni coming in 2nd place at the Elementary class, and Syria's Manal Al Assad coming in 1st and Bassam Anzarouti coming in 2nd at the Advanced class.



NAEL NASSAR:

"It feels very good to win and I was very pleased with my mare as she is very quick and hard to beat if she goes clear; thankfully she jumped well during both jumping challenges. The Syrian Federation did a great job to prepare the grass arena that I think met international FEI specifications. The warm up arena was very good as well; we had lots of space and many riders were practicing together".

"CAT A COMPETITIONS ILLUSTRATED BEAUTIFUL RIDING BY THE FUTURE LUDGER BEERBAUM EGYPT'S NAEL NASSAR"

◀ Mohamed Al Hayek, Syria
Sheikh Ali Al Qasimi, UAE ▶



© Jacques Toffi

KARIM BADARO

*International Judge & Isjc
Regional Representative:*



© Jacques Toffi

“I am here at the 14th Al Wafaa event as a show jumping judge and commentator. I am also here as a foreign judge for the Jumping Challenge Competition held outdoors.

Something that has to be said is that on annual basis the Syrian Organising Committee exerts a lot of effort in putting together this show to make it one of the top shows of the Arab League; I have been to 7 out of 10 events from the Arab League 2008/2009 season and Al Wafaa is one of the best organised events.

As for the Jumping Challenge Competitions, they are very important competitions because the best 2 riders from each country zone will go to the final of the FEI World Jumping Challenge. The results were very good given that this was the first time Syria holds a jumping challenge qualifying riders to the WJC.

On the children’s competitions, they competed outdoors as well and I think it was a little difficult for them because it was raining and so the footing was a tad slippery. However since this is also the first time for such young competitions to be held, their results were quite good”.

THE AFTERNOON SESSION started with a Medium Tour Accumulator with a Joker directly against the clock with the Saudi veteran rider Khalid Al Eid coming in 1st, Kuwait's Bandar Jumaah coming in 2nd, and also Saudi Arabia's Fares Al Shaalan coming in 3rd.

Afterwards a Big Tour Top Score Competition started with Khalid Al Eid also coming in 1st, Shadi Ghayeb coming in 2nd, and Bandar Jumaah coming in 3rd. Finally, an Open Class 6 Bar competition kicked off with 130cm height and 19 riders

competing. Upping the fences to 145cm and then finally 160cm, the 1st place went to Abdullah Al Sharbatly and 2nd place shared by Egypt's all so graceful Daa Amr Bisheer and Syria's popular Wassim Anzarouti.

MONDAY MARCH 23RD, MINI GRAND PRIX & GRAND PRIX:

THE FINAL DAY of Al Wafaa event and as always, the beautiful indoor arena is packed with a huge crowd all coming to watch a display of very beautiful horses and poised riders. The Mini Grand Prix consisted of 1 round and 1 jump-off in case of equality for the 1st place in penalties at the height of 135cm. The national anthem of Egypt is heard with the 1st place win going to the young talent Nael Nassar, the 2nd place to Abdullah Al Sharbatly, and the 3rd place to Ali Al Khorafi.

IN AN EFFORT to promote Dressage in Syria, a demonstration completed by the Syrian Equestrian Federation's Dutch trainer was in display to a big crowd watching and learning about the disciplines of dressage. Freestyle Dressage also was performed to add to the atmosphere of the whole event.

AT THE HEIGHT OF 160cm and prize money of 20,000 US Dollars and a Range Rover, 20 Arab riders saddled up to compete at a very tight and intimidating arena full with a crowd of enthusiasts and Syrian supporters. Expectations and tension along with silence gave the atmosphere a very exhilarating feel. Red is the colour of the Syrian rider jackets and 5 Syrian riders were amongst the top list of competitors. First to jump clear was Syria's Mustafa Al Zindaki followed by a roar of cheering from the crowd. Firas Jneidi galloped in all nervous and tensed missing out on qualifying for the jump off and so did Yasir Sharif and Wassim Anzarouti. Heavy weight on the shoulders of the only Syrian rider remaining Shadi Ghayeb who regrettably took a ghastly crash to a course on his horse Tyson, eliminated just to the crowd's dismay.

Four riders to the jump off: Saudi Arabia's Abdullah Al Sharbatly and Khalid Al Eid, the UAE's Sheikh Majed Al Qasimi, and finally Syria's Mustafa Al Zindaki.



▲ Syria's Wassim Anzarouti, 2nd place 6 Bar Competition



▲ Egypt's Nael Nassar, Mini Grand Prix winner



*Egypt's Daa Amr Bisheer,
2nd place 6 Bar Competition*



© Jacques Toffi

▲ Wassim Anzarouti riding Cyberboy

▼ Rakhshan Radpour, Iran

RAKSHAN RADPOUR

International Course Designer:

What can you tell us about the footing of the indoor arena?

The footing was done perfectly.

Is the footing a contributing factor in making the event a success?

Definitely. Good footing helps the horses jump better and safer.

What kind of challenges did you face when designing the courses for Al Wafaa 2009 event?

We did not have all the top horses and riders from all the Arab league countries, but at the same time we had to design the courses to match the standards of a 4 star show and so I think creating a balance between these two factors was not very easy. Having said so, I think the result of the Grand Prix was perfect.



© Jacques Toffi

“WHAT IS NICE ABOUT COURSE DESIGNING IS THAT EVERY COURSE DESIGNER HAS HIS OWN IDEAS AND IMPLEMENTS THEM ACCORDING TO THE ARENA AT HAND”

What can you tell us about the technicalities of the courses?

A I Wafaa indoor arena is a tricky arena for the horses and riders who are usually accustomed to mostly jumping outdoors. The Grand Prix was quite exciting because riders had to jump in front of a crowd of 6,000! But I believe it was enough what we asked from the riders and horses. The courses during the final day were not too big, but were somehow technical. I believe the courses were fair for the combination of riders and horses. The result for Mini Grand Prix and the Grand Prix was an almost perfect 20-25% of the total riders who participated in the class; clear rounds are what we are normally looking for. During the first day, we designed a Table C which I really don't like to start the show with because it is

purely a speed class which had a lot of turns. I then decided to design a forward course with a few options like a Table A against the clock. What is nice about course designing is that every course designer has his own ideas and implements them according to the arena at hand. I myself live to design twisty Table C courses full of options especially in outdoor arenas. On the second day, the 6 Bar Class, and because the arena is too small for the first round, we had 2 fences in one side of the arena and 4 fences in the middle which is normally implemented in many shows. However that did not appeal to the judges hence we put only 4 fences in the middle of the arena. Finally, during the third and final day of the event, I believe I gave a lot of options (in and out turns) for the accumulator which by nature is a speed class.

▼ *Ali Al Khorafi, Kuwait*



© Jacques Toffi



We have seen a lot of falls and crashes to the fences; were the courses designed to trick the horses or the riders?

In the Arab league we have a mixture of top and medium riders but because of the high level of the show we couldn't build courses for average level riders and so in this case, during all leagues you see some falls or crashes. It is like in the Olympic Games; you have riders from all over the world with different levels. Although many of the riders were qualified before the event, those courses were built for the top ones! Sometimes you can not avoid having falls or crashes, we are not magicians!

AFTER EVERY CLEAR ROUND, music tracks would be played as a cheering factor for the rider. The jump off; Mustafa Al Zindaki with a containment





© Jacques Toffi



© Jacques Toffi



© Jacques Toffi

of nerves jumped clear with no time faults. Jumping clear and taking unexpected twisty turns, the Olympic Bronze medallist and all so elegant and balanced Khalid Al Eid riding Al Riyad made it in 43 seconds. Following Khalid came in the all so determined Abdullah Al Sharbatly riding Quebeq with all the bets on his astounding horse. Silence and Abdullah riding quickly at 38 seconds...ready to jump the final fence. A music track was played loudly to shock the audience as well as Abdullah. With loss of concentration, Quebeq refuses the final fence. Seconds are passing and Abdullah had to jump the final fence clear just to make it in time for a 3rd place win. With the huge upset and the disappointment of the technical music mistake, Mustafa Al Zindaki showed chivalrous behaviour by passing up his 2nd place win to Abdullah Al Sharbatly.



© Jacques Toffi

ABDULLAH AL SHARBATLY

3rd place winner of Bassel Al Assad Grand Prix:

“The courses were quite tricky and the riders who made it to the Grand Prix jump off had quick horses. It was so tight because Khalid Al Eid jumped clear in 43 seconds and Mustafa Al Zindaki was a few seconds behind and I had to beat those times. With the musical technical mistake that arose, my

horse refused the last fence and so I made it some seconds after Mustafa and I am very happy with my 3rd place win. The technical mistake was unfortunate, and Mustafa was kind enough to pass up his win, but I could not accept it. I came in 3rd and it was not meant to be that I come in 1st or 2nd, so I am happy to be 3rd”.



© Jacques Toffi

MUSTAFA AL ZINDAKI

2nd place winner of Bassel Al Assad Grand Prix:

“I am so happy I came in 2nd! I just hope next year a Syrian rider will manage to hold the Bassel Al Assad trophy! Still, this is such a huge achievement for Syria and for myself! It is a very difficult competition and the courses were quite tricky, and we Syrian riders are continuously under pressure due to the high expectations. Nevertheless I tried to contain my nerves as much as I could and I am thrilled to be at such a position, giving back a little to the efforts that were exerted by Mrs. Manal Al Assad to develop show jumping in Syria through her emotional support and to the federation through its financial and horse support”.



KHALID AL EID

*1st place winner of Bassel Al Assad
Grand Prix:*

“This tournament holds a very special place in all our hearts and every single participating rider tries his utmost best to compete, yet even win the Bassel Al Assad trophy. Whilst growing up I used to hear about this show and I always love to compete here. Competition levels are very high and to compete here is technically crucial because we all receive points that will help us qualify for the World Cup. Moreover, every year this show has a different winner which builds up eagerness to attend, compete, and try to win the title.

This arena and this crowd is what makes this tournament so special. Sigh... the crowd gets excited and so do the horses. Tension and expectations are always in the air which makes the atmosphere simply so electrifying. The courses during the Grand Prix were not too big but were very technical; I was lucky to have a very experienced horse and the distances between fences were short which were good for him and so the course plus the horse were put together to simply make me lucky to win the Bassel Al Assad trophy”.



MANAL AL ASSAD

Honourary President of the Syrian Equestrian Federation:

Can you give us a brief history about Al Wafaa?

When Al Wafaa was first held in 1996, it had a special place in all Syrian hearts and minds because it was held on Bassel's birthday, and so as Syrians we honour him through Al Wafaa. Just like everything in life, Al Wafaa started small and grew bigger year after year until it became one of the most important events in the region.

What sort of challenges does the federation face in order to prepare for Al Wafaa?

The Syrian federation with the Organising Committee puts a lot of effort in order to host and organise

such a big event. Our staff works together every year in order to put everything in its place, and this begins at least 3 to 4 months prior to the event so as to get sponsors to cover the expenses of the show and the prize money since it is a 4 star show; this would need a big amount of prizes and heavy organising. With all the details within the show, it requires hard work to keep Al Wafaa on the same high level each year.

What can you tell us about the organisation of Al Wafaa?

It is a pleasure for every Syrian to be involved in this great show. Organising Al Wafaa became a part of our lives and, it is actually taking a great part in



© Jacques Toffi

▲ 1st place Dressage Advanced Class winner, Manal Al Assad riding Sir Shoelling

our lives. The most important issue about organising this show is to see, feel and make sure all guests are happy and satisfied.

What sort of pressure do you face as an Honorary President for the federation and as a dressage rider?

As long as you have a great committed team that knows exactly what to do and when, it is no pressure at all. As a dressage rider I always want to do my best in the show and put everything that I have learned and trained in the ring to know the level that I have reached.

This is the second year dressage competitions were held within Al

Wafaa event; what sorts of measures are taken in order to have dressage continue and develop in Syria?

The Syrian Equestrian Federation's plan is to have more clinics for dressage in order to introduce this beautiful sport to as many riders as possible, so I am sure it will grow bigger year after year.

The demonstration of freestyle dressage on the last day of the event was very educational. How did the idea for that come about?

It was to explain to the big crowd what dressage is all about; it is an art, and music always attracts people; therefore, we thought it was a productive idea to combine the two together.



© Jacques Toffi



Turkey's Sevilat
Cetin Camur, 1st
place Dressage
Elementary Class
winner

What was required to prepare for the beautiful outdoor grass arena and how difficult was it to host children riders this year as well as hold a challenge event?

During the annual Al Wafaa show, children competitions were always hosted. The children's class was thought of as an incentive for Syrian children because they had to participate and compete with foreign riders, and that motivated them to train harder the whole year around. The challenge I think was a very good idea for the youngsters within the region to have a chance to qualify to the FEI World Jumping Challenge final. Moreover we have the facilities to have more than one show at a time so why not do it!

What can you tell us about the competition levels of show jumping during the medium and big tours this year?

The levels were quite competitive and our riders did a good job and were placed every single day of the show. It was very nice to see that after training so hard every day, they were harvested with good results.

Numerous riders mention that one of the main reasons for participating at Al Wafaa is because it is very spiritual and the quintessence of the late Bassel Al Assad is in the air; what are your comments to that?

As Syrian riders we always feel that the soul of Bassel is around us and it is really nice to know that even other foreign riders share the same feeling. Wherever you move in the club, there is always something that reminds us of his presence, the indoor arena is named after his favourite horse Al-Agharr, his club house with all his personal belongings are still there, and the whole club is named after him. We are very proud of him; he made horse riding in Syria what it is today.

Congratulations for Syria's Silver! How did Mustafa Al Zindaki prepare for this year's event and what can you tell us about his horse NCG Catino?

Mustafa is a hard working rider. He is talented, with a good eye and a good feeling and above all, he has such a good heart and character. I think for a rider with all these qualities, he deserves to win the silver. We were all surprised by the performance of NCG Catino, because he was bought as a 140cm horse, but with the trust and belief of his rider he managed to jump the 150-160cm class easily; this I think is an achievement to be proud of. As for me, I predict a bright future with many more golds and silvers for this unique Syrian rider. **HT**



© Jacques Toffi

▲ *Manal Al Assad with Children Champions*

▼ *Mustafa Al Zindaki exhilarated with his 2nd place win*



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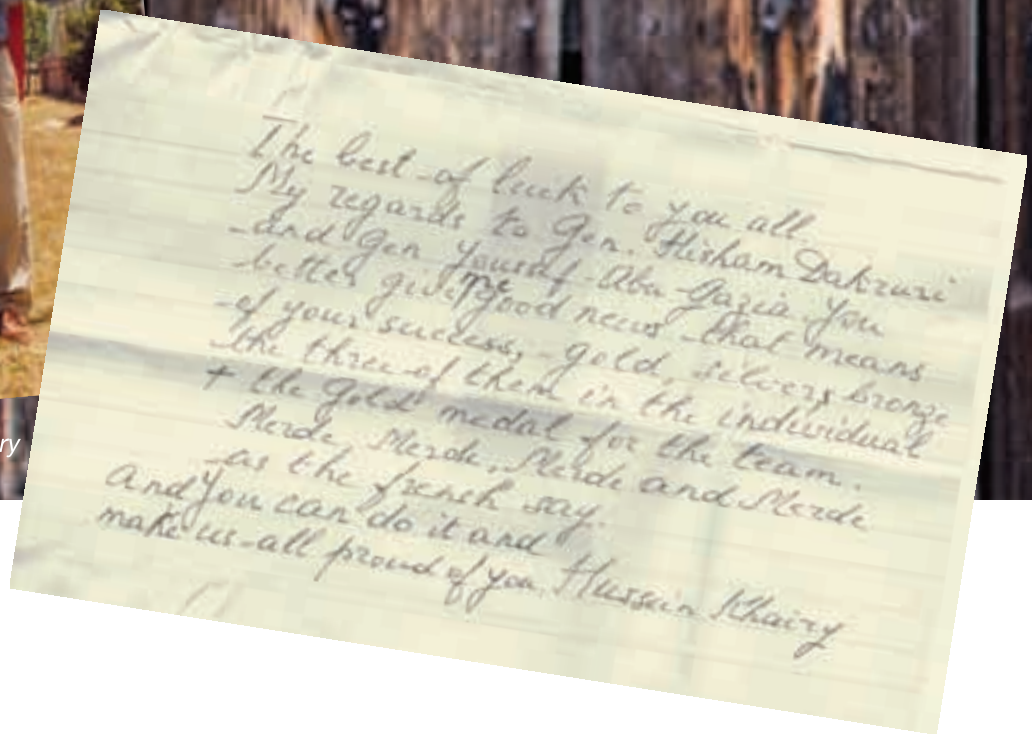
By Nada H. Abdelmoniem







▲ The Late Hussein Khairy & Mamdouh Ismail



It is always a good challenge to try to be creative with articles in Horse Times; it is a unique publication with diverse and controversial editorials. The history article in specific can be a good periodical read and for this spring issue, there were lots of thoughts on how to come up with an intriguing piece.

