

HORSE TIMES



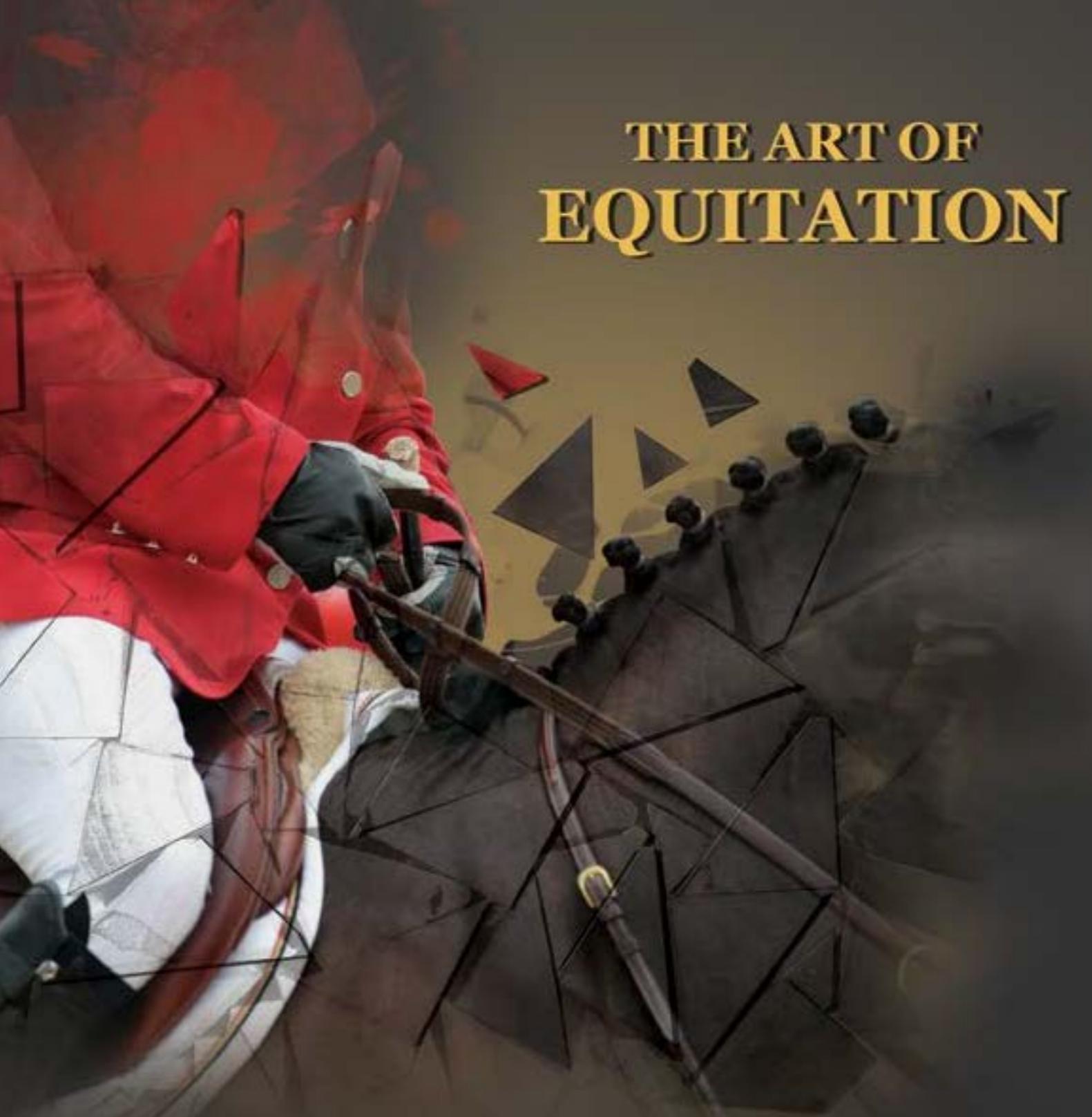
THE LEADING EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

no. 63

WINTER 2022



EXCLUSIVE WITH TOKYO OLYMPIC CHAMPION
JULIA KRAJEWSKI



THE ART OF EQUITATION

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VIEW POINT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Readers,

How do we rate success? Or even better, how do we rate progress?

In the equestrian sport, progress is rated by several measures including organization. An example would be the **Tokyo Olympics** and how that measured up to other Olympic games, especially during a pandemic. Let's hear the opinion of **Julia Krajeweski** while telling us about her first medal as a lady in individual eventing, not only her but let's hear also the opinion of some of the Top Olympic stars like **Cian O'Connor**, **Kristaps Neretnieks**, **Mouda Zeyada**, **Mohamed Talaat**, **Nicolas Delmotte** and the great **Peder Fredricson** in show jumping and hear what they had to say.

Moving on to our visit to **Saudi Arabia** and the world's richest race day, The **Saudi Cup 2022**.

Then to our premiere new idea of profiling a local young rider vs a senior one along with their families to see and realize their talent through their family investments in that sport.



The Equestrian sport is surely amplified through the lenses of talented photographers as **Hamada Hamdy** who explains to **HT** what he sees through the lens.

Dressage tips with **Emmad Zaghloul**, a prominent dressage coach defining and explaining the Half-Halt . **Dr. David Ramey**, a renowned American vet, who honored us with a visit to **Egypt** and a promise of a continuous cooperation protocol with **HT**, discussing the forelimb flexion test.

So there's much more to look forward to, **make sure you stay tuned!**

Ride big is the next big thing to discuss. Ride big is a book about understanding and building your confidence by the great writer **John Haime**, so enjoy the Review.

Finally, **Art and horses**, the everlasting bond.

Please read on and enjoy..

