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THE LEADING EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



IN-DEPTH WITH THE SHINING STAR OF MRT 2022
ABDELKEBIR OUADDAR

A LIFETIME JOURNEY OF HAPPINESS

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VIEW POINT FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Dear Readers,

Welcome to yet another issue of Horse Times online edition.

A grand sparkle in the **Middle East** and **North Africa**, the **MRT** along with the **Salon Du Cheval of El-Jadida**. A superb mixture of competitive 4* along with a rich and unique culture of horsemanship that includes **Arabian Horses** as well as **Barb Horses** showing their skill of **Tbourida**.

The Moroccans have succeeded in introducing their equestrian culture to their younger generation and to the world outside with extreme dedication and precision.

On the other hand, there is no mention of the **MRT** without the dazzling star **Abdelkebir Ouaddar** and his dazzling partner Istanbul. Another match made in heaven by the genius **Marcel Rozier** following the old boy Quickly. **Abdelkebir** is not just a star but a true knight representing this sport and what it stands for.

Stay tuned to the **top riders'** forum at the **MRT** and their in depth remarks on the show.

CHI de Geneva with the **Rolex Grand Prix** representing the top level of the sport and the top ranking riders....

Taking a moment to breathe and reflect with more Equestrian literature and what makes a good horse.

Our usual **60 seconds** with Abdeslam Bennani Smires and a scope through this outstanding character and continuous success.

"Training Tips" takes us through how to be effective in sensing how to find our distance to the fence. **Equine Myths** and some highlights on common beliefs and general quickly conspicuous questions regarding horses and their innate behavior.

Dressage and dressage for jumping taking us through transitions and how that should be appropriate to the stage of training and physical fitness of the horse.

Horse painting being the most prevalent type of artwork. Our meeting with **Georgia Leigh** takes us to more depth in the life of the equestrian artists.

Read On and Enjoy...

Khaled Assem



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IN-DEPTH WITH

THE SHINING STAR OF MRT 2022

ABDELKEBIR OUADDAR

By Nermin Marwan

IT'S HARD TO INTRODUCE A DAZZLING STAR LIKE HIM, BUT IF I HAD TO, I WOULD SAY THAT WE ARE MEETING TODAY THE TRUE MEANING OF HORSEMANSHIP & ONE OF THE MOST HUMBLE RIDERS THAT WE MET; ABDELKEBIR OUADDAR.

WE CAN'T MENTION THE MRT, WITHOUT MENTIONING ABDELKEBIR OUADDAR AND ISTANBULL V.H OOIEVAARSHOF. HAVING BEEN THE FAVORITE DUO FOR THE MOROCCAN CROWD, SINCE THEIR VICTORY IN TETOUAN AND THE INCREDIBLE FEAT IN EL JADIDA!



First of all Congratulations on your amazing performance in The MRT 2022 and your winnings in Tetouan and El Jadida, and let's begin with them;

WINNING AT HOMETLAND MUST'VE BEEN AMAZING, HOW DID IT FEEL?

Nothing beats winning at home, with a crowd cheering and supporting you all the way to victory and singing the national anthem.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOROCCO ROYAL TOUR, STARTING AS A 1* SHOW AND BECOMING A 4* SHOW OVER THE YEARS?

The Morocco Royal Tour is no longer a second-class show, the competitors know that if they want to win a class, they have to bring their top horses. Even in the 1*classes, the young horses have to be competitive in order to win or be placed in a class.

The **MRT** is a really great show with a top atmosphere, everything is well organized from the moment the riders decide to come to the show (*all the documents for the sea crossing are done with the MRT staff and the forwarding agents*) until the return to their stables or Europe. The installations are super for the horses, the arenas are great and the grooms are super taken care of with good food during the tour! We have nothing to envy other international horse shows!

And at last, the concept is unique. The tour is organized in October while it's sunny in Morocco and not freezing or raining a lot. So the weather brings a plus at this time. The three shows are organized in three different cities, each one has its uniqueness and charm. *"It's not only about the sport but the Moroccan culture as well"*.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE STABLING; AND THE DETAILS AROUND IT?

In Tetouan, the horses sleep in real boxes and not stalls; they could almost feel at home. In Rabat and El Jadida, they are in stalls but they have a lot of space to walk during the day and with the sun all the Tour, we can't complain.

HOW DID YOU FIND THE COURSES ?

Each week we had different course designers, they adjusted to the level of the riders on the first days to have a memorable Grand Prix each week. The fences are atypic in Morocco with a lot of craft work, symbols of the cities and the country. We had the water jump during the Nations Cup in Rabat also.

Also the one star was a good formation for the young horses because the courses are very different each day and they can learn a lot.

HOW DO YOU COMPARE THE VENUES, DO YOU THINK THEY COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER?

The Tour is well thought out! Two big arenas and an indoor show to finish the tour and prepare for the European indoor season! Each one of the venues has a specialty: in Tetouan, we are inside the Royal Guard with an Andalusian feel, in Rabat the main event is the Nation's Cup and we could see the crowd cheering us from the moment we did

the parade and in El Jadida, it's during the Salon du Cheval where we have not only the jumping competition but all the others disciplines where the Moroccan and Arabian horses are the main focus!

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE QUALITY OF RIDERS THAT CAME TO THE SHOW?

As always, top riders came to this MRT of 2022. We had Simon Delestre for the 3 shows, David Will, Luciana Diniz, and Emanuele Gaudiano and these are only a few names.

IS THERE ANYONE THAT YOU WANT TO DEDICATE THIS WIN TO?

I dedicate all my wins to His Majesty The King Mohammed VI, May God glorify him, he is the owner of my horses and thanks to him I am where I am today. I owe him my sports career.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR START IN THE EQUESTRIAN WORLD AND WHEN DID YOU START RIDING COMPETITIVELY?