Some say that “the past is our definition...we may strive, with good reason, to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it, but we will escape it only by adding something better to it.” Better like being able to sit down and talk to veteran or rising reminiscent riders about their recollections and triumphs, how their horse should have won, how it is always said if the horse knocks down the first and last obstacle it is not his fault, but it is mostly the riders’, and when they start talking about chronicles that went back in time. Must be something about my charming self!

Syria, March 2009, I am in Damascus to cover Al Wafaa International Show Jumping Event. Driving through a very beautiful mountainous road on our way to attend the first day of the show, I was chatting with an aspiring rider who was clearly captivated by the scenes

and beautiful weather that triggered him to actually, be seated on the emotional seat rather than the passengers’! He recollected some good memories of his favourite horse; a lame horse during Al Wafaa. A veteran rider joined in and started recollecting memories about a horse that died a day before some event dating 30 years back! The third rider, the true inspiration to what comes ahead, started recollecting memories on the feat that Egypt accomplished in Syria during the 1987 Mediterranean Games; oh, what nostalgia triggered by a beautifully scented breeze!

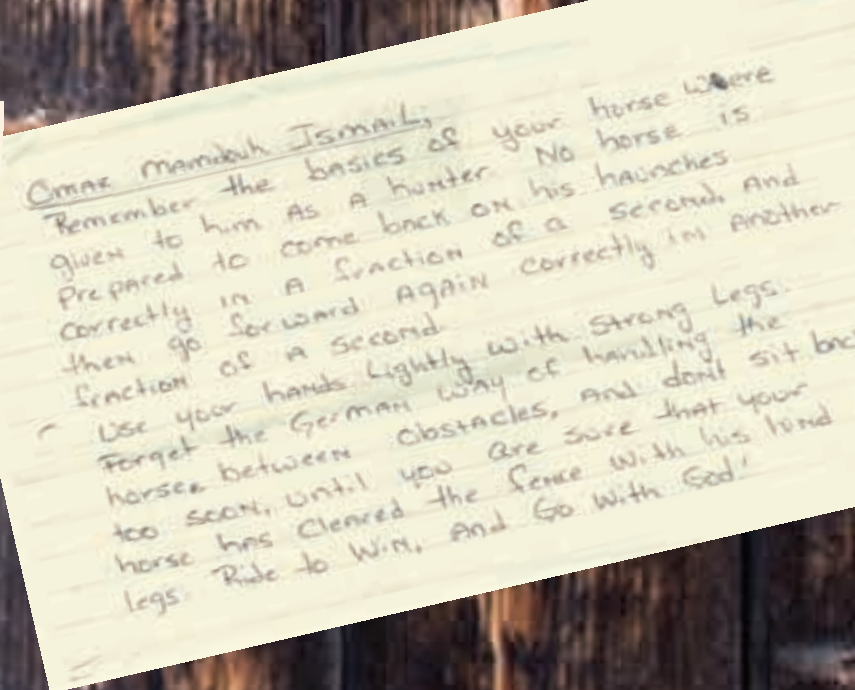
And then that was it! We are in Syria covering a Syrian event and alleviated by the weather. There are beautiful floating memories that took place in the same country twenty two years ago! The 2009 Mediterranean Games are coming up in the summer...why not highlight the memories of the Egyptian team winning the team gold medal and the individual bronze medal years ago? Lets bring them all together and hear how history was made...

1987; highly sensitive political relationships between Egypt and Syria and for more than 30 whole years, equestrian teams were banned by the

government to leave the country due to the ‘South African horse disease’. The Egyptian equestrian team was being guided by Gen. Hussein Khairy, Secretary General of the Federation and were all thriving to compete on the international level. Newspaper articles kept good track of their activities and updated the public with their national wins. Young and aspiring, they trained very hard, competed and waited for their lucky break which came when they qualified for the 1987 Mediterranean Equestrian Games held in Syria. The Mediterranean Games, organised every four years, stand as the greatest sport event of the Mediterranean region attracting the interest of the maritime countries (nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea), where Europe, Africa and Asia meet. The Games, held under the auspices of the International Olympic Committee, fall within the competence of the Hellenic Olympic Committee in terms of the preparation and composition of the National Delegation, precisely as for the Olympic Games. Off to represent Egypt was Dr. Mohamed Elsherbini, a Paediatrician, Hossam Ragab an Army Cavalier, Omar Mamdouh Ismail, an Anthropologist, Khaled Assem a Mechanical Engineer, and finally Khaled Mohamed Aly, a Political Science graduate.



▲ Mohamed Elsherbini & the late Bassel Al Assad



OMAR MAMDOUH ISMAIL:

We had a very good team consisting of 5 riders; unfortunately one of the greatest Egyptian riders, Ahdam Hammad, should have participated but for military reasons he could not leave the country. Had he been with us, I am sure we would have had better results because he had two great horses; 'Last Chance' and 'Tariq ibn Ziyad'. I remember that we faced very hard challenges...we were the first Egyptian team to leave the country and participate in an international tournament and so expectations were all over. No horses were allowed to enter Egypt and vice versa. I remember the President of the Egyptian Equestrian Federation back then Gen. Saad Khalifa along with the late Eng. Hussein Fahmy worked extremely hard to lift the ban and they succeeded. The result was me, Khaled Mohamed Aly, Dr. Mohamed Elsherbini, Khaled Assem and Hossam Ragab travelling to Syria to for the games.

For the preparations we jumped high courses of 160cm designed by Gen. Khairy who loved placing exceptionally wide fences...the width of the oxers where crazy I remember! But I guess this was functional for all of us; we went to the games fully prepared as well as had good experience compared to other riders. Gen. Khairy was very close to us as a friend, and he respected my ideas and I was very outspoken about his wide oxers telling him that they were simply too much! He would answer with a no, you can jump it. I respected him like my father due to the age difference, but the oxers were overdone and we all felt they were too hard. When I think of

it now, who knew that these wide fences were our easy step up to whatever came in the future. He was also very involved with us almost like a trainer even though he was not. Each one of us at that time was his own trainer. We did not have a trainer, and Gen. Khairy followed up on us all the time and what makes it special is that he knew us more than we could possibly know ourselves. Before travelling to the tournament, he wrote a short note for each of us and asked me to read it to the others.

One of the challenges we faced was to transport our horses from Egypt to Syria and we were almost not going to go at the last minute. No aircraft wanted to ship our horse due to the rising unstable relations between the two countries, so at the time there was a carrier called 'Zastek' that accepted to ship the horses. Along with our grooms, Hossam Ragab and I boarded the carrier and travelled just to make sure our horses were in good hands even though when we landed, the aircraft was taxied two to three kilometres away from the cargo building; we walked like we never walked before, but it was still fun!

I remember the other teams had fantastic trainers and better horses than ours but we had more talent, more practise and better preparations. We did not have a Dutch trainer to warm up our horses and then we would just saddle up at the arena after a good "correction"! Other riders did so...we also did not have any "rapping" which was considered cheating. So we rode fair, clean and honest.

I remember during the Grand Prix, I had a one knock down that prevented me from winning the silver individual medal because there were military soldiers chasing after my horse inside the course just to scare him off! Fortunately my horse was so well trained; it could have jumped next to camels or next to an army tank! The Egyptian team was so well trained if a bomb blew up unexpectedly we would have still jumped clear.

More than 20 years have passed and still my memories of the gold medal are fresh and beautiful and of course all the members of the team share those memories. As the French say, "esprit de corps"; we were like a union and my fellow riders are special to me. As close friends, Khaled Mohamed Aly and Khaled Assem along with myself travelled a lot together and when we travelled and won together at the games, the victory was of course very unforgettable. We had plenty of fun! The two Khaleds, Mohamed, Hossam, Gen. Hisham El Dakrory, Gen. Yousif Abu Gazia, Gen. Saad Khalifa, those were the administrators of the federation back then. There were neither mobile phones nor emails and from time to time we called Gen. Khairy for some tips. It was such a pleasure to be part of the team; I enjoyed it and can never forget those times.

Laughing: I remember Khaled Mohamed Aly had several Lebanese girlfriends who flew all the way from Alexandria to Syria to cheer us on. They were very pretty and cheered us on like no others!

*Khaled Assem,
Ride Forward, Forget Perfection, Forget
The Public.
Have confidence in yourself, Communicate
this confidence to your horse; your horse
will then take care of himself And of you.
Forward, Forward, And Forward.
Repeat: The last three strides belong to
the horse and not to you.
Ride to Win And go with God!*



► 4th from left: Khaled Assem, Mohamed Elsherbini & Hossam Ragab
Bottom: Khaled Mohamed Aly & Omar Mamdouh

KHALED ASSEM:

I remember one last qualification at the Army Club; the fences were huge and you either go through, go across, or other horses completely collapsed. And on top of it there was a double combination of a triple bar to a vertical that was gigantic. Actually I remember my horse back then, 'King Tut', was such an incredibly brave creature that went through the qualifications without any hesitation or doubt. Gen. Khalry used to always say "I want to see the ceiling of your horses, the maximum "plafond". I also remember the travelling procedures; the five of us used to stay at the federation and rotate shifts to make sure that the faxes arrived in Syria, the telex, the details of the flight, and how we had to build a container for our horses to board the plane...we literally built pallets! They were not available back then! So many details we had to be attentive to in order to make sure we will go to Syria well prepared. When we were finally there, I remember that everything was handled discreetly due to the crunchy relationship between the two countries...we would ride our horse and train somewhere up in the mountains.

During the qualifiers, I remember I knocked two fences which was funny because the course designers built a couple of fences just too near to the arena railings and the crowd which was basically Syrian, as soon as any horse ridden by a non Syrian would come to

approach the fence by the railings, would stand up, shout and raaaaam as if they were hooraying...but actually they were scaring the horses and mine, completely freaked out that day. Given that, my fellow riders and I had to make a decision regarding the team that would compete and I felt that my horse was the most of the delegation's horses that was shaken by the crowd. And so for the benefit of the team and for the name of Egypt, my horse and I did not compete as part of the team; it was a difficult decision at the time.

When I remember, I felt that we had all the heart and preparations that would take us across, but we lacked the refinement and trickery of how to be prepared to do well. Other teams had extremely good Dutch trainers who rode their horses and even prepared them to become sharper day in and day out. There were tricks that we definitely did not hear about such as putting some liniment under the bandage where the horse's leg would be a little bit sensitive and accordingly he would not want to touch any fence to avoid pain. We did not train to do these things, we never even heard of these things; we trained to be brave and to jump as big, wide and difficult courses as possible. But then this was another learning lesson at the time.

I remember the fences were huge! It was the first time for me to jump in front

of a crowd of thousands of people; it was all new and terrifying. We had to do well because this was a new presentation to the Egyptian team. Luckily all went well! Mohamed Elsherbini jumped with 'Madison' and won the individual bronze medal... 'Madison' was a very good horse bought by the federation. Omar Mamdouh was also a potential candidate for the gold medal jumping with 'Zay Al Assal'; actually, they were a favourite! Khaled Mohamed Aly had a very brave and sturdy horse 'Ayoub' that jumped his own way, but Khaled was a strong and reliable team member. Hossam Ragab had a very good horse that was owned by the Police Club at the time, although when remembering, the horse was a little bit lame but Hossam was careful and made sure that the horse passed the vet check; he ran along with him himself with a heavy heart until the horse passed. Well, it was a marvellous experience and we made lots of good friends. We also realised that at the end of the day it is probably the Egyptian flag that counts.

Laughing: I also remember that we once went out for dinner with the late Bassel Al Assad. Oh my God, the food was indescribably scrumptious that we over ate and over stuffed our stomachs. Khaled Mohamed Aly could not walk home that day and we all had to help him walk!

Khaled Mohamed Aly
 Stop breaking your horse's stride, especially when you get near the obstacle, if you do you will lose the impulsion of the horse and your horse will jump first and will not base-catch correctly & will not round his back over the obstacle with the result that he will drop his forelegs on his hind legs with the risk of knocking the obstacle. The last three strides belong to the horse. Please do not interfere and break his 3 last strides and follow his back. Ride to win, and go with God!



▲ Khaled Mohamed Aly & his horse Ayoub

KHALED MOHAMED ALY:

I remember that it was all about challenges before going to Syria! We had no trainers, no vets, no course designers and no transportation. We did everything on our own. Of course I remember the good effort from the federation back then because they bought good horses; 'Madison' was one of them. The two horses that Adham Hammad was supposed to ride were also top horses. Furthermore, the federation was able to sponsor us financially but they lacked technical and technological details; currently horses are very expensive and federations do not have plenty of financial resources.

I remember our training was hard-hitting; I also remember the big courses that Gen. Khalry designed...his concept was to simply "jump big". The scenario of confirming our travelling to Syria was very consuming; I remember very well before travelling, Khaled Assem, his mother and I were running in the middle of the streets of Cairo to reach the Ministry to get our uniforms just one hour before the flight! Khaled's mother, who was a Director of a Travel Agency at the time, called the airport and somehow gave us time for the check in! Upon our arrival to Syria, we still did not know if the horses were coming or not! It was a miracle when they showed up. My fellow riders all rode good horses owned by the federation or the Army and Police Club, or the Ferousia Club, but I was the only and youngest member of the team that had a private brave horse gifted to me by my father who did

not have the ability to invest on a big scale like other establishments. Our horses were the first horses to leave the country since the late days of Gen. Gamal Harris and Gen. Selim Zaki, men who were part of the National Egyptian team participating at the 1960 Olympics.

I also remember that my groom wanted to do a marvellous job and make me happy but surely did not! He bandaged my horse's legs so tightly the horse arrived with four swollen legs! I spent the first three days in Syria with a hose; just splashing cold water on his legs to cool the swelling down.