Khaled Assem

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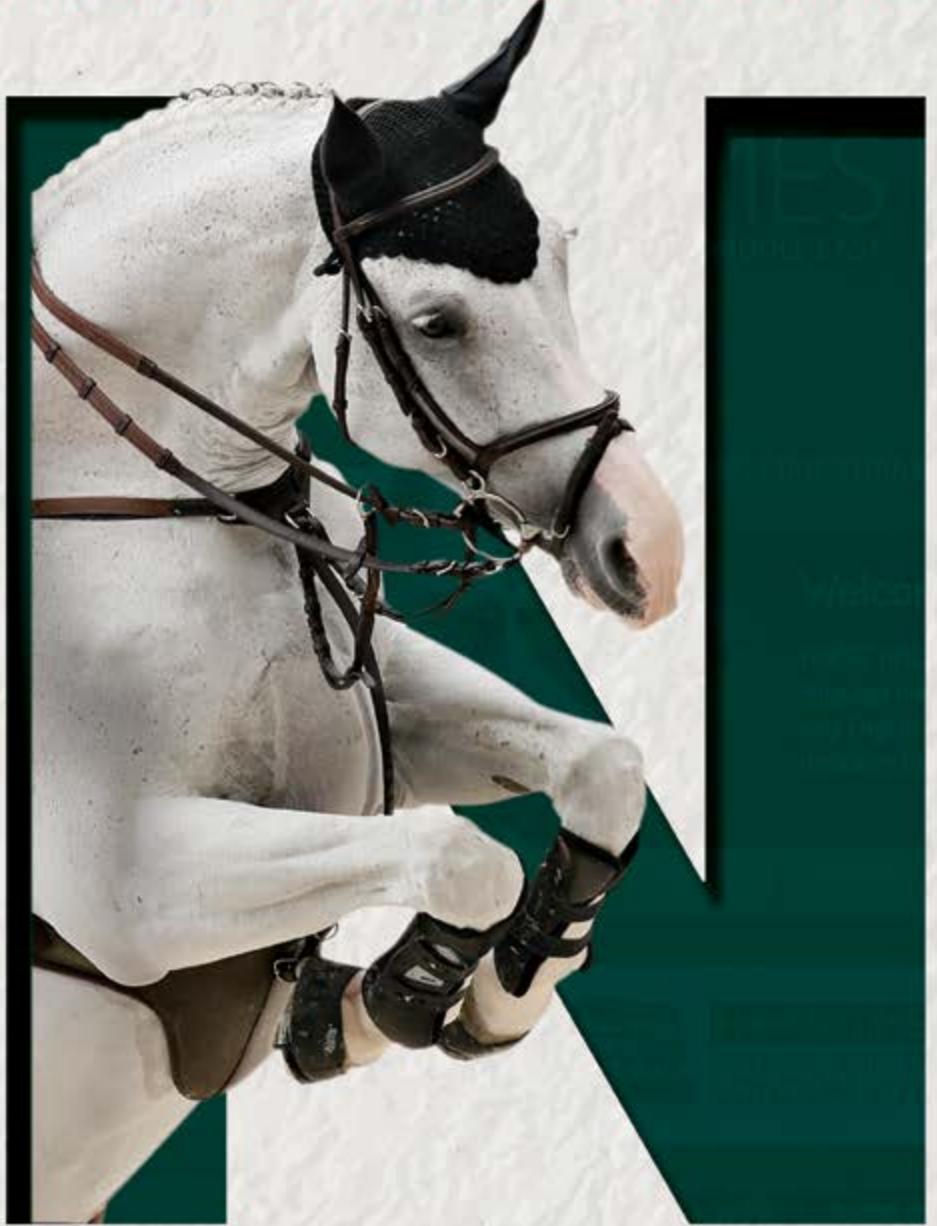
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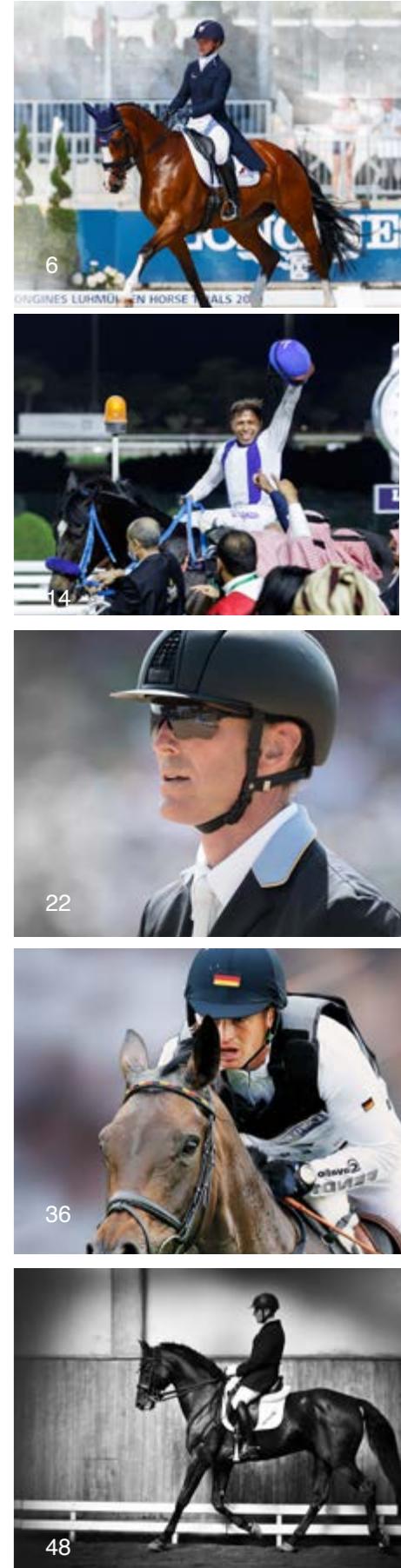
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EXCLUSIVE WITH TOKYO OLYMPIC CHAMPION

JULIA KRAJEWSKI

By Nermin Marwan

IN PART OF OUR OLYMPIC COVERAGE OF TOKYO 2021, WE WERE REALLY LUCKY TO MEET WITH GERMANY'S CHAMPION JULIA KRAJEWSKI; THE FIRST WOMAN EVER TO WIN A GOLD MEDAL IN INDIVIDUAL EVENTING.





First of all, congratulations; tell us about this win? Did you see it coming, especially that you are the first female athlete ever to win the Gold?

Thank you very much!

Obviously, winning the Olympics is the ultimate dream, to be honest, that kind of dream you have but don't think you will actually achieve it. And no, I didn't see it coming a year ago, or even when I knew I will go to the Olympics. I was hoping for a top 5-8 finish. Eventually winning was then the most emotional feeling and still difficult to realize sometimes. It's an achievement that stays forever and I am mostly thankful to my horse Amande, my team around me and all the people that kept believing in all the difficult times I certainly had in the years before.

Being the first female athlete was a bit surprising for me, as we have many very successful female riders in our sport, but I think or hope it sends the signal to all the girls out there, that everything is possible if you have a passion and a dream.

Preparations for the Olympic Games must've been difficult with the Pandemic and all, how did you prepare?

Well yes, there was a lot of uncertainty, and also the delay of one year with many shows being cancelled. The delay certainly helped me, because it only opened up the chance to qualify and prepare my horse Amande, which would not have been possible the year before. When I knew it was scheduled for the summer of 2021, I decided to develop a plan and tried to stick to it as much as possible, and if not, adjust what was possible.



When I knew it was scheduled for the summer of 2021, I decided to develop a plan and tried to stick to it as much as possible.

I decided not to worry too much about what might be, but rather think step by step along the way. It was a close call to make it to the Olympics at all, so that was a huge success already. I focused on trying to be as prepared as possible from fitness and training point of view. I also kept my focus on believing in Amande as well as my abilities. And of course, I wouldn't have done all that without the help of my coaches and my boyfriend, they kept reassuring me a lot

let's talk about the Olympics course of Eventing, how challenging was it? The difficulties you faced?

Everything about the Olympics is somehow special and different from '*normal*' shows and even other championships. Starting from the preparations before, the travel, the attention, the competition

itself, the pressure that builds. In this case the fact that it was held during a pandemic, also brought its challenges as daily testing that created worries like, what if someone tests positive.

Luckily it didn't happen. Regarding the competition itself, Amande felt great from the day she arrived. So, I tried to stick to my plans and took it discipline by discipline. She had a very nice dressage, couldn't have been better in her abilities, and I was positively surprised to be that far up the leaderboard.

On the Cross Country I was quite optimistic that the course would suit her, and she made it feel easy eventually, she was so focused, quick and trusting all the way round. It felt amazing to cross the finish line with just 0.4 penalties for time. With that in the bag I felt that the most challenging phase was behind me as she has always been a very

good jumper. After the excitement, she felt very fresh and jumped a superb clear round in the first round for the team. After that round I was in the lead and knew I would jump for gold, but I didn't think about it very much. Of course, there was a lot of pressure and a very electric atmosphere, even without spectators, but for some reason I was not very worried that it could go wrong. Amande is the horse you would like to sit on a day like that. She jumped incredible and I had the feeling she was even another 20% better. She gave me an enormous amount of confidence and it felt as if she knew it really mattered that day!

How do you see the preparations and the organization in Tokyo Olympics? If you had the chance to change something, what would be?

I think they succeeded in making everything run as smooth as possible. At least I as an athlete felt that way. Surely it wasn't easy during such challenging times, but the facilities, arenas and tracks were incredible, I personally loved the decorations in the main stadium in dressage and show jumping. Of course, it would have been even better to compete (and eventually win) in front of spectators, but I'm super grateful anyways.

You won a silver medal in Team Eventing in 2016, when you compare between Julia in 2016 and Julia in 2021, what has changed in you?

Well, so much happened in 5 years!

I have ridden many top events and won quite a few major ones like the CHIO Aachen, CCI5* Luhmühlen, CCI4* Bramham, National Championships twice, just to name a few. I have been to the World Equestrian Games and European Championships, all of that with many ups and downs along the way and on three different horses that I brought up myself.

So, I would say I really developed my own system that I trust in, learned to cope with pressure, gathered people around me that I know I can trust, so in 2021 I was just way more up to the challenge of competing at the Olympic Games. So, I would say I really developed my own system, I also learned to cope with pressure and surrounded myself with people that I know I can trust. In 2021, I was just way more up to the challenge of competing at the Olympic Games. Plus, having participated in the Olympics before really helped in being there for the second time.



Tell us about the most challenging time in your career, and how did you get through it?

Well, there certainly have been a couple of ups and downs. If it was disappointing championships, public criticism, a positive medication case that stayed a mystery until now or private difficulties. In the end, it's down to doing what I love, which is riding and spending time with horses, plus learning to believe in myself with the help of the people around me.

Naturally, after a big blow, there is disappointment and doubt, but with time passing I just always found

the '*'spirit'* again and just started to look for new goals, made new plans and just like that, the new year had started. Also, I have to say, I always had big successes in between challenging times, so I always had good reasons to believe in myself again.

Tell us about your future plans.