I started riding in Dar Es Salam with the actual president of the FRMSE, Charif Moulay Abdallah Alaoui when we were young. From that first ride on a horse, I did not want to do anything else in my life.

WHO WAS OUADDAR'S IDOL AS A YOUNG RIDER?

All the big names, Pessoa, Rozier. I went to ride with Nelson Pessoa when I was 20 something like that and since 2012 Marcel Rozier has been my coach. They taught me much more concepts than just riding a horse; like Horsemanship, the respect, and love of the horse and more.

BEING SUCH A PROMINENT RIDER; YOU MUST HAVE A PARTICULAR ROUTINE, WHAT DO YOU FOLLOW WITH YOUR HORSES?

I love to spend time with my horses, take care of them. I had this routine with Quickly to sit with him during his naps, now I do the same with Istanbul. I ride my horses a lot outside, to the beaches, the racetracks, and the forest of Bois-le-Roi.

I really like the work at home, all the efforts from the team, taking care of the horses, and spending time with my staff. One of my favorite activities is cleaning the stables, washing, sweeping the stables, and maintaining the arenas with my favorite engine: the tractor.

A difficult win that has special value to you.

That's a hard question! But El Jadida's win is one to remember! It's the first victory for Morocco since

the beginning of the MRT and I am very proud to be the one winning the Grand Prix Sa Majesté Le Roi Mohammed VI.

Also, the indoor is not an arena with a lot of space and you need to have your horse with you 100% and a horse like Istanbul is really sensitive, and to win with this horse this grand Prix has a special place in my heart.

I also have two wins that have a special place in my heart, it was with Quickly, the Saut Hermes in 2016, and the 1m55 in Stuttgart in 2013.

HORSES THAT YOU FELT WERE GREAT PARTNERS AND WHY?

I have fond memories with all of my horses, grand Prix horses, fast classes' horses, I love my horses very much and they gave me a lot of great moments during my career so I can't choose only a few names.

SOME PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS THERE DURING THE JOURNEY OF SUCCESS. WHO SHARED YOURS?

My whole team (*my trainer, grooms, riders, vets, farriers, the FRMSE*) and my family for sure.

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

Hard work pays off . But it's important to stay humble and keep a goal in mind.

WHO WERE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL COACHES IN YOUR CAREER?

Marcel Rozier for sure, we did more than 10 years together and it's still the one I go to after the course walk to watch the first riders (*if I can, depending on the startlist*). We always watch a few riders and see where the difficulties are in the course.

He's almost the first one to come to the stables at home! He loves horses so much, Grand Prix horse or not, he likes to watch the horses get their treatments after each show... And he's very nice with all my staff, he keeps on giving advice to the grooms and riders and that's what makes us a really good team.

WHO IS THE ONE YOU GO TO FOR ADVICE IN REGARD TO RIDING?

Marcel for sure.

Tell us a bit about your plans for the coming months.

I ended my year in Morocco with national shows for the horses before heading to Oliva and the main goal is the Qualification in Qatar in February. 🇲🇦





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MOROCCO ROYAL TOUR 2022 A SEASON FOR HOME WINS

By Nermin Marwan

THE MOROCCO ROYAL TOUR IS A REMARKABLE EVENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL EQUESTRIAN CALENDAR. OCTOBER OF EACH YEAR MARKS ONE OF THE EQUESTRIAN HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR; WITH THE MOROCCO ROYAL TOUR'S JOURNEY ACROSS THREE AMAZING MOROCCAN CITIES.



BEGINNING AT THE JUMENTERIE DE LA GARDE ROYALE IN TETOUAN, THEN CONTINUES TO THE CAPITAL OF THE KINGDOM, RABAT, AT THE MOROCCAN ROYAL FEDERATION OF EQUESTRIAN SPORTS HEADQUARTERS. THIRD AND FINAL STAGE, THE GRAND FINALE OF THE CIRCUIT TAKES PLACE DURING THE SALON DU CHEVAL D'EL JADIDA AT THE PARC D'EXPOSITION.



TETOUAN

Abdelkebir Ouaddar wins the CS14*W Tetouan!

The first weekend of the Moroccan circuit took place in the facilities of the Royal Guard of Tetouan. The exciting Grand Prix designed by Andrea Colombo ended with triumph for the Moroccan Hero Abdelkebir Ouaddar.

Forty riders were on the starting list of this challenging 1.50m CS14*-W Grand Prix on that epic day. Two rounds whose time was among the challenges at the beginning of the race that made only Twelve pairs qualify for the second round.

To win this Grand Prix of HRH Crown Prince Moulay El Hassan, Kebir had to be faster

than his nine other opponents in the jump-off, including medal-winning riders in major championships such as The Swiss rider Niklaus Schurtenburger (2nd), The French Simon Delestre who ranked the (3rd) by timing 47.32, or the Brazilian Olympic rider Luciana Diniz, who was making her return to international competition (4th).

But Kebir was inspired and was able to transcend his horse Istanbul which is not known for being the easiest.

The first stop of the Royal tour ended with amazing moments and the following Thursday riders traveled to Rabat for A CSIO4* as well as the Nations cup that was also the Olympic Qualifier which everyone waited for eagerly!



“This victory is magnificent because it is a horse that was very difficult, and I managed to get him on my side and today he gave me all his heart. “I dedicate this victory to my country and especially to my king because he is always behind me, I owe him my sporting career and I thank him infinitely. It is a gift for all Moroccans”. In Tetouan, we always have a great audience and I felt carried today. Can we say that this Morocco Royal Tour is already a success for the Moroccan rider? It started well”



© Jean-Christophe Bordas



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RABAT

Prix SAR LA PRINCESSE LALLA AMINA.