It was the first time for me to attend and participate at a show with many spectators; it was like a football match! The spectators were not too friendly to riders, however, they shouldn't really be blamed because I am sure it was a whole new experience for them as well. I remember the hardest part whilst riding was approaching the fences close to the arena railings; the crowd would just shout and wham all the time. Still, nothing could have come between us and the medal, even a Pepsi can tossed at us from the crowd...we had the determination to win a medal...and we did.

Personally, the most difficult part at the show was during the second round of the competitions. We were leading during the first round but the second one started to get a little bit out of hand; the crowd was a little aggressive, the horses were

getting tired, and the mysterious preparations that the other teams went through were puzzling. If I had knocked more than two fences down, we wouldn't have won the gold medal. I was just 22 years old and under a lot of pressure! Riding 'Ayoub', a horse that was not too careful but one that can jump big, we were approaching the second fence, a double oxer and we knocked down A and B from the double. And so I had faults...and the team was depending on me to clear the other fences. The moment of pressure release came when I cleared that last fence...and that was it, Egypt won the gold medal. Well, we had an amazing time when I think of it. We were rewarded for our team spirit and mostly for our patience even though when we came back to Egypt, equestrian and Judo were the only sports that received medals and I expected a parade at the airport! I was wearing my medal and I thought the Minister would be waiting for us just like they do with football stars! Having said so and having mentioned that the Syrian crowd was unfriendly during the games, when we won they really cheered for us and were very warm; this was also a rewarding feeling.

Laughing: Khaled Assem loved fresh pistachios; Syria is known to produce amazing nuts. Note that he did not eat the cooked ones, but the fresh ones that by far, one can merely have a handful of! I think the first night he consumed a kilo of fresh ones and for the first two days he was sick in bed.



◀ The faithful groom, Madison & Mohamed Elsherbini

Dr. Mohamed EL Sherbini;
 Be Fair to your good horse. Give him a good
 Forward Canter, full of impulsion. Do NOT slow
 down before the obstacles, [Any obstacle] Remember
 the pace is 400 meters per minute To win is to
 go at least 450 meters per minute. Give your
 horse the ~~speed~~ balanced, Speed and Impulsion
 necessary to let him clear the obstacle
 without Unnecessary effort. Ride to win, and
 Go With God!



MOHAMED ELSHERBINI

The Individual Bronze Medallist:

When I recall, 22 years ago my fellow team partners and myself had the most ambitious target in our horse riding career; winning an international medal for Egypt. No horse left Egypt since the 1960 Olympics when the Egyptian team came in 4th place! My dream was to raise the Egyptian flag in a prestigious event such as the Mediterranean Games or even the Olympics. Thanks to the support of the federation, at that time I had 'Madison', not a big horse but one with a big heart. He was 12 years old at that time and too sensitive in the mouth; I remember I had to prepare a special plan to match with him! Firstly, riding him with a rubber bit and asking him to do what I wanted from him without ordering and secondly, I had to improve his jumping technique since he was jumping too high above the fences without using his neck and back...the thing that worried me the most because such horses usually get tired easily while jumping high fences, especially when getting older. I succeeded in doing such modifications and 'Madison' became my perfect match.

After the team selection, the preparations were very hard. Gen. Khalry believed that "big and high courses were the best teacher." I was also worried that old 'Madison' might not survive such courses, but with the wisely relaxed exercises at home, we

managed. As the team captain, I started to think about the others. We were all very talented and brave riders but without a trainer, a vet, a proper blacksmith, or even an up-to-date course designer, and modern fences before travelling. The courses at the time became very technical...fences were closely related to each other and the poles were lighter (11 kg) and rounded, and the cups were flat while the speed was 400 meters per minute; really...all so challenging! And so, aiming at Syria a week before the competitions, I had to take the working schedule from each rider to deliver them to Gen. Khalifa, Gen. Dakroury, and Gen. Abo Ghazia, nicely asking them not to interfere too much with the riders when training as each of us was a self-trainer in his own way. It was impossible to change or to be asked anything at that time!

In Syria, we had to jump five courses in three days, with two rounds in the individual Grand Prix and two in the Nations Cup. A difference of one pole down kept me from winning the gold medal. That pole was down because of the crowd! Nevertheless, I had received the bronze individual medal; what a moment! The late Bassel Al Assad won the gold medal; I remember...he was a very good rider who had a very good horse and a good trainer. During the two individual rounds, my temperature was 39.5 degrees while competing for the title

but my spirits were very elevated and too strong to be affected by anything; and there was the moment...the Egyptian flag was raised for the first time. The second and most exciting time was when we won the gold medal as a team! The second round of the Nations Cup had the atmosphere of a football match; the crowd went crazy as they wanted Syria to win. The pressure was too much and the horses were distracted, but our determination was stronger and we could have grabbed the gold medal out of a lion's mouth! The national anthem with the Egyptian flag raised highly were in action in a moment that will never be forgotten; it was a great feeling with "one for all and all for one". I will never forget my faithful and very old groom at the time, Abdelaziz El Degheidy, who took ultimate care of 'Madison' who won the first official and precious medals in the Egyptian show jumping history.

Laughing: I remember we spent our first night in Syria in a military hotel (had only one floor!) with only officially dressed soldiers around. I remember we had three meals and those meals were only "white": milk, white cheese, labna, and yoghurt! I called Gen. Khalifa and told him that if they do not move us from this hotel, we would all go on a strike! Hmmm...our request was immediately implemented and we were transferred to a five stars hotel!



Hossam Raghab;
 You have A good horse, powerful and Nice
 Trained. He doesnt like to knock obstacle
 Be with him when he jumps from fence I
 Not try to judge distances. Do not interfere
 with your hands, your interference is
 Always wrong. If in doubt, close your
 eyes and push forward, your horse has
 the power to clear the fence even if it
 take off is far from the obstacle
 have confidence. And you will
 Ride to win, and Go

HOSSAM RAGAB:

It was our dream to compete at the Mediterranean Games. I remember that we all froze when we heard we would actually travel.

I insisted on travelling along with the horses to make sure that it was all true, and to also see that the horses made it out in good hands. When we won the gold medal finally, everything fell into place and the dream came true.

I remember that we were all a tad disorganised because we had no trainers, but we all tried our best to encourage each other to try for success. We also mustn't forget the great effort exerted by Eng. Hussein Fahmy who I think was the upholder of our dream; he was the one who travelled to France many times back then in order to make sure that Egypt was clear from the 'South African Disease' and also to make sure to get approval that after nearly 30 years, the Egyptian team can be back to compete in international shows. I thank all those who remember us a team and those who helped in our success. **HT**

From left: Khaled Assem, Mohamed Eisherbini, Omar Mamdouh & Khaled Mohamed Aly





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Classical vs. Modern Dressage

DOMINIQUE BARBIER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Jean Llewellyn, Canada



DOMINIQUE BARBIER WAS BORN AND RAISED IN FRANCE, BUT HAS LIVED FOR MANY YEARS WITH HIS FAMILY IN HEALDSBURG, CALIFORNIA - THE HEART OF SONOMA VALLEY WINE COUNTRY. A FORMER STUDENT OF THE LEGENDARY TEACHER NUNO OLIVEIRA, BARBIER IS A WELL-KNOWN MASTER OF FRENCH CLASSICAL DRESSAGE AND HAS DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO PERPETUATING THE TRADITIONS HANDED DOWN THROUGHOUT 400 YEARS OF HISTORY.

The dictionary definition describes French classical dressage as “horse ballet,” adding, “Although the discipline has ancient roots, dressage was first recognised as an important equestrian pursuit in the West during the Renaissance (14th to 17th centuries). The great European masters of that period developed a sequential training system that has changed little since then. Classical dressage is still considered the basis of trained modern dressage.” According to Dominique Barbier, however, the differences between classical and modern dressage are as far removed as the differences between today's Warmbloods and the Lusitanos with whom he has shared a life-long passion. Certainly, the latter breed and its Baroque cousins have been more synonymous with the work of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna, the Real Escuela Andaluza de Arte Ecuestre in Spain, and the Escola Portuguesa de Arte Ecuestre in Portugal, rather than international dressage arenas - although their special qualities are now being recognized for FEI-level sport.

However, before discussing the merits of classical versus modern dressage and sharing Barbier's training philosophies, we should recall certain events that prompted the FEI's decision last November to request the immediate resignation of their entire Dressage Committee. In recent years, competitive dressage has been under the microscope following revelations of abusive training methods - including



▲ Barbier riding Sedosco

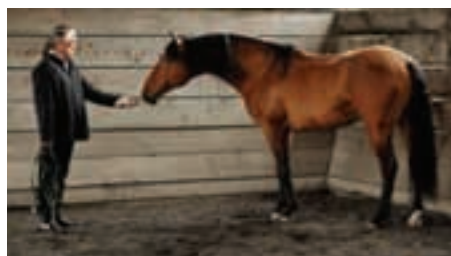
the controversial rollkür - that were first published in a German equestrian magazine. Subsequently, few fans will forget the unconscionable behaviour exhibited by a few of the world's top dressage horses in Hong Kong's Olympic arena last August, compounded by the questionable marks awarded by the international judges for virtually non-existent movements. Dominique Barbier was candidly critical, saying, “Modern dressage horses are not under control. How can they buck in the middle of the ring and win the World Championship?” His view is that, “German marketing has created a sport called 'dressage' to promote big horses, with big gaits. For



centuries the classical dressage horse has been a Lusitano, Lipizzaners, Andalusians... Today, the word Baroque (which typically exemplifies artistic grandeur) has been totally destroyed."

Responding to the FEI's creation of an investigative Dressage Task Force Dominique Barbier is asking, "What do we do? The educators are the judges and the judges are wrong. Dressage is facing its biggest challenge because we're trying to change the education and beliefs of a whole generation." Barbier, who even abhors the use of spurs, suggested that from the outset, the meaning of the word "dressage" should be completely redefined. "New rules, new judging, strict welfare controls, and from the outset we call it "sport dressage," synonymous with competition. It means creating a new generation where love and harmony replace domination and fear."

For the sake of clarity and in line with Barbier's long-held beliefs, it is important to emphasise that the word "dressage" conjures a variety of meanings and perspectives depending on an individual's affiliation to riding and equestrian sport. In the context of this article, "modern" and "competitive" dressage are interchangeable, and equate to a skilled rider performing a series of movements with a horse that is obedient, willing and relaxed. To others it may simply conjure an image of someone inconceivably wearing a top hat and tails and doing fancy tricks with a horse! However, with its origins



▲ Barbier & Narsil - negotiating!

firmly rooted in Italy and then France, the word "dressage" literally translates to mean "training." Therefore, "dressage" provides the foundation for any activity a rider might want to pursue with any horse at all levels and in all disciplines, according to Barbier, "based on lightness, communication, and harmony." More specifically, dressage should epitomise a system of training that employs progressive methodology to optimise a horse's natural athletic ability.

Proclaiming his "less is more" philosophy, Dominique Barbier's view is that the pure meaning of "classical dressage", whether applied to Warmbloods, Lusitanos, or any other breed, no longer exists in the competitive dressage arena. "Modern dressage - in other words, modern competition and training - has lost the quality of the gaits. Few dressage horses have a correct walk, and the trot is artificial because it changes the natural gait. The FEI rules for extension say that the back leg should extend as far as the front leg, and the toes should be pointed where they land. The rules were created because the essential quality of the extended trot is

relaxation. If the movement is created with resistance or rigidity, the back leg doesn't work and the front leg has an exaggerated Spanish trot, a movement that has no name. The essence of dressage is to make natural movement even more beautiful, respecting and improving the gaits. I have a hard time with [modern] dressage because I know how it's done and it's not pretty!"

Believing that dressage should be completely demystified, Barbier wistfully recalled his own classical training, when students were not permitted to question the riding master. "The old trainers were the untouchables." But, some years later, during a clinic presented by his former mentor, Nuno Oliveira, Barbier dared to raise his hand and ask; "What I would like to know is what you are actually feeling on a horse?" Oliveira's response was; "I can't tell you that, it's too private!" This response deeply saddened Dominique Barbier. "I told him this was one of the most important things I wanted to know, but his answer illustrated the mentality of that generation. 'I can do it, but you can't.' It's the same as great chefs keeping secrets about their ingredients, which is a shame because the next generation doesn't learn. You ride who you are, but as a learning experience, all classical training at that time died due to lack of teaching." Barbier continued by adding, "In many ways, it's not really classical versus modern - it's about knowledge. Young riders want to emulate their heroes,



▲ Ray of light

but if the heroes don't have the necessary knowledge....! The pyramid system of training is not designed according to the horse but to the level of competition. It's a reversal of the old system. Competitions are being designed and horses are trained to achieve it - instead of designing competitions to suit the horses."

Critical too of the politics that have infiltrated top-level sport, Barbier said, "Many people with influence have too much power. Dressage represents two emotions: love or fear, and people can make their choice every single day. Are we able to combine sport and classical dressage? Honestly, I'm not sure. It depends on what the FEI wants dressage to represent. Are we sticking strictly to the rules? It used to be very beautiful to watch but now I have a hard time with [competitive] dressage. To the uneducated eye something might look beautiful, but someone who is sensitive will understand the tension. The ultimate goal is for every horse is to actually enjoy dancing with you."

"If you take a horse that's sensitive and beautiful and ready to trust man, and you treat him like certain competition people treat their horses, you will lose their complicity. One of the outstanding qualities of a Lusitano is that they are beautiful the way they are, but they don't want to be pushed and compressed, half halted like some other breeds can take. They are sensitive individuals that require a minimum of understanding from their riders and not be treated like machines.

"Warmbloods are more predisposed to [modern] dressage because the competition judges are placing more

Over the past three or four decades Warmbloods (i.e. sport horses) have undergone an enormous transformation due to selective breeding strategies employed by many of the top European studbooks. This man-made evolutionary process has accelerated parallel to the demands of modern-day equestrian sport requiring horses that have been bred for a specific discipline, rather than suiting the needs of the majority of riders. Dominique Barbier's suggestion is that everyone should allow themselves to sit on a Lusitano and experience a Lusitano, and they will immediately start to understand the difference to a Warmblood. "Ask a well-trained Lusitano to walk, trot, canter, passage and pirouette - then understand why you should have one. A Lusitano is always interested in playing with you, learning, getting a conversation going. It's all about interaction. Warmbloods don't volunteer themselves. Lusitanos will!"

importance on horses with larger gaits than normal. In other words, if your horse does not have an extraordinary trot in competition, it is not even considered. Conformationally, we need big movers and a good engine room, but we also need horses capable of collection, because dressage is all about collection, and we see a lot of problems with horses lacking pure blood [Warmbloods], because the sensitivity is not there. These problems originate with training that is "forcing" them to go somewhere - they are not collected

they are compressed!"

Dominique Barbier explains that gaits should only be in proportion to the size of an animal - whether it be Warmblood or Lusitano or a pony! "The judges should recognise that when a big horse enters the ring, their gaits should also be big. But it is a fact, with few exceptions, that when a horse is above 16.3hh (170 cms) he will have much more difficulty in balancing his movement than a smaller horse. When you consider how many people aspire to Olympic-level dressage, you have to ask how many can actually sit on a big-gaited Warmblood? Not many. So, what have we done? Man has created saddles that help people to grip and stay on - which is anti-classical and anti-dressage!"