In 2022 there are the World Championships in Pratoni in Italy where I would like to successfully compete with Amande. Before that, maybe a 5* in spring, but that will depend on the winter and the preparations. Also, I have some nice horses coming

up, an 8 yo and two 7 yo that I hope will make their way into top sport in the coming years.

Generally, I want to keep enjoying what I do as well as being able to live in it.

In your opinion, what is the key to being a successful rider?

Hard work, patience and always wanting to improve combined with a good feeling for horses. I also think perseverance in improving yourself counts more than talent. 

All photos©Stefan Lafrentz



**André speaks English, French,
Arabic, Italian and German**

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THE SAUDI CUP 2022

A RACING FESTIVITY IN A LAND CARVED
BY THE HOOFS OF ITS HORSES

By Menna Loufty



© Matthea Kelley

IT WAS SUCH AN EXCITING WEEKEND IN RIYADH, AT THE WORLD'S RICHEST RACE DAY CARRYING THE FLAG OF SAUDI CULTURAL HERITAGE. WITH A TOTAL PURSE OF USD\$31.5M, EIGHT TURF AND DIRT RACES TOOK PLACE WITH TOP WORLD RACEHORSES AND JOCKEYS COMPETING AT KING ABDULAZIZ RACECOURSE.

© Douglas DeFelice



Moving around the racecourse and the grandstand, you would see how the event attracted horse lovers, royalty, fashion enthusiasts and Saudi crowds coming from all around the Kingdom to witness the Saudi Cup festival.

FRENCH SUPERSTAR CHRISTOPHE LEMIRE MAKES HISTORY WITH FOUR INCREDIBLE WINS FOR JAPAN

On the first race of the Saudi cup day, Lemire and Authority (JPN) flew to the finish line at the \$1,500,000 Neom Turf Cup winning the 2100m race by a length and a quarter.

The Japanese domination at King Abdulaziz Racecourse continued when Songline made an amazing victory at the \$1.5M 1352 Surfsprint followed by Stay Foolish dominating the \$2.5M Longines Redsea Turf Handicap.

The fourth triumph for Lemire was at The Riyadh Dirt Sprint presented by Saudia, with an easy victory for Dancing Prince (JPN) adding to Japan's incredible night in Riyadh.

"This is unbelievable. I knew this was a very good horse and it's easy when you are riding good horses. I'm so happy for connections. I have been in Japan for two years with the restrictions and no travel, so I was fresh tonight! My horses were just too good tonight. I don't know what to say. "Lemire said

EMBLEM ROAD MAKES AN UNBELIEVABLE VICTORY AT THE \$20M SAUDI CUP ON HOMELAND

It was such a joyous Saturday evening for the Saudi crowds after the unexpected extraordinary win of Emblem Road in the \$20 million Saudi Cup race.

Panama's jockey "Wigberto Ramos" soared to the finish line riding Emblem Road towards the glory of the Saudi title, defeating star horses like last year's winner Mishriff (IRE) and Kentucky Derby winner Mandaloun (USA).

© Douglas DeFelice



Emblem road is a four-year-old American bred that only raced in Saudi Arabia, trained by Mitab Almulawah and owned by Prince Saud Bin-Salman Abdulaziz.

"Wow. To have a locally trained horse perform that way is very emotional. I'm very happy for the connections, and I'm happy for Saudi Arabia. I think Mishriff, a Saudi Arabian-owned horse [the 2021 The Saudi Cup winner], did amazing things to spread the love of horses. And to have a locally-trained horse win it [The Saudi Cup] is extremely special, and I'm really excited about what this means for the future of horse racing in Saudi Arabia." — Prince Bandar Bin Khalid Al Faisal, Chairman of the Jockey Club of Saudi Arabia said



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OLYMPIC STARS FORUM A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF TOKYO 2021

By Nermin Marwan

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HT GOT IN TOUCH WITH THE TOP RIDERS IN THE SPORT, WHO HAD THE CHANCE TO COMPETE IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES, SOME OF THEM EVEN MORE THAN ONCE. WE HAD MANY QUESTIONS TO ASK TO EACH RIDER REGARDING HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE TOKYO OLYMPIC GAMES 2020, BEING HELD IN 2021.

WE WERE INTERESTED TO KNOW THEIR VIEW OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GAMES BEING HELD DURING THE PANDEMIC, ALSO HOW THEY WERE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR LEVEL OF SKILL, EQUITATION, AND HOW THEY WERE KEEPING THEIR HORSES FIT IN SUCH CRUCIAL TIME, HOW THEY FOUND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS SUCH AS THE FOOTING, FENCES, ARENA AND MUCH MORE.

WE ALSO HAD QUESTIONS REGARDING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRST DAY OF SHOWJUMPING WITH THE NEW FORMAT BY THE FEI AND HOW THIS FORMAT AFFECTED SO MANY RIDERS AND HORSES.



CIAN O'CONNOR

Competed at three Olympic Games, two World Championships and six European Championships.

KRISTAPS NERETNIEKS

Represented Latvia at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo 2021

MOUDA ZEYADA

Made his debut appearance at the Olympics representing Egypt at the 2020 Summer Olympics.

MOHAMED TALAAT

Represented Egypt in the 2020 Summer Olympics.

NICOLAS DELMOTTE

Represented France at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo 2021, competing in individual jumping.

PEDER FREDRICSON

Won one Olympic gold medal in team jumping at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, and three Olympic silver medals in 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio and in 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo

HOW DID YOU FIND THE PROGRESSION OF DIFFICULTY IN THE DESIGN OF THE COURSES OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES, ESPECIALLY THAT THERE WERE A LOT OF CLEAR ROUNDS ON THE FIRST DAY?

CIAN O'CONNOR

I think it's important to admit firstly as a competitor that it was great the Olympic Games took place, despite Covid. I think most would acknowledge that the format was challenging in many respects.

With 30 Clears the first day, including time faults, that meant that several good partnerships who had one down missed out and as the course wasn't overly complex, some who were not capable of jumping bigger got through. It's not easy to know what the solutions are, but for our sport of Showjumping, I like to think of the Olympic Games as the ultimate test. In the Olympic Individual Final there were six clears and a full speed jump off.

That, in my own view, is not what an Olympic Final should be. Otherwise it's just another Grand Prix. Despite the format, the best horse won the Gold.

KRISTAPS

That was my first Olympic experience, but one I can say for sure that all these beautiful and special fences together with course difficulty were made just perfect. I could not imagine that it could be made better; for the sport, for riders and for horses. For sure it was a top of equestrian sport. I think first day qualification was difficult enough and everybody who jumped it clear, deserved to go to the final.

MOUDA

Well unlike any other show, the Olympics is the grand stage of them all. No rounds are built for warming up. It starts big enough and technical enough.

Santi the course designer did a fabulous Job almost having 30 clears and 30 were to qualify to the individual final. Of course at the level of the Olympics you expect riders to jump clear, we are speaking about the best riders in every country working all the years for this moment. Still you didn't get a lot of them to jump in the individual final and yet had team medals. It was fabulous sport with top horses, athletes and course designer.

TALAAT

I think that Santiago did a great job as usual. It's normal to have many clear rounds on the first day as it is the easiest course set by the course designer to give horses a fair start for the extremely demanding courses coming ahead.

If you look at Rio and London Olympics, you will see that always the first day almost half the starters are clear and the other half with have one down, of course maybe one or two with a bad results but the normal was clear or one down. The weaker links were then eliminated and the courses were on an absolute Olympic level.

NICOLAS

The courses were very well built, and I really would like to congratulate the course designer as it was pleasant to ride and very fair for the horses. Riders were unanimously happy with the way the courses were built.

Regarding the clear rounds on the first day, I don't think there is anything particular to say: the formula being changed, the nations with a little bit less experience could have done one fault but it was definitely a fair course for everybody.

PEDER

The course builder Santiago Varela did a fantastic job at the Olympics. There were perfectly balanced courses. I am very impressed. Santiago Varela is one of my favorite course builders.



AT THIS TOP LEVEL OF THE SPORT, HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THE QUALIFIED PAIRS?

CIAN O'CONNOR

The course designer had a difficult job as there were mixed standards of horse and rider in the competition. The proof for me that the format was a disaster is to go back and watch the first round of the Nations Cup. You had top combinations literally schooling and not trying for the time allowed as all they had to do was survive to get through to the second round, which made really poor viewing.

KRISTAPS

I don't think that all qualified riders belonged to the Olympic level, we saw several disappointing starts there. But this is the responsibility of FEI and the qualification system. They want to see more countries in the Olympics, but not all these representatives are ready for that. I also did MER competitions to qualify with my horse and it was too easy. I think MER standards should be much higher.