A second victory for Morocco in the Grand Prix 1m50 by El Ghali Boukaa!

The Prix SAR Princess Lalla Amina, second stage of the Grand Prix of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, was the most important individual competition of the CSIO of Rabat. The class consisted of two rounds. Forty riders were at the start, twelve only qualified for the second round on the course that was designed by Gregory Bodo who is recognized as one of the best course designers of his generation and was course assistant during the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020.

This Grand Prix witnessed great performance for all riders, ended by rocking scores from Barbara Schnieper from Switzerland & Escoffier who came in the Fifth Place with timing 42.41, The Moroccan Majid Djaidi & Mister d'Eclipse (4th), António Matos Almeida & Calypso de Kamelia from Portugal (3rd), Rodrigo Giesteira Almeida & Imposant van de Renger (2nd) also from Portugal and Finally The one and only **El Ghali Boukaa & A Kyss** ranking the first with timing 43.08.

El Ghali Boukaa has just written a new chapter in the history of this fabulous Moroccan circuit: "It's an incredible thing... incredible", El Ghali was unable to conceal his emotion. "I've been riding this mare for just over a year and she's been just great. I am very

happy, very moved, these are indescribable feelings".

The story of El Ghali Boukaa and A Kyss is that of a couple who quickly got along: "Its owner entrusted it to me just a year ago because his daughter was leaving to study. At the time, she only jumped courses at 1.25m. Then her other daughter took her over for a while to do slightly bigger courses, then she left in turn and this time I got her back for good and it's a huge chance. Today, she won a Grand Prix at 1.50-55m; she still has a step to take to reach the top level. I will go this winter to Simon Delestre where I love to train and we will see if she is able to cross this course".

THE NATIONS CUP OF RABAT

Germany won the 2022 Rabat Nation's Cup.

Ten teams at the start of CSIO4*W Nations Cup in Rabat.

The German team comprised of Sophie Hinners & Churchill 48, Nicola Pohl & Exelero 2, Rene Dittmer & Burlington Riverland and David Will & My Prins Van Dorperheide ; all of them made spectacular performance not only in the Nations cup but They were shining since the Beginning of the MRT.



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EL-JADIDA

Grand Prix SA Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI

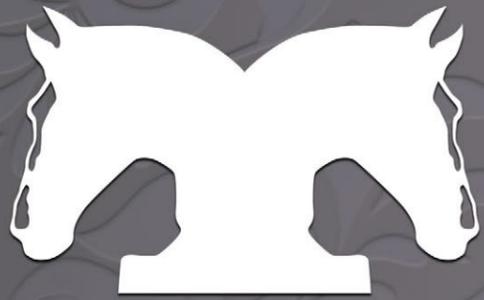
Ouaddar writes history!!

The favorite duo for the Moroccans, **Abdelkebir Ouaddar** and **Istanbull V.H Ooievaarshof**, since their victory in Tetouan, won the Grand Prix of His Majesty King **Mohammed VI in El Jadida** which designed by PeterSchumacher; a German course designer known for his courses at the **CHIO Aachen, MET Oliva** and other prestigious shows, to close the Eleventh edition of the Morocco Royal Tour.

By achieving a double clear round in 34.61 seconds, ranking

first ahead of The French Legend **Simon Delestre & I Amelusina R 51 (2nd)**, the German rider **David Will & Zaccorado Blue (3rd)**, **Niklaus Schurtenberger & Quincassi (4th)** and The Belgium **Jérôme Guery & Azaria Dinero (5th)**.

“On the personal track record, Abdelkebir signs his 5th victory on the Morocco Royal Tour, his second victory with Istanbull and for the first time in history a Moroccan rider wins the Grand Prix of El Jadida! If that was not enough, the Morocco Royal Tour sees for the first time in history its 3 Grand Prix won by Moroccan riders: Ouaddar in Tetouan, Boukaa in Rabat and Ouaddar in El Jadida!”



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MOROCCO ROYAL TOUR 2022

TOP RIDERS' FORUM

By Nermin Marwan

THROUGHOUT OUR COVERAGE OF THE MRT 2022, WE CHATTED WITH A GROUP OF THE TOP RIDERS WHO HAD GREAT PARTICIPATION IN THIS TOUR. HAPPILY, WE TALKED WITH ALI EL-AHRACH FROM MOROCCO, BARBARA SCHNIEPER AND ELIAN BAUMANN FROM SWITZERLAND, MANS THIJSSEN AND NIELS KERSTEN FROM NETHERLANDS, AND FINALLY THE GERMAN RENE DITTMER. LET'S HEAR THEIR OPINIONS ABOUT THE MRT2022;





Ali El-Ahrach

"I am delighted with The MRT2022 development; it is really good to move from 1 show to 4* show show because we can ride with the best riders in the World in order to enhance the level of the Moroccan Riders".*

The facilities are perfect for horses and riders in the 3 Shows, all the foreign riders were very happy with all the facilities in the 3 Shows.

Regarding the course: we had 3 different course designers so we had different and Very good courses, the fences were beautiful and different in the 3 shows.

Barbara Schnieper

"It was my first participation at the MRT; the Prize money was very solid. Besides that, the "special" shows between the competitions were very interesting to follow".

The stabling and the details around were on the whole very good.

The courses were versatile built and the fences were absolutely top.

The three shows in Tetouan, Rabat and El-Jadida really complemented each other because the distance between shows was not too far and the last was also an indoor.

The accommodation of the horses was good, sometimes a bit more space would be good. Concerning coming to the country: to be honest, we faced some long waiting times at the ferry and at the border, but once we crossed the border all was ok.