Dominique Barbier also candidly refers to spurs as "A loaded gun! How primitive is it to poke a piece of iron into someone's ribs. It's like saying, 'I invite you to dance, but you will have a noose around your neck and I will carry a gun in my pocket.' Spurs create tension and are terrible for the relationship. Dressage is beauty and harmony - and people think they can achieve this by kicking!" He continued by saying, "When your body is comfortable, your mind is at rest. The reverse is also true, when your mind is screwed up, you cannot sit still. For horses, if you allow them to remain comfortable in a proper position, when they can use their body with the least effort, they start to enjoy it. They feel okay about what you're asking them to do."

"Many people consider horses as a tool to achieve selfish goals. Today, everything is too results oriented. As soon as competition and winning becomes your first priority, it's over. How are you going to demand something from a horse if you don't respect him?" Barbier concludes by saying, "Today, people are starting to think! This gives me cause for optimism. Today, people are learning to take better care of themselves, going to the gym, meditation, yoga... so perhaps then they go the stable and understand the same process with their horses."

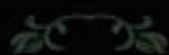
"A horse mirrors his rider - people have certain qualities that become part of their horses. Horses live in the here and now. Most students are unable to understand that concept. Our own inadequacies can provoke action and reaction with both positive and negative results. A horse is the mirror of your soul, of who you really are. It is your reflection that you see through their eyes. Through them, you can more easily come to know yourself. Through you, they can more easily come to fulfil themselves." **HT**

D
Barbier

هواء السماء يسرى بين أذنى الجواد.



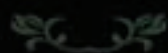
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FEI WORLD CUP LAS VEGAS APRIL 2009



Photo Credits: Tish Quirk

MEREDITH MICHAELS-BEERBAUM CLINCHES THIRD ROLEX FEI WORLD CUP JUMPING TITLE!

Defending champion Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum secured her third Rolex FEI World Cup Jumping title with consummate ease at the Thomas & Mack Center in Las Vegas where America's McLain Ward finished second ahead of The Netherlands' Albert Zoer in third. The sheer class of the German winner's 16-year-old gelding determined the result on a day when Anthony D'Ambrosio's course building tested many to the very limit. For Shutterfly however limits don't seem to exist. No fence is too high or too wide, and the clinching second-round run from this partnership was an exhibition of near-perfection.

Stamina and concentration played a major role in the closing stages, but most of the leading contenders proved equal to the challenge and none of the top three finishers lowered a pole throughout three days of world-class jumping. Lying fourth however, America's Rich Fellers and Flexible slipped two places with a double-error and then disappeared from the reckoning when adding another 22 faults second time out.

Switzerland's Christina Liebherr produced a career-defining performance when anchoring the runaway No Mercy to great

effect in both rounds and this moved her up from fifth to fourth in the final analysis, but the real battle was played out among three great proponents of the sport. Perhaps Ward and Zoer are a little unlucky that their two heroic mounts are at the top of their game at the same time as Michaels-Beerbaum's extraordinary horse. The American rider's mare Sapphire and the Dutchman's great gelding Oki Doki are exceptional by any measure, but Shutterfly has once again shown that he is in a class of his own.

Michaels-Beerbaum talked about her preparation before going into the ring which is also a team effort. "Because Shutterfly doesn't like to do too much it's a nerve-control thing for me - it's not easy to do very little before going in to jump at a big championship," she said. "I try to keep him happy, my husband Markus tries to keep me calm and my groom also keeps a rein on me," she explained. With Geneva, Switzerland selected for the Rolex FEI World Cup Jumping Finals next year and Leipzig, Germany, Hertogenbosch in The Netherlands and Goteborg in Sweden scheduled for the following three seasons while the Dressage will go to Hertogenbosch in 2010 there has been much speculation about the equestrian highlight returning to Las Vegas.

America's Steffen Peters and Ravel claimed the 2009 Rolex FEI World Cup Dressage title with a show-stopping Freestyle test that raised the roof of the Thomas & Mack Centre in Las Vegas. The



STEFFEN PETERS AND RAVEL DANCE TO VICTORY IN THE ROLEX FEI WORLD CUP DRESSAGE FINAL!

44-year-old rider from San Diego, California edged Germany's double World Cup champion Isabel Werth into runner-up position with an inspirational performance, while nine-time winner Anky Van Grunsven from The Netherlands had to settle for third. This was just the second-ever U.S. victory in the 23-year history of the Dressage World Cup - the previous American to take title was Debbie McDonald who officially retired the great mare Brentina who carried her to World Cup success in 2003. Peters was chasing Werth's leading score of 84.500% when third-last into the arena. The German rider's 15-year-old gelding Satchmo can be nervous and fearful on occasions, but he kept his cool to produce spectacular movements this time out and snatched the lead from Dutchman Hans Peter Minderhoud and Exquis Nadine who were real crowd-pleasers; there had been something magical about Peters and Ravel. **HT**



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PERISCOPE ON ANDRE SAKAKINI

Date of Birth: May 23rd 1957
Country: Egypt

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem



“A HORSE IS AN ANIMAL THAT I LOVE AND GREW UP WITH. IT HAS BEEN YEARS NOW AND I CANNOT FIND A WAY TO DETACH MYSELF FROM THEM”

Andre Sakakini:

He is a fan of romantic Italian music and of Italian actress Monica Bellucci! But who wouldn't be? She is gorgeous. He is a professional rider since the age of 10 who is always driven by talent, ambition, and persistence; he is a perfectionist. He is a criticised veteran rider that has achieved numerous goals, yet wants to achieve more. When watching him ride, you distinguish style, and when hearing him speak, you find it hard to tell if he is angry or calm because of his consistent tone of voice. Until you hear him laughing...and then, that is a different Andre Sakakini...

What can you tell us about riding and how you feel about horses?

A horse is an animal that I love and grew up with. It has been years now and I cannot find a way to detach myself from them. I do not however drain myself like I used to before; it was rather hectic training and riding all the time, especially when I rode in Europe. These days I limit myself to a horse or 2 that I love; I ride, compete, and try to achieve. It is a big goal for me to win; it is the biggest actually and that is why I keep going. I cherish to keep my level of riding consistent. I do not ride as hectically as before since I live amongst my family here in Egypt and would like to make time for them.

How did your passion start?

When I was a child I used to watch

veteran riders who were very much the source of my inspiration. To name a few, Gen. Gamal Harris, Gen. Selim Zaki, and Abarry Hammad. I started in 1966 in the Sporting Club in Alexandria and I gradually moved my life into a career of a professional rider, I left to Europe and stayed in Germany practicing for 23 years.

Besides your numerous past achievements that, touch wood, would need pages to be listed, what are your latest achievements?

I just participated in the Arab League's CSI*** Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Qatar; I won 4 classes and came in 2nd during the Sharjah Grand Prix. I rode and stayed with young horses one of which is 'Miss Coreland', a mare owned by Mohamed Mansour, and 'Hope' also owned by Mohamed Mansour. 'Hope' was a good horse which Mohamed asked me to try out. I so believed in him; he is so excellent now and very much created into a Grand Prix horse. I did not go shopping in Europe...all the good horses I found here in Egypt; they came to me! I started with 'Miss Coreland' in June 2008 and she won her first Grand Prix in Germany which was surprising! She also won another 3 classes in Europe. She is really good, making her total wins to 8 since just last June.

What do you do to familiarise yourself with a horse?



I must say that this is a gift God gave me. It has to be a given to be able to accommodate oneself and win with a new horse. 'Miss Coreland' is not an easy horse but I still managed to find a way to familiarise myself with her and we got along very well from the start.

You are a rider, but also a trainer at present; does your way of seeing things differ now?

Things do not differ that much. Riding is riding and so is training. At the end of the day it is a sport; however I always come back and say that this sport in specific is a sport of many details. One can never disregard that and as a trainer, I think in order for a rider to achieve, he should always be attentive to those details. As a trainer, I admit that I am demanding because I like perfection... '85. which is maybe what has made me become successful since I am very conscientious to all sorts of riding details. I always expect my trainees to be the same. I do not expect results in 3 to 4 months, but in 3 to 4 years, and at the end, I create a real rider. It is not just about winning, it is about being able to school for example, to look professional in the ring.

Do your trainees adapt well to your demanding expectations?

In 2008 I trained the Army Club riders for a whole year and their results in the National Championships really speak for themselves. We came in 1st, 2nd

and 3rd in both A-Levels. The riders from the Army are talented but were missing some basics which I tried to help them with. They responded very well to my methods, and I am very pleased with the results we all achieved together. At the moment, I myself am competing again and do not have much time on my hand to train. I currently only have 2 trainees and one of them is Mohamed Mansour, a recreational rider and a business man who also does not have much time.

However we try our best to produce the best out of the situation without 110% dedication. I took riding as a career and Mohamed is taking it as a hobby and a passion. He has adapted to my methods and has improved very much and is achieving good results. We still have a thorough programme ahead of us though, but we will keep going until we achieve what we want. He is very efficient which is what counts.

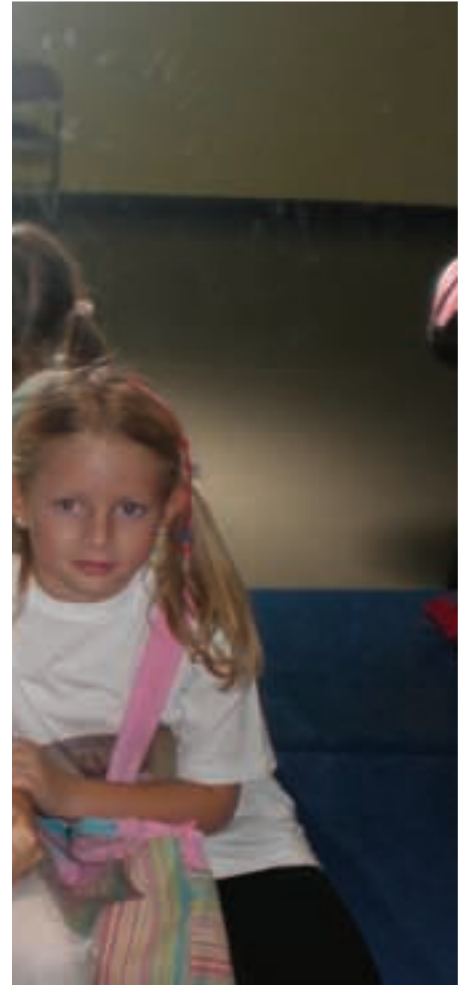
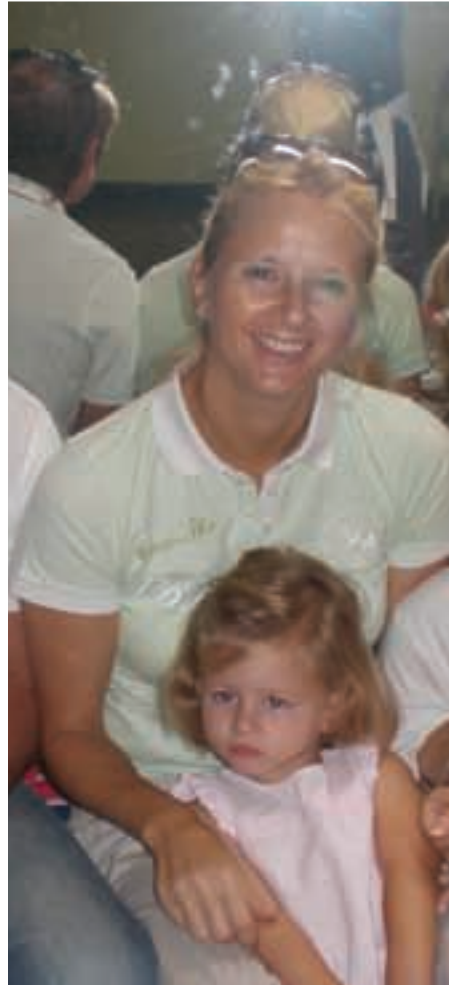
For many years you have been riding for Egypt, but now you are riding for another country. What are your affiliations as a rider?

My affiliations are for riding. I have had problems with the Egyptian Equestrian Federation and for the past 3 years I have been riding for Italy. The Italian Federation treats me well and I think I will stick to what treats me well. My career as a rider has not changed and I am still the same old Andre. I just think it is a shame for Egypt because all the

▲ Andre & Mia

“MY CAREER AS A RIDER HAS NOT CHANGED AND I AM STILL THE SAME OLD ANDRE”





wins that I have achieved could have been associated to the country I was born in; Egypt...my country. But now they will be affiliated to Italy. No harm done however...I am still here and I still keep on going.

You are being criticised for being an Egyptian riding for Italy, what are your comments to that?

I did not leave to Italy, it's Egypt that sent me away. Egypt does not want Andre Sakakini anymore but I want and have to continue my career, or should I stop riding? Italy accepted me and is very happy with my representing it which I am very thankful for because in a very weak moment of my life, Egypt jolted me out, and another country took me in. I owe them a lot and I have to deliver.

How do you think people are criticising you?

People are entitled to do what pleases them, but they "should" not criticise me. Regardless of the technicalities and reasons behind this issue of my representing Italy now, I did not drop Egypt. I was dropped. This happened at the peak of my career and I think it was wrong to happen, nevertheless, I have to continue my passion.

What can you tell us about your family?

I am a father of 3 lovely daughters; Mia who is 25 and lives in Rome, Lara who is 7, and little 3 year old Emily. They are lovely! I do not push them to ride, but if they want to establish a riding career, I would love to see them doing it well, and not just doing it because they are the Sakakini girls. They have to want to do it and I will encourage them. Lara rides ponies, and she travels to riding camps in Germany often; if she wants to continue, I would encourage her.

Besides Andre Sakakini as a show jumper, a demanding trainer, and a father, what is there that is more to Andre as a normal individual, than meets the eye?

I love water skiing and I am an avid lover of Formula 1 (smiling). I met Formula 1 drivers Joel Schumacher and Fernando Alonso and I was very thrilled!! I was invited to meet them when they were once playing football in Monza, Italy, promoting charity for a Cancer Institute, and I was very impressed. If I could define the word professional, I would say these Formula 1 drivers: they are unbelievably efficient and are one-track minded about their jobs. Schumacher is exceptional, was

always a talent and a genius, and very admirable. I love football too and in general I like good sport; I would never miss the European Championships! I hate to cook (laughing). I was never a big eater and I am still not. I have always been very self-conscience about my weight and figure because of the sport hence I never gave much to neither food nor cooking. I eat light and that's all. What else about Andre? I love Italian music because I think it is very romantic and beautiful. In Egypt I love Amr Diab and all his songs. He is not a super and original talent, but his songs are very nice. I am also a fan of Monica Bellucci! And I know what my star sign is! I am a Taurus!

If you had the chance to change something about Andre Sakakani, what would you change?

I always ask myself this question, and I think if I had the chance to change something, I would actually start my life all over again, and not change something about it. I have been a happy man and what has only been hurting me for the past couple of years is this issue of my not representing Egypt anymore. It was hurtful and hard to go through the whole experience but I have moved on noW. I am fine again. **HT**

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MONTY ROBERTS

THE MAN WHO WHISPERS
TO HORSES

By Sue Akehurst, England

(PART 1)



I AM PROUD TO BE ABLE TO BRING YOU ANOTHER EXCLUSIVE INSIGHT INTO MONTY ROBERTS, THE MAN WHO WHISPERS TO HORSES.

Having read a lot about this man I wondered what he was like as he grew up, what his hopes and aspirations for the future were, what drives this man to devote his entire life to improving the world for horses, and in turn, improving the relationship those who follow his methods and concepts have with their horses. Is he achieving all he had hoped for? How does he deal with the inevitable criticism that any successful person seems to receive? Monty kindly spared some time for this interview for Horse Times just before a large demonstration he was giving in the UK.