MOUDA

I believe who ever made his/her way there, definitely is up to the level. Yet anything can happen as we saw some jump amazing clears at the individual qualifier for example Scott Brash and Cian O'Connor but didn't ride through the rest due to their choice to prioritize their horses' health yet we also witnessed others struggling from fence. Anything can happen in this sport but I believe mostly everyone was up to the level.

TALAAT

I believe there are stronger teams out there like Italy that didn't get a chance to compete because of the strange quota; less experienced countries like China were there with all respect to both countries.

NICOLAS

Every rider has their own chance when he has qualified to take part in the Olympic Games, there's nothing more to say.

PEDER

I think the qualifying rules should be reviewed. The level of difficulty should be raised so that it becomes more difficult to qualify.



© Julien Courte

HOW DID YOU FIND THE ORGANIZATION AND THE VENUE?

CIAN O'CONNOR

The venue was super and it was really well organized. The horses jumped well off the footing and, as I said, despite the restrictions it was great to be able to compete there.

MOUDA

Well I believe if it wasn't for the Covid, Japan would've definitely been able to pull out a lot more.

I didn't find a problem with the footing my horse loved it and felt so comfortable. To be honest the whole facility was at the top level.

KRISTAPS

The organization and footing was at the highest level, thanks to that we could show our best possible performance.

TALAAT

The organization was up to perfection and it is what we always expect from our friends in Japan.

The footing was up to Olympic standards.



NICOLAS

The organization there was incredible: the facilities were amazing as well as Japanese people who were very welcoming. The horses had very good living conditions. It was a super experience!

The footings were perfect, just as we can imagine them at the Olympic Games. Jumps were splendid; it was very nice to ride there.

PEDER

The competition was very well conducted. They did a very good job, especially given the restrictions that existed due to the pandemic. I am grateful they even managed to arrange the Olympics in the middle of a pandemic. The footing was fantastic.



© Richard Juilliart

THE NEW FORMULA BY THE FEI STATES THAT THE TEAM COMPRISSES ONLY 3 RIDERS , DID YOU FIND IT FAIR?

CIAN O'CONNOR

On a personal level I was so proud of all my background team at Karlswood, particularly Johanna (Berg) and Ross (Mulholland) who were with me and Sue Magnier's brilliant Irish horse Kilkenny. He jumped amazing to finish equal 7th individually and I'm really excited about the coming season with him.

KRISTAPS

In my opinion the new Olympic format with only three riders per team is a big mistake. I saw all these terrible starts in team qualification, where riders were forced to push their horses to continue the course instead of withdraw and save their horses. It is too much risk of the welfare of our best friends - horses. It's not fair!

Quality of our sport is much more important than quantity of nations competing. I hope one day it will be fair for the horses and riders also.

MOUDA

That's a definite downgrade, so many sports have a drop score and it is very easy to explain it on TV. From a technical point of view as well as for the animal well fair, a drop score is a MUST.

Definitely not fair, look at what happened with the Irish team, British team, German team...I mean Scot Brash had to pull out after first round, Daniel Deusser had to pull out in the team competition, Penelope didn't have her best show, Cian also had to pull out for the sake of the horse.

I mean it is just doesn't make a lot of sense when riders just fly all the way across the world and after their first round they pull out for the sake of horses and the format just puts more pressure but vice versa. I am completely against it!!

TALAAT

The new formula is absolutely not fair for the horse and the rider. If a horse has a problem during a round the rider should not be forced to continue the round. In the new formula the rider is forced to continue the round till he and his horse collapse as we have seen a couple of times. We can't blame the riders because they don't want to eliminate their whole team and let their country down.

NICOLAS

I was not very enthusiastic about this new formula, I think the old one was a lot better as all the riders have suggested it.



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MEDICAL

THE FORELIMB FLEXION TESTS

By Dr.David Ramey



YOU'VE DECIDED TO SELL YOUR HORSE AND THE POTENTIAL BUYER HAS SENT A VETERINARIAN TO YOUR STABLES TO PERFORM A PRE-PURCHASE EXAM OR YOU'RE THE BUYER, AND YOU'RE EXCITED TO COMPLETE YOUR PURCHASE. SO, AS YOU STAND BEAMING WITH SATISFACTION, THE VETERINARIAN PICKS UP THE HORSE'S LEFT FRONT LEG, BENDING IT AT THE FETLOCK, HE OR SHE HOLDS IT IN THE AIR FOR 60 SECONDS OR SO, RELEASES THE LIMB, AND ASKS THAT THE HORSE BE IMMEDIATELY JOGGED DOWN THE DRIVE. IN ASTONISHMENT, YOU WATCH AS THE HORSE THAT YOU'VE KNOWN – OR HOPED – TO BE SOUND MOVES OFF WITH AN OBVIOUS BOB OF THE HEAD. HE'S MOST DECIDEDLY LAME AFTER THE TEST.

WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



What you have witnessed is a phenomenon that is not necessarily of the veterinarian's creation, but something that can sometimes occur following a procedure called a forelimb flexion test. In a forelimb flexion test, various joints and soft tissue structures of the lower limb are stretched and/or compressed for a brief period of time by bending the limb. Afterwards, the horse is immediately trotted off and observed for signs of lameness.

Simple, really. But it gets messy.

Forelimb flexion tests were described in Swedish veterinary literature as early as 1923. And, since then, they've become something of an integral part of the evaluation of the lame horse. But not only that, forelimb flexion tests are generally routinely included in pre-purchase evaluations of horses intended for sale.

The test is not unlike what you might experience if someone asked you to sit in a crouch for sixty seconds and then run right off. Usually – and especially if you've never had knee problems

– you can run off just fine, particularly after a couple of steps. If you've never had a problem, chances are that you're fine, no matter what happens in those first couple of steps. But very occasionally, that stiffness and soreness that you might feel could signal a problem (**such as a bad knee**).

This test used to make me confused, and to some extent, it still does. That's because I'm often not too sure what to make of the state of things when a horse takes some bad steps after a flexion test. I mean, I know I might not pass such a test. So, **who's to say that every horse should?** Because of that question, back in 1997, I did the study. It's still timely. Let me tell you about it.

In my study, I looked at fifty horses (**100 legs**) of various breeds, ages, sex, and occupation. The owners were gracious enough to let me explore my curiosity about forelimb flexion tests. The horses were from my practice, an included a wide variety of pleasure and performance horses – including some world

class jumping horses – but overall, they were a representative sampling of all of the horses that were in my practice.

I took a lameness history of all of the horses in the study, and I watched them trot and lunge on hard ground, and I felt their legs for abnormal swellings or areas of soreness. If a client's horse was lame, or showed some obvious physical abnormality, I didn't use him – I just wanted to study sound horses. And then I did two tests – a "normal" (**for me**) flexion test, and a test that was as hard as I could flex the leg without the horse going up in the air and trying to kill me (**for my study, I held the horse's leg up in the air for 60 seconds, but there's no agreement on the "proper" amount of time – which is another problem**). I recorded the responses. In addition, I took X-rays all of the lower legs of the horses.

I examined the horses again 60 days later. If an individual horse incurred some lameness in the 60-day period following the initial examination, the lameness was correlated with clinical, flexion test, and X-rays findings.

Here's what I found.

I found that forelimb flexion tests couldn't tell me anything about the future of a sound horse. I could make every single horse lame with a hard-enough flexion test, with the exception of one particularly annoying Arabian gelding who was always trying to bite me (**no Arabian jokes, please**).

Horses that had "something" on their X-rays weren't any more likely to be lame after a "normal" flexion test than horses that had "clean" X-rays.

Horses that had positive "normal" flexion tests weren't any more likely to be lame 60 days out, either (**those horses that were lame mostly had things like hoof abscesses, which nobody could have predicted anyway**).

If you follow a group of horses for 60 days, there's a decent chance that a few of them might experience an episode of lameness. Who knew?

So, **what did I conclude?** Well, I said – right there in front of an entire meeting of the American Association of Equine Practitioners – which I didn't think that it was a good idea

to rely on forelimb flexion tests to make a diagnosis of some current or future problem without some other supporting sign. I said I didn't think that they were very sensitive, or that they were very specific. And I said that I didn't think it was a good idea to turn a horse down based solely on a response to a forelimb flexion test, either.