Elian Baumann

"In 2018, I decided to participate in the Morocco Royal Tour for the first time, I was very curious to how the tournament would be like. Now It has become one of my favorite tournaments and its amazing how well-organized everything is".

The stables are great. There is nothing to complain about. The non-slip floor throughout, bright boxes with windows. There are plenty of washing places available, especially in the immediate vicinity. The whole infrastructure is always very well maintained!

The courses were demanding technically, but always fair for horses and riders. They were beautifully designed and the jumps were very diverse.

All three venues are very attractive. The venues complement each other very well. The last stage probably does not suit all horses, as the transition from the two outdoor courts to the hall is not easy. I would also like to mention that the surfaces are very good and well maintained.

Regarding the logistics and transportation; we came from Switzerland. For our horses, it was a long journey. We made two stops, once in Barcelona and once in Estepona. So that the horses could relax overnight. At the port, we had very long waiting times, on arrival and return. In Morocco, at tournaments, everything is well organized. A big compliment to the organizer!



Mans Thijssen

"I was really amazed by how good and how beautiful the atmosphere was. Also the staff was really helpful and we never had to worry about anything, because of the help we had."

All the 3 shows were incredible; all the venues were amazing on all 3 weeks.

The stabling was really well organized, especially in Rabat and El Jadida, the tents were really big and that made it cool enough for the horse to feel even more comfortable. The stables were close to the ring also. And once again, the staff in the stables in all 3 weeks was there to help you at any moment you needed help. I think everyone was really happy with the stabling and how it was organized.

The courses were really good, the course designers were very well-known and very good, who made good use of all the variations in the fences.

All 3 venues were really very special and also had enough paddocks, lunge areas, hack areas, and so on to make it comfortable for riders and horses. Also, it was really impressive to ride there I thought, especially in Tetouan and El Jadida it was a really special experience because you don't ride in arenas like that so much with such a big crowd.

The accommodation of the horses was really well organized. Coming into the country at first seemed like a difficult thing but with the help of the show and some people around you, it wasn't that difficult at all. So we were really happy we made the choice to come to Morocco and we will be back for sure!

Niels Kersten

"It was my first time at the MRT; the venue locations are amazing. The footing is perfect at all 3 venues. Regarding logistics, it is definitely a challenge to organize the whole trip as we're from Europe, But when we arrived to Morocco, it was well organized and taking care of. As there's police escort to all the venues and a strict schedule".

The stables for the horses were very decent and well-located near the competition arena. Good Washing places and nearby waters.

Top quality fences from most of isitrade and some others. And also a very good course designer which is very helpful.

Even though, all **3 venues** are top quality but still a lot of difference with the last one being indoors.

The horses' accommodation; It's a whole organization to get there, but the horses are well-taken care of and it's definitely worth it to go!

Rene Dittmer

"It was the first time for me at MRT and I really enjoyed it. We had excellent conditions and everything was very well organized".

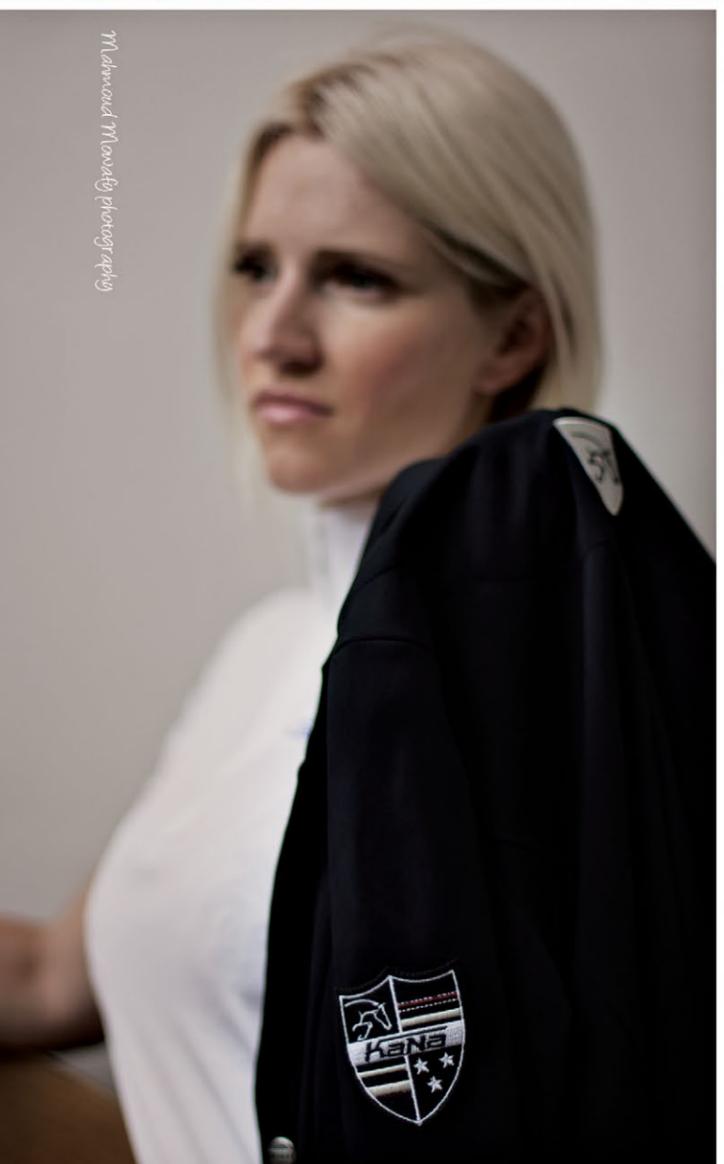
The stables were really good at each show. Water was always close by and hay, straw, and shavings were easy to access.