Monty always uses his patented schooling halter, ► the "Dually" which effectively rewards horses for acting in partnership with the handler

What job did you want to do or see yourself doing as an adult? Is this what you always thought you would do?

Yes, I saw myself as I was growing up winning World Championships with horses. I loved racing, and thought that I could have the World's best racehorse, and I did! And I thought I could win a World Championship with western horses, and I won nine! There was a time when I thought I would also be a veterinarian, I was good in school and I thought academically speaking, I could do that. I even went that way for a slight period of time after secondary school. But I discovered that that was purely working with medicine and not with horses, I say purely, nearly purely. And so I didn't follow the medical route. There were times when I thought I might pursue my education further to become a psychiatrist for people, but soon learned that the horses were more important to me than the people and I found it much more gratifying to do that. So since there were no animal behaviour or psychology courses, I set out to cause those to happen. And they have! Jane Goodall (the renowned Primatologist) was helpful in that regard, I have never even met her, but she did a lot of things that helped me in my quest to cause there to be animal behaviour courses and even Dr. Dian Fossey (one of the world's leading female scientists, author of "Gorillas in the Mist" which was later made into a film) did a bit on that score as well, and even Dr Leakey, (Kenyan archaeologist and

naturalist) who has since died. But these were the things that I thought about. I wanted to somehow be a Father, a Mentor and to leave the world a better place than I found it.

At what age did you realise that the route that you have taken was the route that you wanted to take?

I suppose my first realisation setting into this varied route, because it's always been something close to this route, was about 15-17 years of age, maybe, around there.

When you first started down that path was your aim and goal the same as it is now and where did you see it evolving to?

Well my aim and goal at that point in time was to get a good education and education was primary to me, which was why I went to University for six years and triple majored. I really took my education seriously and that was my goal at that time. Then to use that education to take me to the places that we have talked about.

Has it evolved the way you believed that it would?

Pretty much it has evolved the way I thought it would, in some ways I wanted it to be a lot better, I always set my goals far ahead! But I suppose that's a good way to do goals, because if you just made them all, that would be pretty dull and not much of a goal! So I set them way out there, and in some ways I couldn't have



dreamed it would go as far as it has! So it comes to me in both directions really.

Do you feel, over the years of doing this work that you have held fast to your original dream and goal? Or has it evolved more into a business through the realities of life and money?

No, no, no, no, no, NO! I have NEVER EVER thought of my career as a business, not a minute. The realities of life are that a lot of other people think that way, and they start reprimanding me for not being more commercial or more dedicated to the business side of it, but I have never been, and they have to fight it all the time to keep the home fires burning. When I was able to go non-profit in the year 2000, that was a GREAT turning point for me because I could just say stuff it, I'm not business and I'm not going to be business! Then when you become non-profit you



get a bunch of people telling you what to do every day! And I wasn't ready for that one. But in fact that is what's happened. But no, I have never thought of it as a business.

Do you believe that you are achieving your goal of “leaving the world a better place than you found it for horses and for people too”, and how are you achieving it?

Well it is way more than a feeling now. It is an actual fact that the count of horses is probably approximating something like 40% of all the horses trained in the world today, in the last twelve months lets say, will see a little bit, some part of my work. That's way more than I ever thought would happen. If God would give me another ten years or so, I think we would see it go past the mid way point. I think we have already reached the point of critical mass if you

like, a point where it won't stop, where the ball is rolling and it's going to go on. The cessation of whips in racing, the reduction of brutality is just MASSIVE and I swear a lot of it is down to me, and the people who are responsible for stomping down on a lot of this will tell you, right upfront, that it was after my book, without any legislation to reduce the use of whips in racing the United States has, since my first book came out, reduced the use of the whip in racing 30% with NO legislation or rules of any kind! So yeah! It's working!

Is it working enough? 'HELL NO!' We are more violent to one another than we have ever been! So I am not at all proud of that end of it. So I am working with people now more than I am working with horses.

Do you have any new ideas or ways you want to take this now in the future to have more of an impact?

YEAH! - Monty lowers his voice and leans in to me as he smiles and says...I do! I have new ideas! Lots of ideas!

I am so a-technical, there are not words to describe my illiteracy in the technical world. But I have people around me that do pretty well. It's really exciting to think that you can push a button and 50,000 people will get your message in the next hour or so. It's crazy! And there is a potential for us to start out with about 50,000 people able to get an hour or so of me per month on an internet subscription site. Wow, that is really exciting! Because what does it do to me? It stretches the hell out of me. It multiplies me, I don't have to travel 220,000 miles a year average and you know I can't do that forever or much longer for that matter. Travelling is difficult enough, a trip or two a year these days. And when you are on the road for 310 days out of the year it is

diabolically tough on your system, tough at my age, tough on my pocket book, and the non-Profit people start screaming about cost of travel and they don't want me to go here and they don't want me to get there because there is no money in it, and I just want to go because of what I am doing there. So yes, I am excited about the new innovations in how to stretch me, multiply me, so that more people will get my message than are currently getting it, while I travel less.



If your methods are better ethically and economically, why are they not even more popular and more widely accepted?

Yes, this is a REALLY good question for me too! I have more legitimate reasons to ask that to you than you do. Why not? If it happens faster, that's less money, more economical, I have done 8,400 horses in front of public audiences and four of them have visited the veterinarian, FOUR of them! All with minor injuries.

These injuries happened during the demonstration?

Yes, one was bucking and trod on his heel, another one kicked the fence and scratched a hind leg, another one hit its ear on the fence and the other kicked one hind leg with its other hind leg. Four horses! Now I tell you if I marched 8,000 horses through this building with nothing to do but just get through this building, four of them would be hurt some way or another. So I am really proud of that. So why don't they accept it more? Ok, it's safer, it's faster, and you get better performance from your horses so I want to ask the question with you. I want to join with you at the hips and ask that question HOW COME MORE?

The person standing outside, that's in the horse industry would say "You got 40% now, what the hell do you want?" Well I



▲ Monty using his incremental training with non-loading horse. The horse learns to accept the hollow wooden noise under hoof, a simulation of the ramp of the horsebox



want 100%, that's what I want. Am I going to get 100%? No I am not. But the resistant people, how do they justify it? They have to be just arrogantly persistent to do the wrong thing to justify it. I have owners that will take a manure fork and jab their horse with the manure fork before they send it to me to try to get me to fail! I don't know about the human race and that mentality. You know, I would rather put my trust in a horse any day!

What do you say to the people who criticise your demonstrations as being less personalised, same old problems, are too marketing orientated in selling your products rather than informative?

Well you can hear people say anything in life and I really detest someone that would say these things and I detest them down to the ground. The principal reason for my detesting them is that they are lying. They are lying through their teeth. I am non-profit, what about non-profit don't they understand? Some of my Recommended

Associates sell clothes, but I don't sell clothes, I don't make any clothes. I sell my halter because it is better for the horse, I sell my long lines because they are better for horses, my bits, my books, my DVD's that's it! If you could see what we get for them wholesale, and what they cost us, you would realise that I have a non-profit board back home that is screaming at me that I am not business enough about it. So I detest anyone saying that. They don't think a thing about going down to Marks & Spencer and spending £4 for half a chicken or something, and they wouldn't say that Marks & Spencer shouldn't make a profit in it and they'd be the first ones to say "Ah, that Marks & Spencer went broke!" Ok, my board don't want me to go broke, they want to keep me on the road and I am spending tax payer's money being non-profit. So I don't have any control over these prices. I don't tell my people what they have to put on for prices. I detest that person who would say that because I'm not. As for not informative? Pfaa! NO clinician, NO CLINICIAN works harder than I do, to bring information to my audiences. I am not knocking them for that. No, they do what they can do. I'm a maniac! I know that I do more than the next guy, and he would say to me, and they often do, "Are you crazy? 310 days out of the year, and you spend long cold nights in England sitting there answering questions, the same questions often, over and over!" But look, I asked for this job. Nobody put a gun to my head and I am going to do the best I can. But don't tell me I'm not giving them information, because that will get me upset! HT

SHAPING UP TO BE NUMBER ONE

She almost became a fitness trainer and twice gave up show jumping, but now Australia's Edwina Alexander is one of the world's top show jumpers. Kerry Bowness finds out how she's achieved so much

On her first visit to Olympia in 2008, Edwina Alexander and Isovlas Itot Du Chateau won the World Cup qualifier with the sole double clear. The 15.2hh gelding and his 5ft 5in rider had denied a home win for John Whitaker. But this was no fluke victory for this diminutive partnership. A lifetime of hard work, determination and tough targets has made Edwina one of the world's best show jumpers.

Edwina, who was born in Sydney, New South Wales, wasn't part of an equestrian dynasty, in fact, her parents had no connection with horses at all. "I was one of those inner-city kids with an unexplained passion for horses," she says. "But we had some neighbours who kept horses, and I started riding for them when I was about eight years old." She joined the Avondale branch of the Pony Club soon afterwards and remained a member until the age of 14. "I only had a few ponies and moved on to horses quickly," she says. "I won a lot until I was about 18; then I had a period of riding poor horses. "I wanted to quit and my parents wanted me to

stick with it, so I didn't want to disappoint them. They then invested in some good horses for me." At this time, Edwina was studying for a degree in physical education. Sports and fitness have always been a major part of her life and after graduating at 21, she became a fitness instructor, a role she enjoyed for three years. In 1998, still unsure whether a career in equestrianism was for her or not, she decided to take a horse, Mr Dundee, to Europe. "If you want to make it in the horseworld, you have to be in Europe," she says. "In Australia, the sport is a bit dead-ended; over here you can find out if you are good enough."

SETTLING IN EUROPE:

She returned home to Australia after six months, but briefly, and soon returned to Europe and quickly began working for Belgium's Ludo Phillipaerts riding his dealing horses. "I worked for Ludo for about three years before setting up on my own," she says. "However, I got a bit fed up running a business by myself." While working for herself, Edwina represented Australia at the 2002 World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Jerez with Quelle Damme Van Der Heffinck and in 2003 her career truly started to head in the right direction. That year she met her partner, former Olympic team gold

medallist Jan Tops, and began working for his yard, Stal Tops. But she wasn't fully involved with competing horses at top level. "For the first two years I worked more on the business side of things," she said. "It was something I enjoyed doing." In 2005 she was given the ride on Isovlas Pialotta, a horse whom she credits with changing her riding style and success. "People said Pialotta was not an easy ride — I felt I could ride her," says Edwina. "I'd been used to riding thoroughbred types and I had to change my style for her." The German mare had been ridden by Swedish Olympic silver medallist Rolf-Goran Bengtsson. "I had to be stronger with my seat and legs, think more about rhythm and be strong, but sensitive," says Edwina. "She was also very well schooled in dressage." Jan had owned Pialotta since she was a 10-year-old. She had been ridden by Rolf and then Tatiana Van Loringhoven. Edwina's fortune changed when Tatiana decided to stop riding. Jan asked her to try Pialotta, who was then 14, and the decision to do so changed her career. "I was fortunate to have her. Together with Stal Tops, she brought me to the level I'm at now. Without her, there's no way I'd be where I am today," she says. International success followed quickly and in 2005 Edwina won the five-star Grand Prix in Valkenswaard, then in 2006 Edwina and Pialotta were





▲ Edwina talks to Germany's Daniel Deusser, who is based at Stal Tops, in the indoor arena

“DESPITE WHAT HIS CRITICS HAD SAID, ITOT PROVED THEM ALL WRONG AND HE WAS THE ONLY HORSE TO JUMP TWO CLEAR ROUNDS IN THE TEAM COMPETITION”

selected to represent Australia at the WEG in Aachen. The pair made the final of the individual championship and Edwina finished fourth. “She taught me a lot, but I take something from every horse I ride,” says Edwina. “They all have something to teach you and you should appreciate every one.” Edwina’s string began to grow in strength with the addition of international winners, such as Isovlas Socrates, who won the five-star grand prix in Zurich in 2008. Then on New Year’s Eve 2007, while in Australia, Jan surprised her. “He told me that he and my owner, Cees Van Opstal, had bought Itot Du Chateau from [France’s] Michel Hecart,” she says. “I’d never ridden him and I couldn’t wait to get back to the yard to try him.” Edwina wasn’t worried about taking the ride on a horse she hadn’t tried, particularly not this one. “I’d watched him compete a lot and there wasn’t much else he could do to convince me that I wanted him,” says Edwina. “Some people were worried he’d be too strong; others questioned his ability. He was bought with the Olympics in mind, and some suggested his height would restrict him, but for

me it wasn’t an issue. “Itot has a really big stride, the heart of a lion and lots of power. He also rides up in front, so you feel like you’re riding something much bigger,” she adds. Itot - or “Itzy Bitzy” as Edwina affectionately calls him - had been hugely successful for Michel and he didn’t disappoint Edwina. However, there was one goal in mind, so glory on the European circuit couldn’t be chased with full gusto. “We were targeting the Olympics,” explains Edwina. “I had set targets, but I wasn’t trying to win anything. All the shows I went to were a stage towards Olympic preparation.” The regime paid off and Edwina was selected to represent her country in Hong Kong, her Olympic debut. Despite what his critics had said, Itot proved them all wrong and he was the only horse to jump two clear rounds in the team competition. The Australian team finished ninth overall and Itot and Edwina were equal 10th in the individual final.

LOOKING AHEAD:

After Hong Kong, in November, Itot partnered Edwina to a win in Brussels’

five-star grand prix before heading for the Olympia World Cup qualifier. Together with Late Night 16, the former ride of Germany's Heinrich-Hermann Engemann, Itot has secured his rider's qualification for this year's World Cup final in Las Vegas — Edwina is currently third in the Western European League. "I'm still undecided which horse I'll be taking to the final," she says. "Late Night has also proved to be very talented at top level, too. "Socrates has also returned after a break. This is of great benefit as the horses must help each other by rotating [workloads] in the sport." As she competes under the Australian flag, Edwina will not be able to contest the European Championships at Windsor in September. "It's a pity in some ways, but being based in Europe means I can concentrate on other competitions, while all my competitors are working towards Windsor," she says. The Global Champions Tour was set up by Jan and carries a huge prize-fund so success in the series is high

on the list of goals in 2009. But her real aim is to get to number one in the world rankings. "Last year, I was aiming to get into the top 10 on the rankings list by December, and I'd done it by September. Now, I'm aiming to get to number one, but I think that will take a bit longer," says Edwina. However, she isn't far off her goal, being ranked fifth at the moment. The support she gets from Stal Tops is key to her success. "My achievements are not just because of me," she says. "It's the result of the entire team of 30 staff working closely." Jan is a very successful businessman and trainer. He's been involved in the sales of some of the world's top horses, including Denis Lynch's Lantinus. Germany's Daniel Deusser is also based at the yard and Jan has been instrumental in the training of Rolf-Goran Bengtsson and top Swiss rider Steve Guerdat. "Jan is very motivating, and having someone like that is crucial at the top level. It doesn't matter that we are all competing for different countries,

we are working towards success for the yard," says Edwina, who has just secured a new sponsor in equestrian clothing company Kingsland. "And Jan's management programmes are key to keeping the horses in peak condition." Every horse at Stal Tops has an individual programme that includes flat and jumping work, specific nutrition, regular fitness checks, numbers of shows attended and targets." Keeping each horse very fit reduces the risk of injury, too," says Edwina. "As well as the ridden work they get in the school, we also have a treadmill, 2km track and a wood they can be walked through. Obviously, the younger horses don't get quite so much work." But Edwina's sheer determination to succeed and her passion to be the best in the sport has given other young riders hope that you can reach the top without having to be born in the saddle. "Everyone has dreams," she says. "There's still a lot more I want to do. "I've had to sacrifice a lot and it was very tough in the beginning. But if you believe in yourself and you are prepared to work for it, you can do anything." **H&H**



“MY ACHIEVEMENTS ARE NOT JUST BECAUSE OF ME,” SHE SAYS. “IT’S THE RESULT OF THE ENTIRE TEAM OF 30 STAFF WORKING CLOSELY”

◀ *Edwina with Late Night 16*

This feature first appeared in the 5 March issue of Horse & Hound.