Which caused a bit of a kerfuffle, but I still feel the same way. That is:

Flexion tests appear to also have no predictive value for the occurrence of forelimb lameness for at least 60 days after you do the flexion test.

Otherwise stated, if a previously sound horse goes lame after a flexion test, the lameness could not have been reasonably predicted by forelimb flexion.

Some folks apparently feel that there is a potential for hurting a horse with forelimb flexion tests. They may be concerned that by flexing the joint, one could apply sufficient stress to the tissues to injure them. I couldn't find any sign of such a thing in the horses I looked at, and I flexed them really hard. They did a study on flexion tests in Belgium a couple of decades back, in which horses were subjected to as many as six flexion tests a week, and that didn't cause any problems for the horses, either.





PROFILES

HT MEETS WITH SEIF ABBAS AND HIS FATHER ESSAM ABBAS

By Nermin Marwan

“BEING A FATHER FOR SUCH A SPECIAL, TALENTED CHAMPION LIKE SEIF, MAKES ME VERY HAPPY AND PROUD. I THINK SEIF IS ONE OF THE RIDERS WHO IS PUTS A LOT OF EFFORT FOR THE SAKE OF THE GAME”

Tell us more about yourself. You are a father of a big equestrian champion; how does this feel?

I am Essam Abbas, I was an equestrian rider at Alexandria sporting club, but I had to stop when I became a prosecutor and now, I am a Court Counsellor.

I am a very proud father, Seif works hard to stay in the top sport, he feels obligated to be up his game all the time, he doesn't just seek perfection as a rider but he is so keen to see this sport moving forward as well, I always try to support him as much as I can because he really deserves the best.

Do you have any riders in the family?

Yes, we are 3 brothers, and all of us are riders. I can definitely say it's a family sport.

When and how did Seif's journey start with horse riding?

I used to take Seif with me to my trainings when he was still a baby. The first time he touched a horse he was 6 or seven months, then I tried to test his interest in horse-riding when he was 8 years old. I was so keen to let him travel abroad and learn a lot about the sport from an international perspective, in order to gradually become well-educated in everything related to horse-riding. Till now, Seif trains regularly with prominent riders like Alan Waldman and



Abd Elkader Saeed every year to improve his performance.

How did horse-riding change Seif's personality?

Seif has become more independent and has learnt to make decisions; as horse riding always obliges you to take a decision in a second. A rider has to be a quick thinker and has to take the right decision, because you are dealing with a very intelligent creature who has his own personality as well.

Many accidents happen to horse riders, has this ever affected your support to this sport?

Unfortunately, the equestrian sport has its risks, I had 3 accidents before while riding, and sure Seif had many accidents till now but that didn't urge us to give up or leave what we love.

What's the happiest moment related to Seif that you remember?

When I saw him for the first time riding my horse Roshe Noir, he was very young at that time, and then he competed with him and won.

A moment you felt so proud of Seif.

When he was competing in Germany with his team. With more than 30 teams in competition, he had a clear round and entered the jump-off and won the class.



What do you think was the most challenging period in Seif's life and how did he come over it?

I believe it was that time when he had more than six well-trained horses, and we sold two of them, and then the other three died in less than a year. He only had one injured horse left and he trained it a lot, till he eventually had very successful results with him. It was a very difficult period because these horses were dear to him and they were some of his best horses.

What's the piece of advice that you always give to Seif?

Never stop learning. Whatever level you reach, you have to be always be updated with every new technique, with every style, and always seek to become better.

What do you wish for him?

To always be well and happy, and to make great steps in his path until he rocks.

A dynamic photograph of a rider in a black competition outfit and helmet, riding a dark horse in an arena. The horse is in mid-stride, kicking up dust. The background is blurred, suggesting motion.

THE SON

A CLOSER LOOK ON THE PROMISING CHAMPION SEIF ABBAS

How did your passion for horses start?

When I was a child, I loved horses so much as most of my family were riding horses and owned ones, so I loved this smart beautiful creature so much. It was my only interest back then, yes in the beginning I was somehow afraid of riding them, but my love overcame that fear.

What did you have in mind growing up as a rider?

Once I started my path in this sport, I always set a goal for myself and worked on it no matter how this goal is small or big. As an example, I put a goal to reach the A1 level in Egypt then to ride internationally. And so, I worked and reached that, then I set up a higher goal; to jump in the Arab League the following year and so on

Who was Seif's idol as a young rider?

Ben Maher and Kent Ferrington my personal favorite riders. I really like them since I was a child, I find their riding "mind blowing".

Who were the most influential coaches in your career?

Mouda Zeyada, took charge of me in a very critical period in my life, I wasn't doing too well , he put a lot of effort in me and my horses. Sometimes it was pressuring me but at the end when I saw the results, I couldn't thank him enough, I can see this rider has made a great touch in my career and I owe him a lot

Abdelkader Saied, he is one of the best for sure, listening and watching him were enough to learn lot.

Kareem Zohair, he was there for me since day one and till now, he literally helps me in everything, and whoever is training me , I don't feel as comfortable like I do with Kareem.

You have competed in many places around the world; tell us about your favorite arena and why do you find it special?

Fontainebleau in France, the place is magnificent, and I have a lot of good memories and I had good results there.

Tell us about the most challenging time in your career, and how did you get through it?

The period dad mentioned of course, in 2016, it was very tough period, losing such good horses and left with one injured one wasn't easy. I worked very hard on that horse till I leveled it up, but as difficult as this period was, I cherish it a lot. I believe that this challenge taught me a lot.

In your opinion, what is the key to being a successful rider?

Work hard and think smart, you have to think in every step.



All photos©Hamada hamdy

Dedication, you will pass by a lot of hardships.

Always track talented riders, watch, listen, and always learn.

Some people are always there during the journey of success. Who shared yours?

Of course, my family, they have got my back since day one and till now. They have never left me or stopped supporting me to become better. Abd ElFatah ElHussien is also considered one of my family members, he is my life time partner, and he is the one who gets my horses usually. I have to mention Mr. Ahmed ElNaggar for sure , he helps me a lot , gives me horses to ride and now he is sponsoring me with the best horse in Egypt , so I am really thankful for all of them.

What do you have in mind for the future?

To become more based in Europe and jump the Arab League of course. In addition to that, I plan to start training youngsters. ☺

HORSE TIMES
THE LEADING EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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THE ART OF CLASSICAL DRESSAGE RIDING

THE HALF-HALT

By Emmad El-din Zaghloul

THE HALF-HALT IS A SPECIFIC RIDING AID GIVEN BY AN EQUESTRIAN TO HIS HORSE, IN WHICH THE DRIVING AIDS AND RESTRAINING AIDS ARE APPLIED IN QUICK SUCCESSION. IT IS SOMETIMES THOUGHT OF AS AN “ALMOST HALT,” ASKING THE HORSE TO PREPARE TO HALT IN BALANCE, BEFORE PUSHING IT ONWARD TO CONTINUE IN ITS GAIT.



USES

The main purpose of the **half-halt** is to rebalance the horse, asking it to carry its weight slightly more on his hindquarters and less on its forehand. Additionally, it may be used as a warning signal to the horse, calling its attention back to the rider to tell it that it is about to be asked to do something, such as perform a transition between or within a gait, make a turn, perform a difficult movement, or jump an obstacle. It can also be used to encourage the horse to take a lighter contact with the bit. The half-halt should not make the horse break into a different gait. However, repeated **half-halts** are used to help collect a gait. The gait that it is in needs to **half halt** to get right on to the next gait as in a gallop.

Half-halts are universally useful, regardless of riding discipline, although they are used in great abundance in the dressage arena, where perfect control of the horse is required.

TIMING

The best time to apply the half-halt is the moment when the hind leg it is meant to control touches the ground.

"When it first touches down in front of the vertical, it carries, the haunches flex. That is the correct moment for the half halt. As soon as the hind leg passes the vertical, however, it starts to thrust. If you were to half halt against the thrusting leg, the horse would brace against you and either go against, above or behind the bit. If you half halt when the leg is in the air, you would shorten the stride and prevent the hind leg from stepping under. It would have to set down prematurely, maybe not even reaching the vertical, much less reaching in front of it. That way, the carrying phase would be shortened or even made impossible. The result would be loss of balance and relaxation not to mention collection." TM

PERFORMING THE HALF-HALT

The **half-halt** may be performed two ways, both of which are commonly used by various skilled horse people. The first is a split-second application of the driving aids, to create energy, which is then quickly and immediately harnessed with the restraining aids, and then released. The second is the opposite approach: an application of the restraining aids, asking the horse to "almost halt" and bring its hindquarters under itself in the process, then immediately applying the driving aids to maintain the gait. In both cases, the driving and restraining aids should never be applied for a prolonged period, as that will only cause the horse to lean against the bit, tighten its back, and finally ignore the aids. The yielding of the aids is just as important as the application of the aids.