There were great course designers from Europe. It was nice that each show had a different course designer. The fences were really nice. I liked that some of them gave some Moroccan flair.

The show in Tetouan was my favorite. The second show in Rabat was also super nice since there was so much space. For some horses, it was difficult to come into an indoor arena in El Jadida after the first two shows. For me, it was great practice since I kept going with indoor shows back home and the atmosphere was amazing.

Regarding the horses, it was a long trip but everything was really well organized. The customs etc. were all handled really well. It was made as easy as possible for the horses. 🇲🇦

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Melanie Ward Photography


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AFTER TWO YEARS OF CANCELLATIONS
DUE TO COVID-19

THE SALON DE CHEVAL D'EL JADIDA

MAKES A REMARKABLE RETURN THIS YEAR

By Menna Loutfy



SINCE 2008, THE ASSOCIATION OF THE SALON DU CHEVAL HAS ORGANIZED THE SALON DU CHEVAL D'EL JADIDA IN OCTOBER OF EVERY YEAR, PRESIDED BY CHARIF MOULAY ABDELLAH ALAOUI AND HELD UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI IN MOROCCO.

Held under the theme of The Horse Factor of Territorial Development, the amazing exhibition aims to support and encourage to the development of the equine industry in Morocco as well as contribute to the promotion and protection of the Moroccan rich intangible equestrian heritage.

Over the years, the exhibition was able to impose its impact and presence within the professional circles as an unmissable annual meeting for horse lovers around the world and especially the **Middle East**.

A variety of fun activities related to the horse are included in the program, where high-level national and international competitions and exhibitions are organized: the International Barb Horse Championship, the Champions' Cup for Arab-Barb Horses, International Arabian Horse Show "A", and **The Moroccan Arab horses breeders' cup**.

And of course, the cherry on-top is always the **Grand Prix of His Majesty King Mohammed VI** of Jumping in the category of four stars, that is the third leg of the **Moroccan Royal Tour** which has a world cup qualifier that also attracts top world riders.

On this year's **2022** Edition, more than **100** exhibitors were in part of the exhibition presenting different countries, more than **1000** horses were part of the whole spectacle, that included jumping horses, tbourida horses, pure Arab blood horses as well as Arab Barb horses. The traffic was beyond expectations with **220k** national and international attendees.

"Since the organization of the first edition in 2008 and thanks to the efforts made, the Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida has become a major equestrian event for the enhancement and promotion of the equine sector in Morocco and an illustrious meeting to highlight our rich cultural heritage related to the horse, and an opportunity to express Moroccans' deep attachment to these noble creatures.





For professionals, the **Salon** is a great meeting point and exchange of experiences between the various actors in the equine sector.

Internationally, the **Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida** has acquired an indisputable notoriety. It is one of the most famous Horse fairs in the world. The richness of its programming as well as the opportunities for professional meetings that it offers will make it, once again, an unmissable event in the international equestrian calendar.

We will be very happy to welcome and to see again the professionals, the sponsors, the craftsmen,

the speakers, the riders of **Tbourida**, the riders of the national and international equestrian sports at the **Mohammed VI Exhibition Park of El Jadida** for another **Salon**, richer and more successful”_ **Charif Moulay Abdellah Alaoui - Chairman**

“The general organization of the event and its programming will, once again, highlight the rich equine cultural heritage of our country and the multiple uses of the Horse such as sports, festive or cultural levels.

The public thus had an appointment, once again this year, with competitions that represent, the reputation of the **Salon du Cheval d'El Jadida**, like the Champions' Cup for Barb Horses, the International Arabian Horse Show “A”, the International Jumping **CSI 1 *** and **CSI 4*W**, **3rd** stage of the **Morocco Royal Tour (MRT)**, as well as the **Moroccan Arab-Horse Breeders 'Cup**. The best Sorbas in the country are also present in the **Grand Prix of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Tbourida**.

This edition coincides with the inscription of Tbourida in the representative list of the intangible

cultural heritage of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization **"UNESCO"**.

Cultural and scientific aspects are not overlooked because the horse breed is also highlighted during many conferences, as well as in many fun games dedicated to children who receive particular attention from the Salon, given that the transmission of our equestrian traditions to new generations is one of the Salon du Cheval's missions.”_ **DR. El Habib Marzak - Commissioner** 🇲🇦

All photos by © Agence RB Presse



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

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EVENTS

CHI DE GENEVA 2022

By Laurence Lemire



FROM DECEMBER 7TH TO 11TH, THE BIGGEST STARS IN THE EQUESTRIAN SPORT MET ON THE SUPERB PALEXO TRACK, FOR THE 61ST EDITION OF THE CHI GENEVA. WHETHER IN SHOW JUMPING, EVENTING OR DRIVING, THE VERY HIGH LEVEL GAVE THE ENTHUSIASTIC PUBLIC A SPORTING SPECTACLE OF VERY HIGH QUALITY.

On the program, in addition to the Rolex Grand Prix on Sunday, there were major competitions, such as the final of the Top 10 Rolex IRC, won by **Hendrik Von Eckermann (Sweden)**. The 2nd place went to the Frenchman **Simon Delestre**, followed by **Peder Fredricson for Sweden**, **Mc Lane Ward (USA)** and **Harrie Smolders (NED)**. 60 riders, including the 10 best in the world rankings, who competed for the trophy of this prestigious event.

Besides the elite of show jumping riders, were added around thirty hopefuls under 25 who competed in 3 events, including the Land Rover Grand Prix on Saturday. In addition, the new team event - the Credit Suisse Coupe du Jockey Club - was able to set the mood on Saturday evening, with show jumping and cross country stars, not to mention a pony team!