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In 1977 Michel graduated from the National Equestrian School, home of the Cadre Noir in Saumur, France before gaining international experience in the USA and Germany as a rider and trainer. In 1988 Michel was long-listed to represent France at the Seoul Olympics and during time spent in Europe received further training from Commandant Saint Fort Paillard (France), Willi Schultheis (Germany) and Jürgen Koschel (Germany).

Fluent in French, German and English, Michel has become a highly respected trainer, teaching numerous riders of all levels across Europe, up to Grand Prix at CDI International level. This includes 3 years as resident trainer to Suzanne Lebek, the former European gold medallist, Young Rider, Team Champion, in Braubach, Germany. Michel was voted "1995 UK Dressage Trainer of the Year," and is a member of the International Dressage Trainers Club. He is also

currently on the British Dressage panel of trainers eligible to judge Potential International Dressage Horse classes. He officiated several times at the Championships for 4 and 5 year old horses. In 2005 Michel became the UK National Para-Equestrian Dressage Squad Coach and has so far taken his Team GB riders to win team gold medals at the 2005 European Championships, the 2007 World Championships, and the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games.

Michel & his wife, Mette Assouline have also long been established as experienced producers of dressage horses, combining the German, French and Scandinavian training techniques according to special requirements. They also have considerable experience in training riders from Novice to Grand Prix level. Their different training backgrounds provide a huge pool of techniques from which to draw upon. Among the top international riders they have supplied, are Carl Hester with

Escapado, and Jane Bredin-Gregory (UK), Marietta Almasy (France), Claudia Aulenbacher and Michael Klimke (Germany) as well as Ursula Travers (USA), and Polly Hodges (UK) with 2 international Young Rider Team horses.

How did you first get involved in becoming the Paralympic sport coach?

I was approached almost 4 years ago, in early 2005, by the British Federation about coaching the Paralympic squad for the next Paralympics. It was a big chance, because I knew they had already done well. They won the team gold in Athens, so there was some pressure, and it would be a disaster if I took them on and we did not do as well. The first year I took them on, I really had to help them improve the quality of their horses because I knew the FEI was just starting to endorse the sport, and I knew that that would increase the requirement of the quality of the horses. Then we had to raise the bar with their

MICHEL ASSOULINE

GOLD MEDAL PARALYMPIAN COACH

By Sue Akehurst, England

MICHEL ASSOULINE; SQUAD COACH, AND DAVID HUNTER; CHEF D'ÉQUIPE, LED TEAM GREAT BRITAIN PARAEQUESTRIAN DRESSAGE TO VICTORY AT THE 2008 BEIJING PARALYMPICS GAMES. THEIR TEAM WON TEAM GOLD AND CAME HOME WITH A TOTAL OF 10 MEDALS, AN INCREDIBLE 5 GOLD AND 5 SILVER. IN THE TEAM COMPETITION ALL QUALIFYING SCORES WERE WELL ABOVE 70% WHICH WAS A HISTORICAL FIRST FOR ANY COUNTRY. GERMANY WON TEAM SILVER AND NORWAY TEAM BRONZE.

▼ 2008 Hong Kong medal ceremony



training and improve the quality of both their riding and the training of the horses.

How does the training of the horses and the people differ?

In my book it doesn't differ, because the judging is the same as in Grand Prix

dressage. The criteria of judging is exactly the same, and the protocol marks at the end of the test, with rider mark and submission. The judges try not to look at the rider, they look at the horse, so you can train the horse in the same way you would train it with an able bodied rider.

You work hard on making the horse engage, and light into the contact, so that everything looks harmonious, and they don't look as though they are labouring. This is hard because if the rider has got a strong disability, it can look as though they are labouring if you are not careful, but it is a matter of finding a way to make it not look so. There will be little practical issues; for example, Lee Pearson has nearly paralysed legs, so has hardly any movement in them, and is in a wheel chair. A rider like that, with a strong weakness, can ride, if he wants to, with 2 whips, and teach the horse to take more from the seat aids, and hopefully towards a result as good as with an able bodied rider. With those top riders you will find that when things go well, it is as impressive as with an able bodied rider. They find a way to make it work for them, and it has got that final achievement of lightness and throughness.

How are the riders put into the grades?



▲ *Michel riding Louis Feraud champion of Hickstead CDIO Dressage Grand Prix Master League*

There are officials called profilers who will assess each rider to determine their disability level, which is how they are graded. It is a continuous process to be checked because, for example, a rider with Multiple sclerosis (MS) sometimes gets worse and has to be downgraded. So the riders are checked frequently, and they have to carry a card at all times to prove that they have been checked and graded in the right way; there has to be specialist assessors for that. We have 4 grades from 1 - 4, Grade 1 being the most disabled category and Grade 4 the least disabled. Grade 4, for example, means that when they do their freestyle they are at Prix St. George level, where as in Grade 1, it is more of a walk/trot test because they are more disabled.

In the Paralympics, do the competitors compete only against other people of the same Grade?

Yes, when they are classified at, say, a Grade 2, they will stick to that Grade, and medals will be awarded in each grade. Grade 1 has 2 subdivisions, 1a and 1b, then 2, 3, and 4. So yes a Grade 4 rider will compete against only another Grade 4 rider. In effect there are 4 different Olympics, as you have the 4 different grades.

How do you choose your horses for the Paralympians?

Well the horse is generally the same as for able bodied riders. You need the same quality as a good dressage horse. They

have to have good paces, obviously a fantastic temperament but the quality as such in the ring has to be as good as an able bodied rider's horse. You might think maybe we can have a horse with a nice temperament, and it does not have to be as good, but yes, it has to be as good for a competitive level. Competition wise, you need a really good horse, otherwise you are just not going to compete against the top horses. The pressure is getting the right horses.

Most of the horses on the team are German, Hannoverian or Westphalian for example, you do find that German horses, generally speaking, will have a slightly more suitable temperament for Paralympic dressage, but really it is a question of taste. Some people will say the Dutch horses are a little hotter, but it depends really as always on the blood line. There is a good horse everywhere. Considering statistics, in dressage I think the top 9 horses are German. Certainly the German horses have been the most successful of all the breeds. So you tend to go down that route, because it is a safer or more proven route to find that good horse. I tend to buy at 4, keep them with the breeder, and bring them on so I know the history from the beginning and there are no hidden facts, possible injuries or anything.

Do you feel that the Paralympics is growing and how do you see the future of the Paralympics evolving?

You will always have riders disabled as a result of injuries and with medical conditions such as MS. Maybe one day we can cure that disease, and others, so thankfully there will be less of these. But equally more people are getting into sports that are disabled. It used to be thought that if you were disabled you wouldn't feel like taking up sports, or there just wasn't the opportunity. Not just in equestrian but all sports. But the mentality is changing. By taking up a sport, disabled people can keep active in life which helps them to feel they are still a part of things. Otherwise they can get depressed. Being able to ride also gives them a sense of independence as opposed to being, perhaps, stuck in a wheel chair. It gives them a sense of thrill and a sense of speed, and of mobility, that I think is very good. Regarding spectators, in the Hong Kong Paralympics we had a record. In total, over the 3 days, we had an attendance of 30,000 spectators. This

TEAM RESULTS	
1 - GREAT BRITAIN	220.470
2 - GERMANY	204.092
3 - NORWAY	202.788
4 - DENMARK	200.704
5 - NETHERLANDS	198.428
6 - ITALY	195.743
7 - CANADA	193.035
8 - AUSTRALIA	190.729
9 - SWEDEN	186.755
Team GB: Sophie Christiansen & Lambrusco III - Grade 1a, Anne Dunham & Teddy - Grade 1a, Ricky Balshaw & Deacon's Giorgi - Grade 1b, Lee Pearson & Gentleman - Grade 1b, Felicity Coulthard & Roffelaar - Grade II, Deborah Criddle & Pavaroti - Grade III, Simon Laurens & Ocean Diamond - Grade III.	

shows that it is probably the fastest growing Olympic sport.

Looking to the future, what goals are you working towards currently?

Well we don't want to go down! This year we have got the European Championships in Norway, and in 2010 we have the World Championships in Kentucky. Then of course the challenge to help the Paralympians get their next gold in London 2012, and it's hard. There is pressure from the Germans; the Danish have got a good team, and the Dutch. Norway also is very good, so the pressure is on. Things can change rapidly though, when you have a good trainer, who resources good horses, and you have the riders, it is very likely you are going to achieve results. So you have to be aware all the time that you can get beaten!

It would be good to see more countries getting involved in the sport, for the sport as well as for disabled riders...

Yes, I think so because if a good rider has an accident, rather than giving up everything, they can continue with a disability at a competitive level. I think it is great that we still have the chance to offer that. It is growing, you see more and more participants in other countries but it is important that the other countries continue to develop, and that people are aware they can continue in the sport. **HT**



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Incanto
*2005, chestnut, gelding
by Incolor - Weinberg



Cassilas
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▲ Hady Gabr, Sameh Hattab, Karim Hamdy, Karim Habashi, Mohamed El Boraei & Ibrahim Sami

Held at the Cairo Stadium under scorching weather conditions, the National Egyptian Championships kicked off in a display of competitive riding and technical courses designed by international course designer Rob Jansen.

A competition was held over three days resulting in wins going to Hady Gabr at 6th place, Ibrahim Sami at 5th, Dr. Sameh Hattab at 4th, Mohamed Osama El Boraei at 3rd, Karim Hamdy at 2nd, and the National Championship Top A Level title going to Karim Habashi riding 'Inshalla'.



© Atef Morgan

▼ Ibrahim Sami

▲ Karim Habashi ►

KARIM HABASHI:

"The finals were quite tight with fences of 1.55 cm height and extremely technical courses. Thankfully this season my horse had lots of practice since we participated at three shows from the 2008/2009 Arab League Season; Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. In some past National Championships I came in second and third, but this year it feels so great and different to come in first; I am very happy". **HT**



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2009 DUBAI INTERNATIONAL ARABIAN HORSE FAIR

HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH HAMDAN BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM INAUGURATES DUBAI INTERNATIONAL HORSE FAIR 2009

Dubai, United Arab Emirates



◀ *Sheikh Hamdan cutting the ribbon at DIHF*

Largest ever equestrian exhibition in the Middle East to showcase latest equipment, supplies and services alongside biggest ever Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and UAE Minister of Finance and Industry, inaugurated the 2009 Dubai International Horse Fair (DIHF) at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Following the opening ceremony, HH toured the show, which this year attracted over 150 participating companies from a record-breaking 37 countries. Organised by Dubai World Trade Centre, DIHF will run from 19 - 21 March 2009. The show was open from 11am-8pm Thursday and Saturday and from 2pm-8pm on Friday.

Billed as the most international equestrian event ever held in the Middle East, the show saw record numbers of visitors on its first day. Held under the patronage of

HH Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, DIHF has quickly become a key event, serving a fast growing industry with strong traditional roots in the region.

The show runs alongside the 6th Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship, a three-day competition for purebred Arabian horses, showcasing their beauty, agility and heritage, culminating in the Championship classes for the most exquisite horses.

"The response from both visitors and exhibitors has been extremely strong this year, with many international attendees saying that the show is now firmly among the world's best equestrian events," said Abdulla Qassem, Board Member - Higher Organising Committee of Dubai International Horse Fair and Dubai International Arabian Horse Championship.

DIHF has been highly successful in providing a platform that brings together local distributors, international horse

owners, manufacturers, breeders and suppliers as well as the wider riding community. Over the years it has consistently attracted a stronger number of visitors with an interest in horses, thanks to the event's exciting mix of companies, features and services on offer.

In step with these developments, DIHF showcased a wide range of products. As every year, the exhibition was the platform for companies to display innovation in supplies and equipment. Moreover, a raffle draw sponsored by Al Awani General Enterprises Establishment and Gulf Rider Veterinary (UAE) and 3rd Veterinarian Seminar sponsored by Olympic Horse Feeds Ltd, UK was undertaken.

Building on last year's successful introduction of seminars and exhibitor presentations at DIHF, veterinarians and horse owners were invited again to participate in meetings running alongside the show to discuss key issues in the industry. **HT**



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Grey Stallion 1996. (Kamar El Zaman/Haboub).

Owner/breeder: Royal Jordanian State Stud.

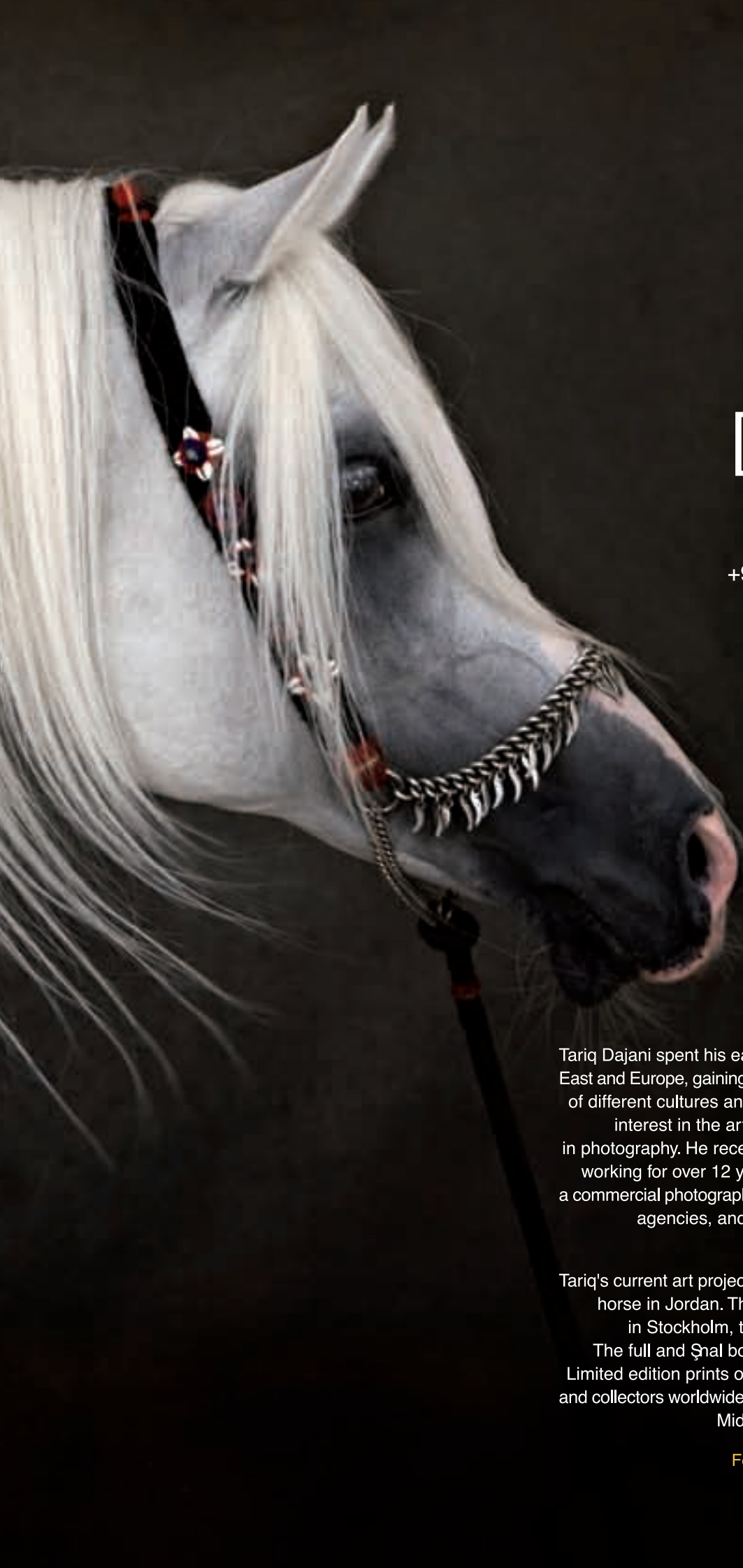
Strain: Kehalan Ajuz (Freiha).