The degree of pressure applied by the aids will vary greatly between horses, depending on their training, temperament, balance, and the situation in which the half-halt is given. The degree of the aid is usually performed by instinct and feel, a result of experience from the rider. Often, one half-halt will be slightly different from the one preceding it, as this depends on the horse's balance and the requirements of the upcoming exercise. However, the aids should not be strongly used, by which they signal the horse to make a transition.

In dressage, the primary restraining aids will be made by bracing the lower back and briefly preventing the hips from following, while adding slight rein pressure. However, some well-trained and sensitive horses will respond simply to a deepening of the seat. When jumping, especially if the rider is in two-point position, the rider may instead apply the restraining aids by sinking down slightly into their heels and bringing their shoulders more upright, and adding slight. In extreme situations, such as when a horse is galloping and excited, it may be necessary to use even more rein pressure to ensure the restraining aids are respected, which may even result in a harsh jerk. This is reserved for the worst-case scenario, when the horse needs to be rapidly re-balanced (**for example, due to an upcoming obstacle**), and usually only occurs if the horse is ignoring the rider or if the rider did not prepare the horse properly in advance. The driving aids are created by the legs and by softening the seat.

“BRINGING UP A CHAMPION” SERIES

YOUSSEF GALAL & SHERIHAN ELGHAMRY

By Nermin Marwan

ONE MUST ALWAYS WONDER ABOUT THE JOURNEY OF BRINGING UP AN EQUESTRIAN CHAMPION; HIS LIFESTYLE AND THE ROLE OF HIS FAMILY IN SUCH SUCCESS. HORSE TIMES MAGAZINE DECIDED TO WORK ON A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS THAT EXPLORE THE VALUE OF HORSEMANSHIP, AS WELL AS HOW FAMILY BONDS CAN LEAD TO FURTHER SUCCESS THAT ENDS WITH INTRODUCING A HERO TO THE EQUESTRIAN WORLD.

OUR THIRD MEETING IS WITH A BEAUTIFUL FAMILY; A MOTHER OF 4 NAMED SHERIHAN ELGHAMRY , AND HER TALENTED PROMISING SON YOUSSEF GALAL.





TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF?

My name is Sherihan El-Ghamry. I am 40 years old, a mother of four, 2 boys and 2 girls. I used to live in Saudi-Arabia with my husband, and I worked there as a KG teacher. But now I'm back in Egypt and I chose not to work to spend enough time with my children.

WHY IS "HORSE RIDING" "THE SPORT YOU CHOSE FOR YOUSSEF?"

Actually, he did! I was always pushing him to play a sport such as basketball or swimming but, he always avoided that and never enjoyed these sports.



Until he came across the place designated for equestrian games, and kept watching it for hours without getting bored, so he asked to join the equestrian training.

At the time, I had no information about horse-riding, even though I did not know that it had tournaments and training, but as a result of his persistence and determination, I complied with his request and we began our journey together in this sport and from here this became our daily break, visiting horses and equestrian training; it became our home that we start and end the day with.

HOW DID RIDING CHANGE YOUSSEF'S PERSONALITY?

Youssef was a very shy child who refused to play with other children, afraid of strangers, and not a team player at all. When he started riding, I noticed that he began to talk to his trainers and fellow riders too.

Now, Youssef has changed 180 degrees, he tends to socialize more, express himself and his opinions, loves his friends so much and even attends tournaments to encourage them.

SOME ACCIDENTS HAPPEN TO RIDERS, DID THAT EVER FRIGHTEN YOU?

I didn't know that the game was that dangerous, until I started watching him improve his level and his falls from the horses increase by the way.

Every time he falls, it frightens me so much, but I do not convey my fear to him, I do not show it to him, this fear is inside me, because I do not want to raise him as a person who easily gets intimidated.

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU SEE YOUSSEF'S RIDING IMPROVE DAY BY DAY?

I feel so happy, even though we face many challenges, but also his father, my husband supports us very well, so with every improvement I am very happy because I see the return for our efforts.

In addition, I have a goal for each of my children to pursue, so any step towards this goal makes



me very happy.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT THE CHALLENGES YOU FACED.

This sport is concerned with two things, the player and the horse, not like other sports in which the interest is limited to the player only. This makes the boy take responsibility as there is another creature he is responsible of and he has a duty to take care of him.

I definitely have moments of frustration, anger and a sense of failure, especially in the beginning; we did not have the ability to buy a horse for Youssef, so we resorted to allocating



or renting horses.

In the policy of renting horses, the horse always has a problem, so we take him and work hard on him in order to solve this problem, and when horse has improved and we start to step forward with him, the owner of the horse comes to retrieve it to sell it because he initially rented it for the purpose of selling it.

But Youssef was always very patient with that and never got upset like me, and he was always satisfied and confident that god will compensate him with something better than what he lost.

WHAT'S THE HAPPIEST MOMENT RELATED TO YOUSSEF YOU REMEMBER?

There are many moments of happiness between me and Youssef, the time when he first started competing, I used to videotape him and once he finished his routine he would come running to me to watch his performance

together and see what we failed in and what we did well.

And yet, every time he shares his interests with me, it's been one of the happiest moments of my life.

In Horse-riding, every time I hear "*Youssef Galal came in the first place so far*" I come into tears.

DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOUSSEF IN INTERNATIONAL SHOWS?

Sure, it's his dream and we won't give up until we reach the Olympics.

WHAT DO YOU WISH FOR HIM?

My wish for Youssef is that he never suffers from emptiness or deficiency in any aspect of his life, succeeds in everything he does, be a productive person and has an imprint in society, be a lovable and happy person. 

An advertisement for Kana Professional Riding Helmets. The background is a dark teal gradient. Three helmets are displayed: a white helmet on the left, a large black helmet in the center, and a grey helmet on the right. Below the helmets is a stylized silver horse head logo. The word "Kana" is written in a bold, italicized, lowercase font. A horizontal line separates the helmets from the text below. The text reads "PROFESSIONAL RIDING HELMETS" in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, there is a small logo of a horse head and the text "SOLE AGENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST". At the bottom, the address "2, Bahgat Ali Street, Zamalek, Cairo - Egypt" is followed by the telephone and fax number "+2 02 27356939 +2 02 27354348", the email "post@equicarecompany.com", and the website "www.equicareproducts.com".

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60 SECONDS WITH YOUSSEF GALAL

NAME: YOUSSEF GALAL

AGE: 17

HOROSCOPE: LIBRA

PROFESSION: STUDENT

Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Youssef, I started riding at the age of 9 in Egypt. After 3 years I traveled to Saudi Arabia where I participated in many competitions there and I achieved great success.

What was the best advice you were given?

“Focus on your dream” I've learnt stick to my dream and goal, no matter how many ups and downs I face.

If you're young again and you are given the choice; would you choose Horse-riding again?

Sure, I will even begin with stronger passion and more surely attitude than I started.

Did you ride internationally before?

Only in Saudi Arabia, and I entered many competitions there, I remember that I scored the fifth place on the United Kingdom when I was 12.





If you have to choose a super power, what would it be?

Definitely talking to horses! If I know what horses want to say; how they feel, what they want to do. That would be fantastic.

What your current goal that you are working to reach?

To put my horse in A1 level.

A moment you were proud of yourself.

When I won the first Place in Rabab Competition, it was a big reward for me.

How do you balance between your education and training?

It's all about time management, and it is not permissible to fall short with any of them.

What are you planning to study after High school?

I want to study Engineering and complete my education abroad.

Who has been your greatest support?

My mother; she has been here for me since day one.

All photos©Hamada hamdy

What is the biggest challenge in the sport you have faced?

To convince my dad to buy me a new horse, and to choose the right horse with the best condition.

A rider that you enjoy watching.

Marcus Ehning. He is brilliant! He has unbreakable chemistry with his horses, and his style is very unique.

What is your second favorite sport?

Everything related to cars and motor sports, I am really fond of cars.

What is your favorite book?

The Original Horse Bible.

What is your strongest point?

Focusing while riding, and not being affected by the surrounding conditions

What's your dream?

Compete with my horse TIKO in the Olympics and win!

What is the message you want to say to your parents?