Fans of indoor cross-country were not disappointed either; actually since its creation, this event... since its creation, this event has always been eagerly awaited by the public and presented by the Tribune de Genève. It allows you to savor a superb spectacle, with magnificent natural obstacles, in particular the famous lake for which this Radio Télévision Suisse. This little known discipline, however, ensures moments of jubilation and enthusiasm.

Indeed, the presence of the only Swiss qualified for the World Cup circuit, Jérôme Voutaz, created an explosive atmosphere in the arena. Finally, the most anticipated moment of this 61st edition of the CHI Geneva was undoubtedly the farewell of **Clooney 51**, the horse with the impressive prize list of Martin Fuchs, European champion and vice individual world champion. His last lap took place on Sunday December 11, just before the Rolex Grand Prix. Martin Fuchs shared his emotion with us in a poignant and sincere speech. The audience was on their feet to give the horse and rider a standing ovation.

Nobody will forget this particularly moving champion, which he will spend in Normandy (**France**), in the stud farm of high honor Luigi Baleri.

Finally, this prestigious equestrian event ended with the famous Rolex Grand Prix, the flagship event of the Geneva event. 40 riders were at the start of this long test of 14 obstacles and 18 efforts. 13 finalists competed in the jump-off, won by the American **Mc Lane Ward** in an incredible time of 38.43 s. **Martin Fuchs**, once again applauded by his Swiss public, won 2nd place, followed by **Shane Sweetnam (Ireland)**, **Gilles Thomas (Bel)**, and **Simon Delestre (Fr)**.

We are all waiting for next year's edition of this unmissable equestrian event that is the CHI Geneva! 🏆

All photos by © Philippe Lemire



EQUESTRIAN LITERATURE

A LIFE IN HORSE BOOKS

By Jessie Haas



“

“ANY CREDIBLE HORSE BOOK MUST ENCOMPASS THE FACT THAT HORSES ARE LARGE, INDEPENDENT-MINDED CREATURES WHOSE OPINIONS SOMETIMES DIVERGE FROM THOSE OF THEIR RIDERS,” SAID REVIEWER ANITA L. BURKHAM IN HER ARTICLE, ‘WHAT MAKES A GOOD HORSE BOOK.’ (THE HORN BOOK, JANUARY 2014) SHE WENT ON TO SAY, ‘JESSIE HAAS HAS PERFECTED THE KNACK OF BALANCING THE HORSE’S PERSPECTIVE WITH THE HUMAN’S WITHIN THE SAME NARRATIVE...’ I WAS GRATIFIED TO READ THESE WORDS, BECAUSE THAT BALANCE BETWEEN THE HORSE’S PERSPECTIVE AND THE HUMAN’S IS WHAT I’VE BEEN TRYING TO WORK OUT SINCE CHILDHOOD, IN THE STORIES I WRITE AND WITH THE HORSES I RIDE.



Growing up in rural Vermont, I read only horse books. The Black Stallion was my favorite. **But why were the horses I knew so different from the horses in stories?** How come Alec Ramsay, alone on a desert island, could ride The Black without even a bridle, **while my real pony Scamper defeated me at every turn?** Scraping me off on tree limbs, balking, bucking, biting, running away, rolling in something whenever I especially wanted his white coat to be clean, he taught me that horses have their own points of view, and that I should never take victory for granted.

Still yearning for that mystic union I'd read about, I persuaded my parents to let me buy a weanling filly when I was a young teen. I'd never trained anything in my life, but I'd read a lot of books. Josey had not read those books. We didn't kill each other. Eventually we came to understand each other, but until the end of her life at age **34**, I could never give her paste dewormer without help.

Growing up, most of my friends had horses, in the way Vermont kids did in the **1960s** and **70s**; animals of no special pedigree or training, on whom we were more or less turned loose to roam the

woods and fields together. Our parents usually had no idea where we were, and it didn't matter. The horses knew the way home. In college, having read every horse book I could find many times over, it dawned on me that somebody needed to write some more, and that somebody could be me. But I wouldn't just rewrite the books I loved. I would tell it like it is.

In my first book, Keeping Barney (**Open Road Media e-book**), Sarah loved the same horse books I did, and took on the care of a horse exactly like Scamper while his owner was at college. Selling just before I graduated, Keeping Barney hit home with many readers; I met one on Facebook recently, a mom who has goats and Morgan horses because of reading that book while she was growing up.

Keeping Barney was published forty years ago. Since then I've written forty more books, most involving that struggle/diplomacy between humans and horses. *"Bramble didn't think she should always do what Maggie wanted. Neither of them should be boss all the time. There should be some give and take."* (**Bramble and Maggie; Give and Take, Candlewick 2013**). I've also have trained



two more horses. It's hard to say that I've gotten better at either, because each book, each horse, presents unique challenges. My training skills have certainly improved since I learned about clicker training, which lets me say 'Yes, that's what I mean' to my horses by means of a delicious treat. I've incorporated positive training into many books now, including in my easy reader series, the Bramble and Maggie books. Even my books for American Girl, the doll and book company, involved clicker training, and Saige, Girl of the Year 2013, came with her own pink clicker. Clicker training seems to bring out the sense of humor in my horses—or maybe in me. All I know is that I go more slowly, and laugh more.

My other major interest is history. I've written about it in The Horselover's Encyclopedia 2nd Edition (**Storey, 2017**) and in Hoofprints: Horse Poems (**Open Road e-book 2004**). Horses changed the human story. Our modern world would not exist without their influence, yet most people have no contact with them, and no idea how they shaped our lives..