Senior World Champion 2002.

European Champion Stallion 2004.

Multiple National & International (Middle East/Europe) Champion.





TARIQ DAJANI

PHOTOGRAPHER

+971 50 5011 647 Dubai, UAE
www.tariqdajani.com

Tariq Dajani spent his early years moving between the Middle East and Europe, gaining an understanding and an appreciation of different cultures and traditions. He grew up with a strong interest in the arts which subsequently led to a career in photography. He recently returned to the Middle East after working for over 12 years in England and Sweden as both a commercial photographer shooting for advertising and design agencies, and an artist exhibiting his work in group and solo shows.

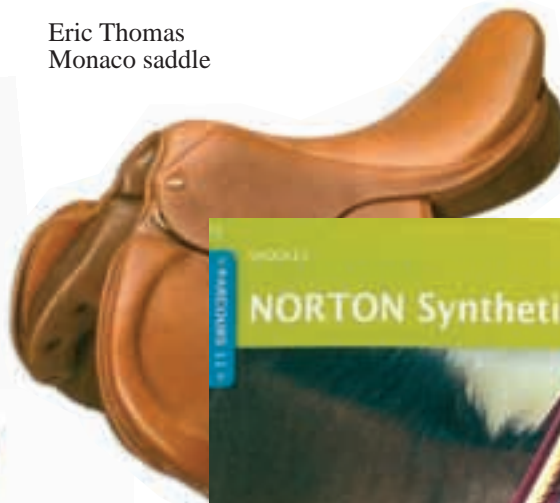
Tariq's current art project focuses on the theme of the Arabian horse in Jordan. The first part of this work was exhibited in Stockholm, then in Amman, Jordan in early 2008. The full and final body will be exhibited in Dubai in 2009. Limited edition prints of his art work are owned by art lovers and collectors worldwide, including leading members of several Middle Eastern and other Royal families.

For private commissions, please contact
the photographer directly

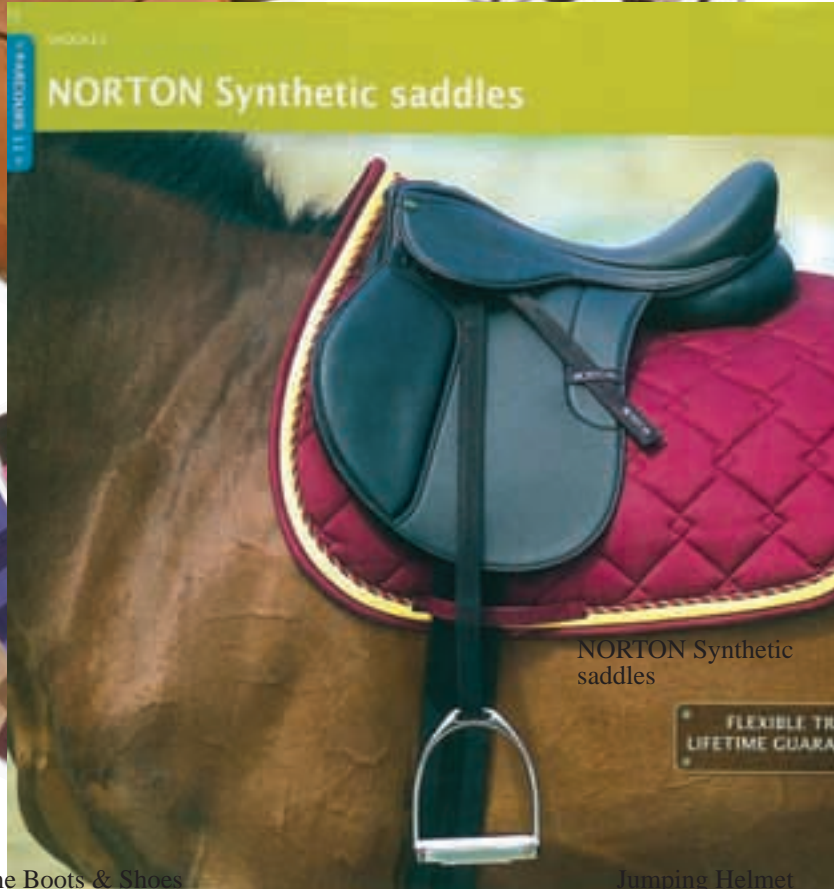
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& ENDURANCE

By Nada H. Abdelmoniem



What's your best achievement?

Having a team of excellent young talented riders.

Who is your favourite athlete (rider or other sports person)?

Meredith Michael Beerbaum.

Do you keep any pets?

Many dogs!

What is your favourite movie?

Legends of the Fall.

Who is your ideal celebrity (female or male)?

Lady Diana.

What is your favourite gadget?



My I-Pod!

What is your favourite music record?

Silence by Delirium ft. Sarah McLachlan.

What is your second favourite sport?

Swimming & biking.

Do you like to cook?

Not at all!!!!!!!

To your close friends & family, you are known to be?

Dynamic (smiling)!

If you had the power to change something, what would you change?

To change the policies of the world in

order to have a more peaceful life without wars.

Do you support any charitable organisations?

Yes I do; SPANA (society for the protection of animals abroad) & WASPA (world society for the protection of animals). **HT**

THE HORSE'S MENTAL FITNESS

By Dr. Mohamed Elsherbini

(PART 4)

TRAINING HORSES DOES NOT ALWAYS PROCEED ACCORDING TO PLAN. MANY DIVERSE PROBLEMS CAN ARISE AND IT TAKES YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO BE ABLE TO OBTAIN DESIRED RESULTS WITHOUT UPSETTING THE HORSE AND LOOSING ITS GOOD WILL



TEMPERAMENTAL PROBLEMS:

Sometimes horses who are basically willing, reliable and good to ride, suddenly develop temperamental changes. The first thing the trainer should ask himself is whether the horse has had sufficient and regular exercise, and also whether he has perhaps been asked for too much too soon. He should also check that the horse is receiving the right amount of food and balanced diet (e.g. not too much protein). The horse should also be checked by a veterinary surgeon to ensure that there is no physical reason (e.g. in the horse's back or mouth) for the behavioural change or resistance. If these points have been checked and eliminated as possible causes, the rider will need to think carefully

about his training methods. Has the horse's training been too one-sided recently? During the training sessions, is there more time devoted to the serious work than to loosening and relaxation? Is the horse ready for and able to cope with the advanced work? Has it been "gymnasticised" equally on both reins, and so is it sufficiently "connected" and "through"?

BLOCK TO AN EXERCISE:

Some horses who have so far worked willingly develop a resistance for "block" to one exercise in particular which seems impossible to overcome. Often the trainer makes the mistake of practising the exercise over and over again which only serves to confirm the horse in its resistance. Instead, an experienced trainer will concentrate on getting the horse to meet the basic preconditions for the exercise and put off practicing the exercise itself until much later. With patience he will succeed in rebuilding the horse's confidence and with better preparation the problems with the exercise usually disappear. Although back to basic seems to be a retrograde step, sometimes it is the only way to start moving forwards again.

VARIATION IN WORK:

There should be a variation in the horse's training. Repeating the same exercise every day can quickly have a deadening effect, especially if the lessons always follow the same pattern. Obviously each training session should be made up of three phases: loosening (riding in), the main phase (work), and relaxation (winding down). However, just as a show



EXCESSIVE REPETITION AND “DRILLING” DESTROYS THE HORSE'S ENTHUSIASM

how you can tell that this horse is mentally fit during training. A correctly trained and relaxed horse can be ridden better according to plan. His energy can be regulated and he can be collected easily along with being turned in balance, as well as being ridden on a light contact to the utmost of his ability without harming his health and well being. The rider also stays relaxed, full with energy, and in constant control. However, any healthy and well-schooled horse can be ruined quite quickly - health wise and performance wise - if handed over to a worse rider with less feel and bad nerves.

jumper is not jumped over a course every day, a dressage horse should not be asked to perform the same exercises, in the same order, on a daily basis. Excessive repetition and “drilling” destroys the horse's enthusiasm for its work and the end result is a dull performance lacking in expression. For the training to be successful, the trainer needs to be able to spot immediately when the horse is beginning to lose energy and concentration which is a point that should not be reached, thus the daily training session should be ended while the horse is still working well.

CORRECTION OF BAD HABITS:

Resistances and bad habits during training can usually be traced back to insufficient basic training, over forcing the horse, misunderstandings between rider and horse, or the use of constraint. If you want to correct a horse during training you should respect his mentality; for example, if an aid is applied energetically as a correction, it should be used only with the context of the forward-driving aids. Harsh or punishing rein aids should never be used. They are un-horseman-like and usually have a reverse effect; the horse

becomes “dead” in its mouth and even less responsive to the rein aids. Before re-training a spoilt horse, two questions should be answered:

1. Why is the horse difficult? Are there conformation faults which make it unrealistic to spend a long time re-training the horse?
2. Does the rider and trainer have the necessary experience and temperament to do this work successfully?

If answers to the above questions are positive, work on the horse can then start.

SIGNS OF GOOD TRAINING:

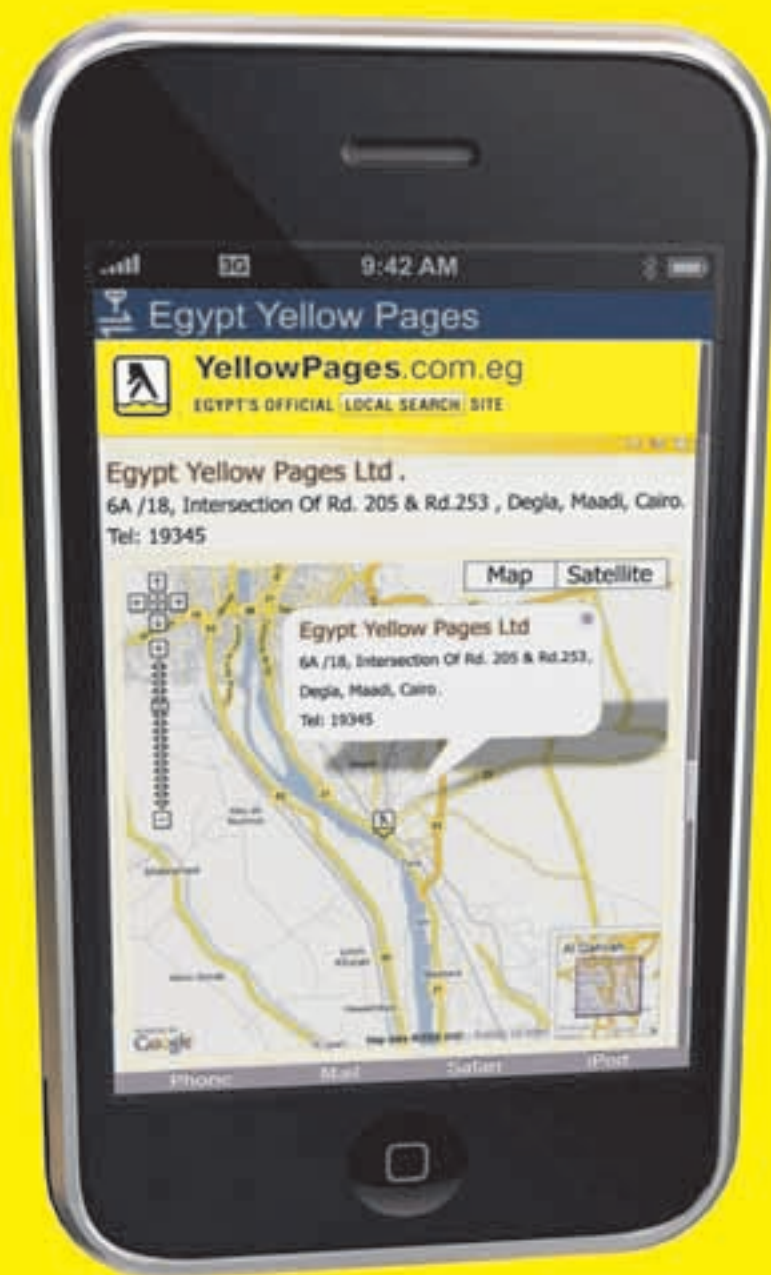
A well trained horse has a contented expression, a correctly developed musculature, and a friendly, trusting relationship with people. It should satisfy all the requirements for “looseness” in the advanced as well as the basic exercise under the rider; it should swing through its back and work with its mouth closed but not tensed. Furthermore, the tail should also be free from tension, “carried” and swinging in time with the movement, and the movement of the ears should denote contentment and alertness. That's

KEEP YOUR HORSE MENTALLY FIT:

It is important at top form competitions to keep your horse's mentality fit in between competitions. It is essential to keep a confident relationship between the horse and his rider and/or groom. The most perfect training system is useless if the horse is not kept in good condition mentally. All guidelines are valueless if the horse becomes nervous, if he turns sore or becomes a coward, and if he does not work willingly. The groom plays a big part in keeping a horse physically and mentally in good condition. Peak fitness can only be achieved if the horse is content and has received the best of care without being pampered. A warning signal is if a horse stops eating, although this can be due to illness, teeth problems or worms, it might be due to a little too much training.

To sum up the above, the deciding factors in keeping a horse in top competition form is not just medical care, but much more of the basic training, built up logically and systematically and the establishment of a trusting relationship between horse and rider. **HT**

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▲ Karim Hamdy, Mohamed Sabry, Mohamed El Boraei & Sameh El Dahan

◀ Shady Samir



▲ Sameh El Dahan



▲ Hady Gabr

SHADY SAMIR

Managing Partner of SPSS Middle East

How did the idea of sponsorship come about and who is SPSS sponsoring?

SPSS is currently sponsoring five Egyptian riders: Mohamed Osama El Borai, Mohamed Sabry, Dr. Sameh

Hattab, Sameh El Dahan and Hady Gabr. My partner and I established SPSS Middle East just this past 2007 and since it is a leading company worldwide, however unknown in Egypt, our initial aim was to spread awareness and enhance the company's name locally within advanced business sectors such as the equestrian sport for instance. With the local target, we also had to concentrate on the Middle Eastern

market and so far things have been quite good. Let's spread the name of SPSS through sports first and from there on we would plan our future steps.

Is the equestrian sport the only sport that SPSS sponsors and when exactly did you decide to implement the concept?