I want to thank them for their all-time support, I am really lucky having .

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UNDERSTANDING & BUILDING YOUR CONFIDENCE (PART 1) CONFIDENCE SERIES

by John Haime

IN THE FIRST OF OUR THREE-PART SERIES ON BUILDING
CONFIDENCE, WORLD-CLASS HUMAN PERFORMANCE
COACH AND SPORT PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANT JOHN HAIME
EXPLAINS WHY CONFIDENCE IS A MUST FOR THE SUCCESS IN
THE PARTNERSHIP WITH YOUR HORSE.

"The mental and emotional muscle development that took all elite riders to the top, he says, is within your reach with the right mindset and some key steps."

Welcome to your 3-part series to help begin your understanding and building of your confidence.

Equestrian sport and life are about patterns and cycles. Sometimes you *"have it"* and other times you don't. No exceptions. So, a rider must work on important areas like confidence: First, understand it and second, learn how to build it. The mental and emotional aspect of your equestrian performance is like your physical training—prepare, do some work to build your skills and if your training is done well, it will translate to the show ring.

Working on your confidence is an investment in yourself as a rider, but this skillset is more than that. Confidence is a must and transferable to everything you do in life—business, career, relationships and any other “performance” activity you engage in. Consider it an investment in your future. Confidence may be the single greatest asset for you as an equestrian athlete.

At every high-level show class we see wonderful displays of skill and grace—riders handling their partners with precision and efficiency,

taking calculated risks to gain advantage and expressing their riding abilities and those of their horses. It's part of what makes elite riders so good—making it look effortless and easy. Being courageous in this way takes confidence, which is something many amateur riders lack, but that doesn't have to be the case. The good news is there's plenty you can learn from these elite equestrian athletes to make yourself a better rider.

A key area for any rider—whatever their skill level—is confidence. Confidence is your bullet-proof vest. World-class riders know it. If you want to be like them, you have to understand it and learn how to develop it.

WHAT IS CONFIDENCE, ANYWAY?

Well . . . it really boils down to knowing. Knowing in your heart you can do it under the pressures of competition. You know the feeling: You're riding well, your horse feels great and everything is going right for you. There is an easy belief in what you are doing, and you just know you can do it.

You undoubtedly also know the other feeling: You just don't have it, you and your horse don't feel “on,” and nothing is going right. There's lowered belief in what you are doing, and you're not quite sure what's wrong. That's when you

have to be able to trust and believe in your abilities and decisions, and express them in challenging circumstances.

"I'VE LOST MY CONFIDENCE"

When my phone rings, it's often a rider, coach or parent on the other end, voice panicked, telling me a rider has "lost his confidence." The rider may be struggling to perform when it counts, is very anxious before and during show classes and often not enjoying playing the experience of equestrian sport.

I always ask these riders or their supporters where they think their confidence has gone. Some may be up-and-coming riders and some have risen near the top of the sport. It's funny that these riders don't really know where their

confidence has gone. Something small has triggered some initial doubts, and the spiral downwards begins from there. This scenario can seemingly happen overnight. One poor show or even show class and the rider declares that they have lost their confidence and the difficulties begin.

This is where riders get confused. Confidence requires some understanding—and some work.

NEXT IN PART 2: John Haime explains that confidence is proactive: It's a choice you can make, not something you simply have or don't have. Learn about the role of challenge in sustained success and read Haime's formula for achieving and maintaining it.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Haime is President of John Haime Performance and a renowned global Human Performance Coach who is trusted by some of the world's leading riders and coaches. His world-class approach to elevate equestrians is a winning formula from performance psychology, emotional intelligence, neuroscience, sport psychology, business planning, communication and executive coaching. He is the author of the acclaimed new book Ride Big - The Ultimate Guide to Building Equestrian Confidence published by Trafalgar Square Books (May 2021). John is based in Ottawa, Canada.

See WWW.JOHNHAIME.COM



PROFESSIONAL RIDING GEAR



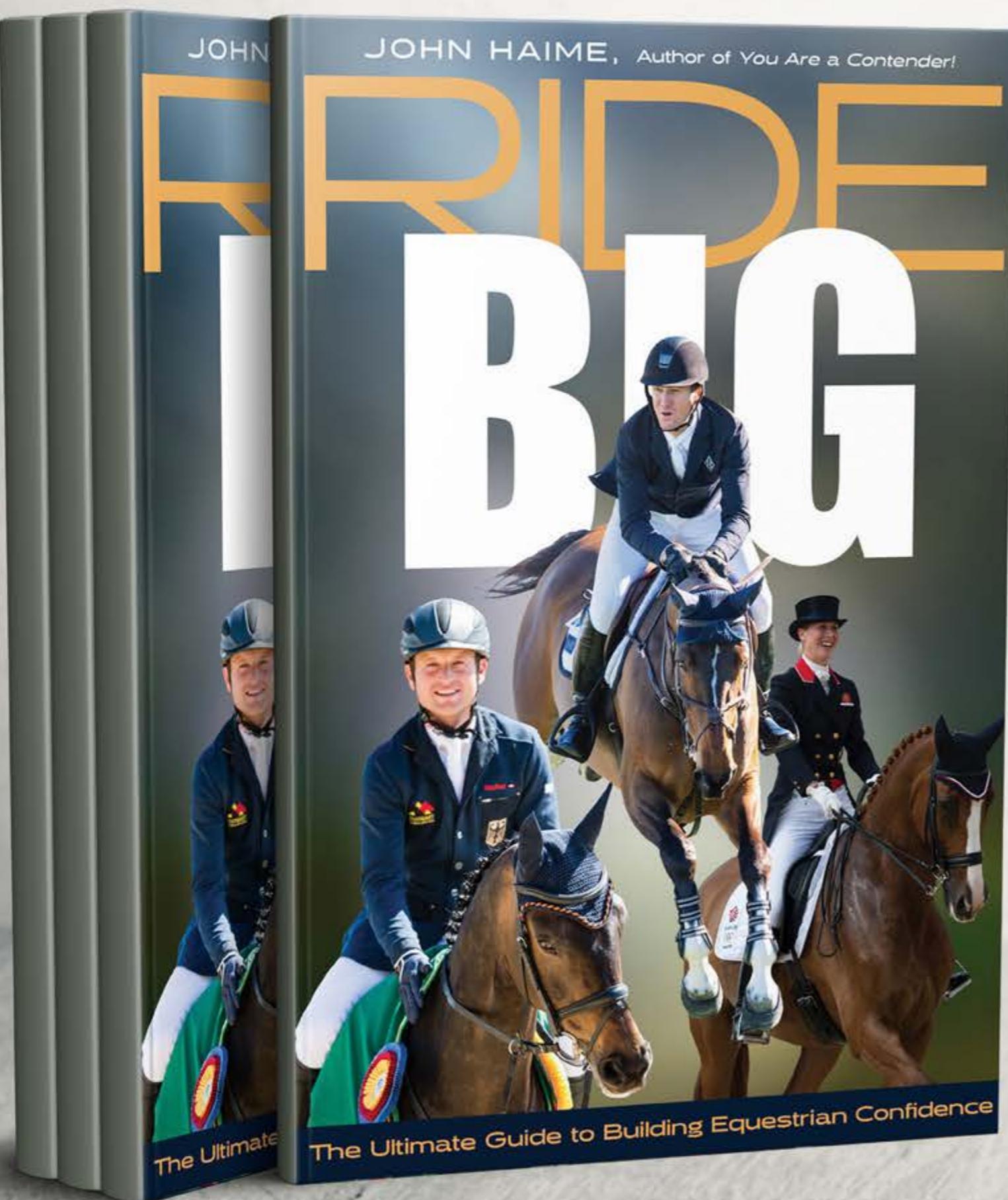
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BOOK REVIEW

JOHN HAIME'S RIDE BIG *THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO BUILDING EQUESTRIAN CONFIDENCE*



A new book, *Ride Big*, is the modern rider's path to lasting confidence and a must read for every equestrian and non-equestrian athlete. Confidence is the key to performing well, yet many of us struggle to attain it, or maintain it. Haime's book serves as the ultimate guide that helps equestrians assess and reflect on themselves as individuals and riders, and addresses the root causes behind shaken confidence. It stands out among other books on sports psychology and managing your mind, by how personalized the book is, using relatable content, real life stories of professional riders, and quizzes that trigger critical thinking about one's emotions, behaviors and responses.