These days I own two Morgan mares, and ride

them on the farm where I grew up. They are descended from the heroes of two favorite books from childhood, Justin Morgan Had A Horse, and King of the Wind, both by the late Marguerite Henry. I still remember the thrill of realizing that she and I were colleagues.

In recent years I've begun writing stories from the horse's point of view as well as the human's. Bramble, a persnickety lesson horse, goes on strike, and her owner tries to sell her. Maggie has always longed for a horse, and falls in love at first sight, but Bramble is determined to be picky. *"Maggie seemed like a pleasant girl. But maybe there was something wrong with her."* (**Bramble and Maggie, Horse Meets Girl, Candlewick 2012**). Through four books, a horse who has her little ways and a girl who takes every question to her big horse book learn to trust each other. The Hungry Place (**Astra 2020**) follows Princess, a champion Connemara pony who lives a privileged but lonely life until she's abandoned to starve, and a girl named Rae with a different kind of hunger in her heart.

Writing from a horse's point of view feels tricky.



©Obe Virginia Lisai

How do I know what a horse would be feeling? But how does any writer know what someone else would be feeling?

We live in a time when identity is important for authors and readers. *I've written stories from a male point of view;* today I'd hesitate to explicitly speak for someone from another culture. But horses aren't going to be writing books of their own any time soon. If anyone is going to speak for them, it must be a human. I approach the horse point of view with humility and respect, informed by the exciting new science about equine senses and the equine mind.

That new awareness makes writing about horses, and even a gentle ride in the hay field, seem even more daring and fantastic. Horses see and hear and smell the world so differently than we do that they might as well be aliens. Yet they're not. They are our cousins, and sophisticated loving communication is possible. The more I learn

the more astonishing that seems, and the more interesting the challenges; riding horses, and writing about them. 🏠

Jessie Haas lives in Westminster, Vermont, USA, in an off-grid cabin in the woods with her husband and two cats. She's the author of 40+ award-winning books, and an environmental journalist. Learn more at

 www.jessiehaas.com



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60 SECONDS WITH

ABDESLAM BENNANI SMIRES

By Nermin Marwan

COUNTRY: MOROCCO

DATE OF BIRTH: OCTOBER 10, 1983

STAR SIGN: LIBRA

PROFESSION: SHOWJUMPER





Describe your typical practice?

I work mainly outside, in the woods or sometimes on the beach, to build up a good condition and keep my horses happy. The rest consist of flat work and small jumping courses or gymnastics to prepare them for the show.

Where is your favorite place for practice?

Definitely the Dar Es-Salam Equestrian Club in Rabat. The whole facility is perfect to keep horses and riders in the best condition.

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

I think the most important thing is to adapt your training to each different horse. It depends so

much on every horse type and we as riders should focus on this when we are planning the training.

What was the best advice you were given?

Straight-forward, and balanced.

What is your best achievement?

Jumping the WEG in Normandy was my biggest moment for sure.

What are the goals that you aspire to achieve?

The one and only goal at the moment is the qualification for Paris 2024 Olympics , next February in Doha.

Who has been your greatest support?

My whole family, from the beginning as a junior till today,

they have always been by my side. It's sometimes hard to leave for weeks, especially when I compete in Europe. This makes me even more motivated to reach my goals because everyone around me is involved.

What do you think about the MRT this year, how was your experience?

This MRT was very special for us. For the first time, Morocco wins the three Grand Prix. Abdelkebir Ouaddar and Ghali Boukaa have both delivered incredible performances.

How were the venue, the footing, and the organization?

After two years off due to COVID, the organization was even better. Always improving year after year, the conditions are perfect in each



of the three venues.

This year was also interesting because we had new course designers who made a great job as well.

What is your second favorite sport?

To be honest, we have no time as riders to have a second favorite. But if I have to choose one, definitely football.

What is your favorite genre of movies?

I like Tarantino movies or Guy Ritchie.

What kind of music do you enjoy listening to?

Electronic music.

What is your favorite book and who is your favorite author?

L Alchimiste from Paolo Coelho.

What is your favorite food?

Of course Moroccan.

What is the most memorable place you ever visited?

Dakhla is a real inspiration for me, its in the extreme south of Morocco, a mixture of desert and sea.

What are your strength and weakness points?

Strength: always believing that it's possible.

Weakness: sometimes too perfectionist .

What is the biggest challenge you have ever faced?

One year a lost a gold medal in the Moroccan championship for less than 1 pt, it was such a deception. Then I fixed to myself the goal to winning the title with the same horse and we did it the year after.

If there is something about yourself that you would like to change, what would that be?

I would like to be a little bit less easygoing.

If you weren't who you are today, what would you rather be?