SPSS has sponsored squash before,

however yes; this is its first time to sponsor the equestrian sport, and in particular show jumping. I had the idea of doing so for a while after the show jumping Arab League was constituted. The League has been successful for a while now and I would sincerely like to expand the sponsorship to Middle

Eastern countries besides Egypt.

What is the five year equestrian sponsorship plan for SPSS?

Well, to tell you the truth, things are still fresh at the moment and our main goal is to spread the

name of SPSS in the region. Since this is the first time and we have yet to see how things develop, we will accordingly set our five year plan. We would like to do some sponsorship in Syria, the UAE and the KSA along with other countries of course. **HT**



▲ Mohamed El Boraei



▲ Mohamed Sabry



▲ Sameh El Dahan

▼ Karim Hamdy, Mohamed El Boraei, Hady Gabr, & Sameh Hattab



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SPRING IS HERE AND FLU IS ONCE AGAIN IN THE AIR

EQUINE INFLUENZA

By Dr. Jack Leonard



Spring is here and flu is once again in the air. Equine Influenza is caused by a type A, orthomyxovirus which is a single strand RNA virus. The disease exists over most of the world where there are susceptible populations of equines with the possible exceptions of Australia, New Zealand and Iceland. It is highly contagious and is spread by airborne droplets as well as contact with secretions of infected horses. People can carry it to horses by contamination of their hands or clothing. Contrary to popular belief, humans cannot be infected with Equine Influenza virus.

Clinical signs include fever, nasal discharge and coughing. Affected animals may also experience depression, poor appetite and laboured breathing.

All equines are susceptible but infection is more common and generally more severe in horses under 4 years of age.

The virus has the ability to frustrate the immune system by slightly altering the nature of the protein in its external coat. This results in what is called “minor antigenic shift”. The virus seems to do this frequently but not as often as human influenza virus. Large changes in the protein coat occur more rarely and are known as “major antigenic shifts”. These are responsible for new strains of the virus. Vaccine manufacturers in Europe and the United States constantly monitor these shifts and take them into consideration as they try to produce the most up to date vaccines possible.



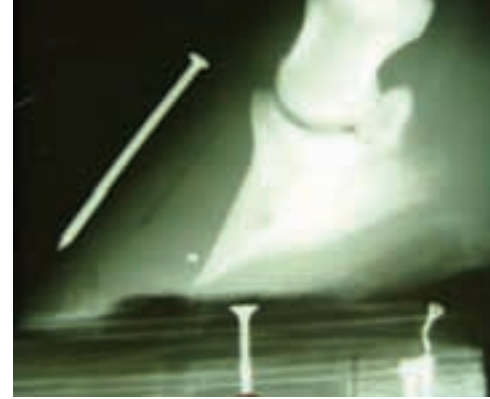
“EQUINE INFLUENZA USUALLY RUNS ITS COURSE IN 7 TO 10 DAYS WITH THE VAST MAJORITY OF ANIMALS MAKING A FULL RECOVERY”

Since there are no specific anti-virals currently available for Equine Influenza, treatment is largely environmental and symptomatic. Affected horses should be isolated if possible. They should be rested in a clean, stress-free and dust-free environment. They should have good nutrition and free choice clean water and be kept in well ventilated areas. They should not be subjected to forced exercise or shipping of any other stressful situations.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as flunixin meglumine are excellent for pain, inflammation, controlling symptoms and decreasing the overall morbidity of the disease. Immune stimulants such as Eqstim and Transfer Factor may also be helpful.

The use of cortico-steroids is contraindicated in Equine Influenza due to its suppression of the immune system. Equine Influenza usually runs its course in 7 to 10 days with the vast majority of animals making a full recovery. Over-medicating these horses is generally a mistake and can lead to unnecessary complications and prolonging the course of the disease. Inappropriate use of antibiotics can lead to diarrhea, endotoxemia and laminitis. As previously stated, most cases are self-limiting and not life threatening.

There are however some serious complications of Equine Influenza that can occur. Affected horses should have a thorough physical examination by a qualified veterinarian with special attention to auscultation of the lung fields. Secondary bacterial pneumonia is the most common complication of flu. This can be serious and even fatal if not addressed properly. Streptococcus is the most common culprit in these infections and is generally treated by bacteriocidal antibiotics such as cephalosporins. Pleuritis or pleuropneumonia is a grave complication of the flu. This is a bacterial infection in the space between the lungs



and the chest wall. It is usually fatal even with treatment. It is more common in highly stressed or immune compromised individuals or those who received corticosteroids. Even if the horse manages to recover from pleuritis it will often be a permanent respiratory cripple. Prevention is 2 fold, environmental control and vaccination. Good hygiene and isolation of infected animals that may be shedding the virus are important steps. There are several types of vaccines available. It is essential that all vaccines are properly stored under refrigeration at all times. Improper storage can be a reason for vaccine failure.

The intra-nasal vaccine is a modified live virus that is specially attenuated so that it cannot spread the disease. It has some advantages including the production of local secretory antibodies (IgA) and the induction of anti-viral interferon in the nasal passages. This gives more immediate protection to the vaccinated horse.

Annual boosters are required for all horses. More frequent boosters may be advisable for young horses that are exposed often, such as in shows or races. The more horses that are vaccinated in a given area the less likely and the less severe outbreaks seem to be. Vaccinated horses can certainly contract the disease due to antigenic drift. But the cases are usually mild and complications are very rare in these animals.

Outbreaks tend to occur once or twice a year in most places. Worldwide influenza is responsible for fairly large economic losses in the horse industry. This is mostly due the cancellation of events and the disruption of training schedules. This is especially important in the racing industry which is highly dependent on 2 and 3 year olds, the group hardest hit by influenza. Despite its economic blow, Equine Influenza is a disease that we can live with and minimize its impact on our horses. **HT**





EQUINE OSTEOPATHY

(PART 2)

By Sue Akehurst, England

Would you say osteopathy is about prevention, maintenance or cure?

It can be all 3. I have a problem with the word cure however. Prevention; definitely, because if something is functioning well you can approach the patient prior to a potential injury occurring and keep them in good condition. Maintenance; again if there has been a previous problem and you have regular periodic checks you can usually prevent the problem reoccurring. You catch it before it becomes a larger problem. Now, cure; the reason I have a problem with the word “cure” is because what does the word cure really mean? In order to use the word cure you are going to presume that there is an absolute “normal” so when do we say that something is cured? If your neck is stiff and you have osteopathic treatments and you feel great. Are you cured? I would say that you are better than you were, as you are at a level of improvement that you are happy with. “Cure” just seems very black and white. If we use it in terms of finding a cure for a specific disease, absolutely there needs to be a cure, but when you are talking about functional



problems, which is what osteopaths deal with, things can be improved so that there are no signs or symptoms anymore, but you have also got to be aware that without correct management things can come back.

Would a riding-school or hacking pony need less treatment than say a top competition horse?

Usually yes, but for example I regularly visit a yard where they keep 350 Argentinean polo ponies. These are

beautiful horses. When they move their ears you can see the muscles rippling down their back just because they are in such tip-top condition. Similarly last time I went to Badminton I was fortunate enough to be in the horse enclosure, and again these things are supreme athletes, so yes the demands that are placed on them far outweigh anything a riding school horse would be asked to undertake, but the condition is also that much better. I would liken it to someone who is perhaps really out of shape can suddenly get this insidious onset injury from bending down to say pick something up from the floor. At the other end of the scale look at say an Olympic gold medal sprinter, he is probably not going to put his back out in that way, but because of the high demand that he is putting his body under doing his sport he is also very susceptible to injury, so it is as far as it is wide.

Can a rider who is unlevel affect the horse and vice versa?

Yes, very much so, it is important to have both backs checked. In the majority of horse and rider combinations you can get

away with a little imbalance on either side, I am not saying it shouldn't be improved, but a rider could be a little stiff down one side without completely messing-up the way the horse is going and vice versa. But if you are talking about competition horses then the movements and balance become super important.

During treatment there can be various noises and what sound like crunches. What is actually happening and is it expected to hear these noises?

As you get movement over the joints you can sometimes get a sort of popping sound, which is air, like when someone clicks their fingers. It is just a movement of air. When you get a cracking or a crunching of the joints it is known, as crepitus and it can be a degenerative thing. People frequently ask me if it is ok if they click their own joints, fingers being the most common. But it is not, because what tends to happen is that the clicking joints are the most mobile sections, and then they just keep getting more mobile.

The parts which, need to be manipulated in order to give a more balanced movement, are not the ones that 'click' when you do it yourself. The more you click your fingers the more you need to, things become a bit of a habit, and eventually you are going to cause wear and tear in the joint which can then cause degenerative conditions. Any sort of manipulation has to be done under the correct conditions, by someone who is trained and understands what they are doing and why.

Could someone watch a few techniques during a treatment and copy it themselves?

No. I think that is a really important point. It would be like doing karaoke. You haven't written the song, rehearsed with the band, or practised it; you are just copying it with the obvious generally poor outcome compared to the original song! The skill and training an osteopath undertakes is so that they understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, what affect it will have and most importantly they know when to use which technique and when not to. Feedback you are getting from the patient affects the choice of treatment method also. I don't mean necessarily verbal feedback. It is very much about what the osteopath is feeling and seeing happen when he is performing the technique. It is a long combination of things that will lead the osteopath to arrive at the decision of which techniques to



use, or to press in this place or move the neck in that way. You cannot buy or copy that sort of information, it takes education and time to understand what is going on underneath and there is no ABC way of doing it.

Do you have in your mind a perfect alignment of a skeletal structure when you are treating?

No, something not being level, and even sometimes works better! To change it can open a whole Pandora's Box of other problems because they were quite comfortable in the first place. There may have been some problem, but suddenly levelling everything adds strains and puts other things out. There isn't a perfect skeletal structure; there isn't a perfect way to be. Of course there are anatomical guidelines of how we perceive things should be, but I think you have to look at the way the subject is going and the job it is doing and weigh up if manipulation could improve its way of working. Manipulation can have dramatic results, which can cause it to be over used almost like a dinner party piece. It is an integral part of what we do but it is only one of the tools in an osteopath's tool-box. A large part of our training is to know how and when to treat, as well as when not to treat.

You also practice in craniosacral therapy, could you explain what that is?

Craniosacral is a very calming technique that really turns down the volume if you

like of the symptoms. The craniosacral rhythm is basically the way the cerebral spinal fluid has its own pulsating motility as it travels from down in the base of the spine up the spinal cord into the brain. The effects of certain craniosacral techniques can have a very relaxing affect on horses and people. I use cranial work with babies and really with the right kind of cranial techniques you can get fractious babies to fall asleep quickly and relax, and suddenly start sleeping better. With horses, I have seen it work really well in calming down very fractious agitated horses, as well as horses that are highly strung. However, that said, sometimes you can get very highly strung stressed out owners wondering why their horse won't stand still. It is not rocket science, you send the owner off to get something and you get someone else in who stands nice and quiet and it is a whole different story.

Why is it that there is traditionally so much focus on the need for good feet, good dentistry, and good saddlers with far less importance placed on the back care in the horse?

That's simple, lack of education. That is all it is. The back is not more important but definitely is as important as all of these things.

The back is taking a lot of strain, and people forget that horses were not designed to be ridden. So if we are to suddenly stick a lump on its back, why aren't we going to look after its back? If you put a saddle on a back which is dysfunctional for some reason, however well fitted the saddle is to the dysfunctional back, it is not going to resolve the issue.

Some of my best referrals, I am happy to say, now come from saddlers, farriers and vets. Farriers, for example, realise that problems in the feet are going to have a reciprocal arrangement in the back. All these things are important. Without correct shoeing you are going to potentially end up with back and musculoskeletal problems. Without the correct saddle or correctly fitted saddle you are going to end up with back and musculoskeletal problems. Without the correct dentistry you can end up with neck problems. Problems in the head carriage as the horse tries to compensate can provoke problems in the temporomandibular joint (the joint of the jaw and is frequently referred to as TMJ). As with us any kind of clenching or discomfort in the jaw area leads to tension in the neck and poll area and right down the neck and into the

withers.

From your study of both the horse and human skeletal structure, what are the benefits or advantages and disadvantages of the two?

Broadly speaking, they both have different pressures placed on the joints of the backs, which is the result of gravity. The difference from being upright to being on all fours. There is a more even weight distribution from being on all fours, ie: in a horse. However, the middle of the spine is more vulnerable in a horse as it has no support. I have attended a lecture on just this subject. It was being given by an engineer who constructed bridges who was applying his knowledge to the structural make up of a horse and people, and it was very interesting. This is such a huge topic and we could really go into all the finite advantages and disadvantages. People, who tend to be upright most of the time, tend to have or develop a lumber curve (the lower back), and can develop a hump in the thoracic spine (between the shoulder blades), which is called a kyphosis caused by excessive strain on the base of your neck.



In horses the most vulnerable area tends to be the mid back and we can certainly argue that that is because we sit on them.

I think one of the greatest anatomical advantages horses have over us is having a tail. Because the tail balances the spine and we as humans should have a tail. If I were to have any kind of plastic surgery I would have a tail fitted! The tail itself would act as a counter balance and take some of the tension out of that lumber

curve. So to sum up, there are different pressures and strains placed on different areas of both for different reasons.

What can we do to help counteract some of the potential problems in our backs?

Quite often you get lower back problems in riders, the lower back being the suspension that absorbs the movement of the horse, keeping the upper body of the rider in a good position. So core stability work is very good for riders. Strengthening this whole section is good and it helps the rider maintain a good position. Pilates is an excellent way to strengthen the core stability muscles.

What would you like to see in the future of the Equine Osteopathy profession?

I would like to see the osteopathic profession continue to grow and develop, and for osteopathy to take on a primary role in equine back care worldwide. I would like to raise the profile and standards of equine back care so it is considered as a routine part of equine care as much as dentistry, shoeing, and saddle fitting. **HT**

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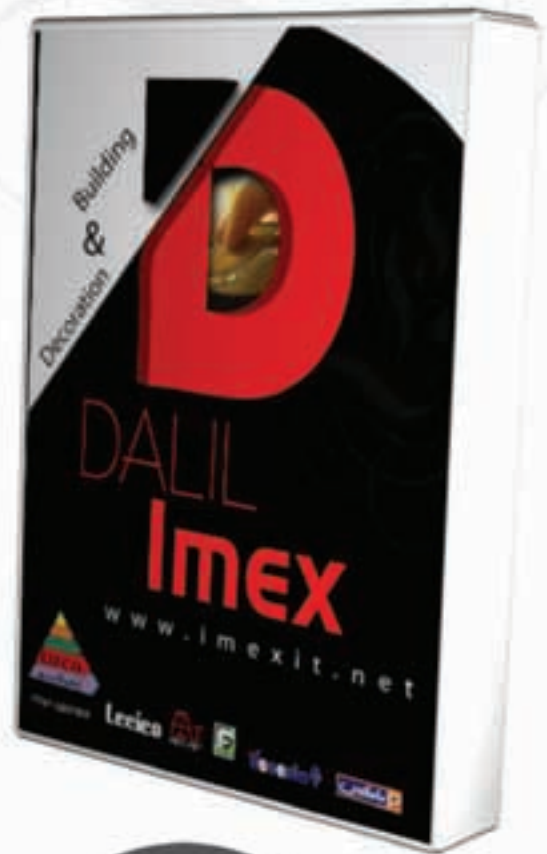
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