The practical component on how to actually help oneself leverage self-knowledge into confidence is made simple, with easy exercises and concepts to remember and commit to when self-doubt, fear or pressure are at their peak. The book's structure and language ease the transmission of information in such a way to fully digest it, and prompt a holistic approach on how one behaves on and off the horse, during training, competitions, and at the stables too. Overall, Haime facilitates reader reflection by breaking down common thoughts, feelings and emotions, and elicits the readers' thinking, questioning and acknowledgment of certain ideologies, that in turn drive readers to move forward, and pave the way to a positive journey of long term growth and development.

Review by Khaled Assem

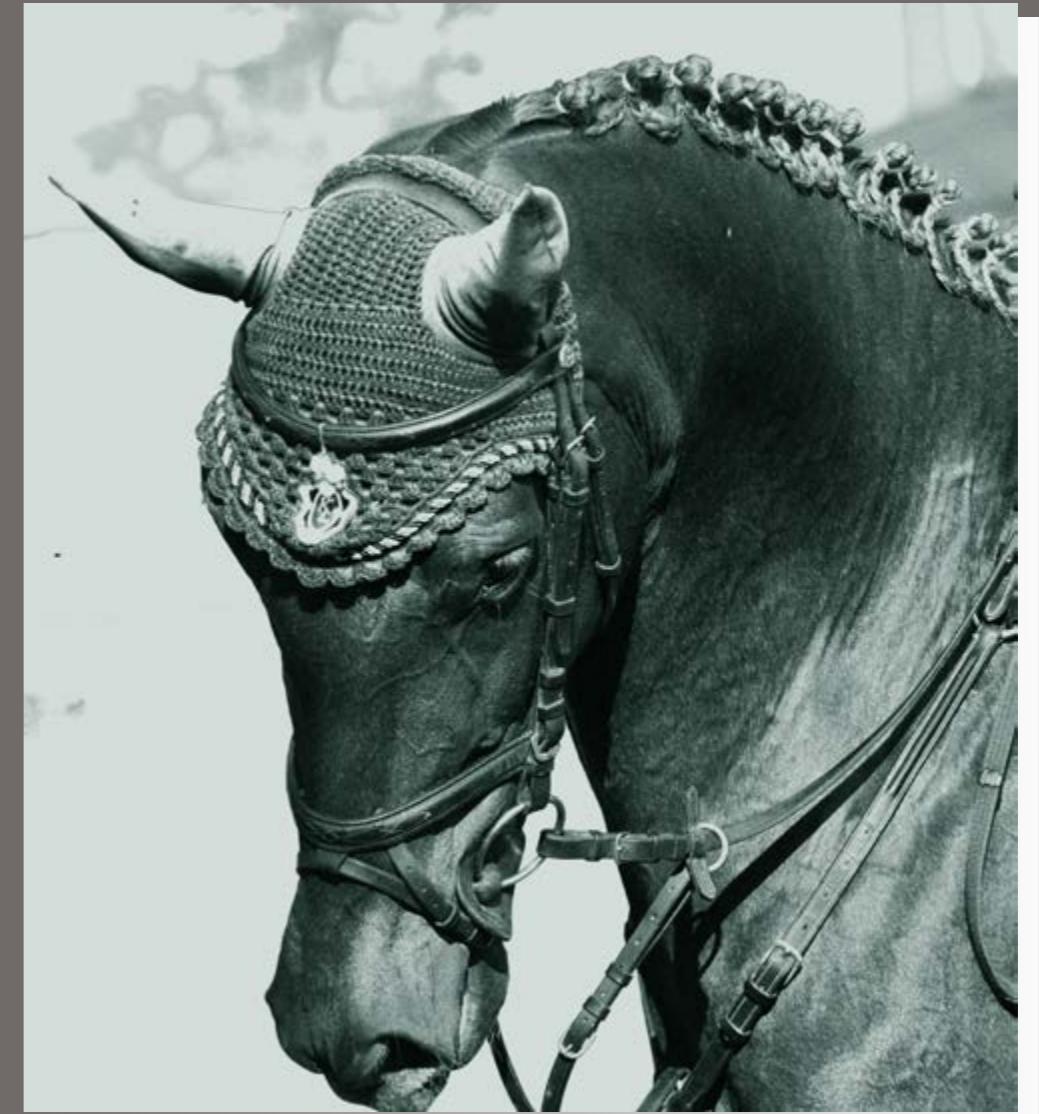
IN DEPTH WITH
MOHAMED HAMDY

By Nermin Marwan

WE SEE PERFECT SHOTS FOR THE HORSE RIDERS & WE WONDER ABOUT THE MAN BEHIND THE CAMERA; HIS LIFE, HIS DECISIONS, HIS CAREER, AND THE STORIES BEHIND HIS PICTURES.

HT IS HAPPY TO INRODUCE ONE OF THE BEST EQUINE PHOTOGRAPHERS IN EGYPT; MOHAMED HAMDY.





Tell us a little bit about yourself.

My full name is Mohamed Hamdy Mohamed Aly, born on the 29th of June 1982 in Alexandria. I hold a bachelor degree in Commerce. I've been happily married for 8 years to Safaa Barakat who's an architect and we have two wonderful kids Zain and Ezz. My nickname is Hamada Hamdy.

Why are you specialized in horse-riding photography?

I think the main reason that pushed me forward in getting specialized in horse-riding photography is being insanely in love with horses, and my experience with horse riding helped a lot in capturing the perfect shot.

Have you ever ridden a horse?

Sure, I started riding when I was 16, yet my

passion to horses was way before this age. Since then I have been riding on and off, hopefully will be back again when I lose weight.

Have you ever seen a rider and thought “this rider is going to be a champion”?

Mouda Zeyada, I have known him since he was 6 years old. He was so talented and now he is representing Egypt in the Olympic Games.

What is the challenge you always face in your career?

One of the challenges I face in my work is that I can take high-quality pictures with a poor-quality camera. Sometimes I send the pictures to friends outside Egypt and they ask me about the type of camera used, and when I answer, they are very surprised from the quality of the pictures.

What's the funniest/most weird moments happened to you in your career generally?

On the professional side, when someone falls off a horse, I become so terrified praying they'd be okay but at the same time I feel the shot I took is so unique and unforgettable.

Personally, one of the funniest yet touching moments I've ever experienced was in the operations room when my wife was giving birth to my first son, I was busy taking photos of every second, and once I saw him I had mixed feelings of happiness, fear and confusion.

What your current goal that you are working to reach?

To be an International photographer who covers the most important showjumping, it actually happened before specifically with horse time,

yet I look for unique shows to cover.

Are you keen on having a special style in photography? Something like a signature.

I think I do have my special signature in photography; riders are the ones to be asked if they actually can tell a photo is mine with no logo on it.

Tell us about a moment you were proud of yourself.

Whenever I see people happy with what I do, and the special moments I helped them memorize. Also, when I'm told how influential they feel about me in horse riding shows in Egypt.

Who has been your greatest support?

My wife has been the greatest support since



I decided taking photography as a career, she helped me a lot and was always been my backbone, some of my close friends also encouraged me a lot to start taking photography as a career rather than a hobby.

Who is the horse rider you like to watch?

Mouda, Nayel Nassar and Seif Abbas.

Have you ever thought to change your career?

I actually did, I used to work for 12 years in the airport for a ground service company, and finally took the decision to quit being a full-time photographer.

If you have to choose a super power, what would it be?

If eating without gaining weight is considered a super power, I'd definitely pick it

If you are given a chance to change something in this world, what would it be?

If I could give each and every orphan in this world a loving and caring family to raise them up, I'd never think twice to do it.

In your point of view, what makes you unique as a photographer?

As I explained earlier, maybe being aware of horses' techniques and styles helped me know how and when to capture the perfect moment.

What's your ultimate dream?

Just be happy, me and my little family. I hope I could do whatever makes each one of us happy.

What do you wish for your kids?

I only wish that both my kids would experience whatever makes them happy. I give them the whole freedom to choose what suits them best, of course under my supervision along with their mom's. But again, each one of them is unique in a way and I just pray to God they grow feeling how much love I have for them

What's your advice to amateurs that are thinking in following the same career?

Don't think of it as a career, have the passion to what you do. As the well-known proverb says "love what you do, so you end up doing what you love"

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A close-up photograph of a high-quality leather saddle. The saddle is made of light-colored tan leather with dark brown leather accents on the cantle and girth area. It features a traditional English-style design with a deep seat and a high cantle. The leather appears soft and well-made.

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