Probably an architect, I like to be creative. 🇲🇦



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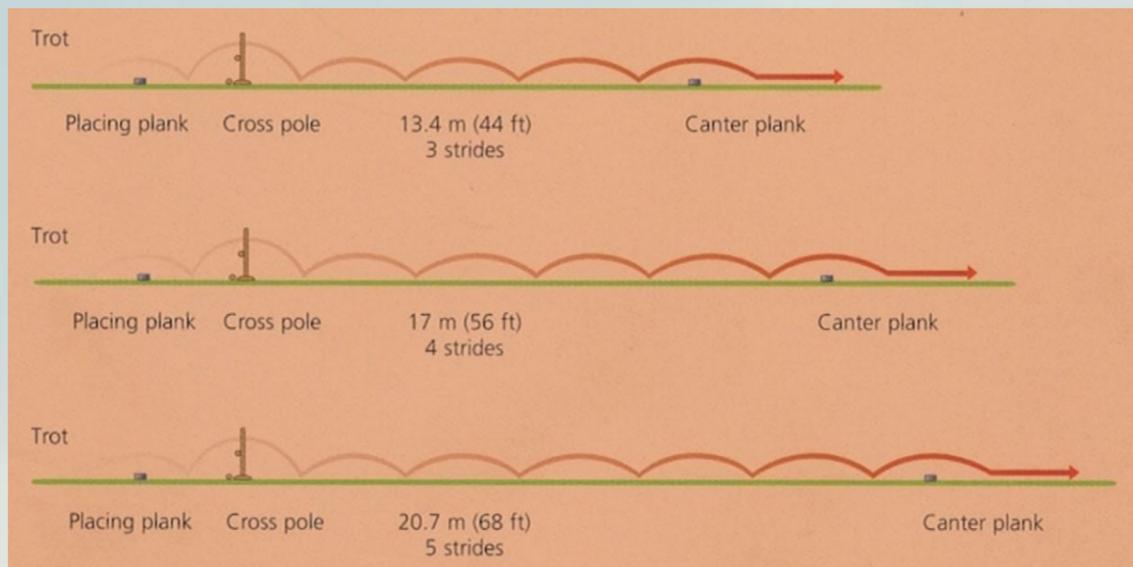
TRAINING TIPS

FEELING A STRIDE

By KHALED ASSEM

TO BE EFFECTIVE, A RIDER HAS TO DEVELOP HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE JUMPING EXERCISES AND THEIR EFFECT ON HIMSELF AND ON HIS HORSE. THE AIM HERE FROM THOSE EXERCISES IS TO ACQUIRE THE FEELING AND THE SKILL OF DETERMINING THE RIGHT TAKE OFF POINT TO THE FENCE.





Horse Riding Manual

When approaching a fence, the rider has to be aware of his horses' stride length and through his guided flat work, he should be able to stretch, lengthen or shorten this stride in order to be able to adjust easily his approach and accordingly his take off point. The rider has to be aware that there are other elements that help in finding the right take off point, and those are his pace, the balance of the horse, straightness and finally feeling the stride.

A good coach will develop his riders' feel of distance and accordingly take off point by firstly helping the rider develop harmony and feel on the flat by moving through his center and sensing what is happening with his horses' stride through extensions and collections while maintaining good balance.

Secondly, by introducing grid work/gymnastics to develop the rider's position and technique progressively.

Thirdly by teaching the rider to count strides where the rider would eventually be able to feel the end of each stride loading to the take off.

Some Info from "Complete Horse Riding Manual" Book by William Micklem

About the author:

Eng. Khaled Assem is a certified Level 2 PO Preliminary level 3 FEI trainer. He has been training Locally for over...30 years, competing internationally for over 15 years. He has been training locally for over 30 years.



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MEDICAL

EQUINE MYTHS

By Horse Health Programme

AS OWNERS AND PERHAPS COMPETITORS, WE HAVE MANY RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARDS OUR HORSES. THIS INCLUDES FEEDING, CARING FOR THEM PROPERLY, AND ADDRESSING ANY INJURIES OR ILLNESSES, BUT THAT RESPONSIBILITY DOESN'T STOP AT THE STABLE DOOR. WE ALSO HAVE WIDER RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN THE EQUINE COMMUNITY – MAINLY TO NOT CAUSE OR ALLOW HARM TO OTHERS THROUGH OUR OWN ACTIONS, OR INACTION.



EVEN THOSE OF US THAT ARE FAMILIAR WITH ALL THINGS HORSEY MAY STILL BE DECEIVED BY SOME COMMON MYTHS SURROUNDING HORSES. IT'S IMPORTANT TO IDENTIFY AND DISCREDIT MYTHS THAT HAVE ENDURED FOR YEARS BECAUSE IT COULD IMPACT ON YOUR HORSE'S HEALTH, HAPPINESS, AND PERFORMANCE.

Myth - Horses must be wormed every 4-6 weeks

The best way to control your horse's worm burden is to implement a targeted worming programme and monitor the worm burden through faecal worm egg counts and other tests available. Your horse can then be wormed appropriately if required. By only worming your horse when necessary to do so helps to reduce resistance to the drugs used in wormers and is better for your horse. Worming your horse with the correct dose for their bodyweight is also important to ensure its effectiveness.

Myth - A horse only needs to be vaccinated for influenza if it competes

Even if you don't go out competing with your horse, don't think it couldn't happen to you.

It's easy to overlook the importance of influenza as a disease as outbreaks are relatively rare. However the disease is debilitating for your horse and can be distressing for you to witness. Influenza is an airborne virus and can spread quickly and easily through a yard and as such your horse doesn't need to leave the yard to be at potential risk. Under favourable weather conditions influenza can spread up to 5km.

Myth – It's better to not pick out a horse's feet during wet, muddy conditions as the mud that is already in the hoof keeps the foot dry

A horse's hoof is a living structure that requires daily care to stay healthy.

It's important to clean dirt and manure from the underside of the hooves as well as lodged stones and small sticks that can cause discomfort and bruising. If



wet mud remains in place it will keep the sole and frog damp for an extended period of time. This results in the horn structures becoming soft and potentially not as resilient as they could be. In addition, by cleaning the feet out it allows the hooves to be checked for any signs of injury or infection.

Myth – hot and cold blooded breeds have different body temperatures

The terms hot, cold and warm blood refer to the temperament as well as the workload horses are best suited to, not their actual blood temperature.

All horses are mammals, and are scientifically classified as being warm blooded. Historically, hot blooded horses are generally bred for their speed, agility and intelligence. Cold blooded horses are exclusively draft horses, being large, muscular and sturdy with a calm temperament. Warmbloods are crossbreeds of cold blooded and hot blooded horses.

Myth – horses always sleep standing up

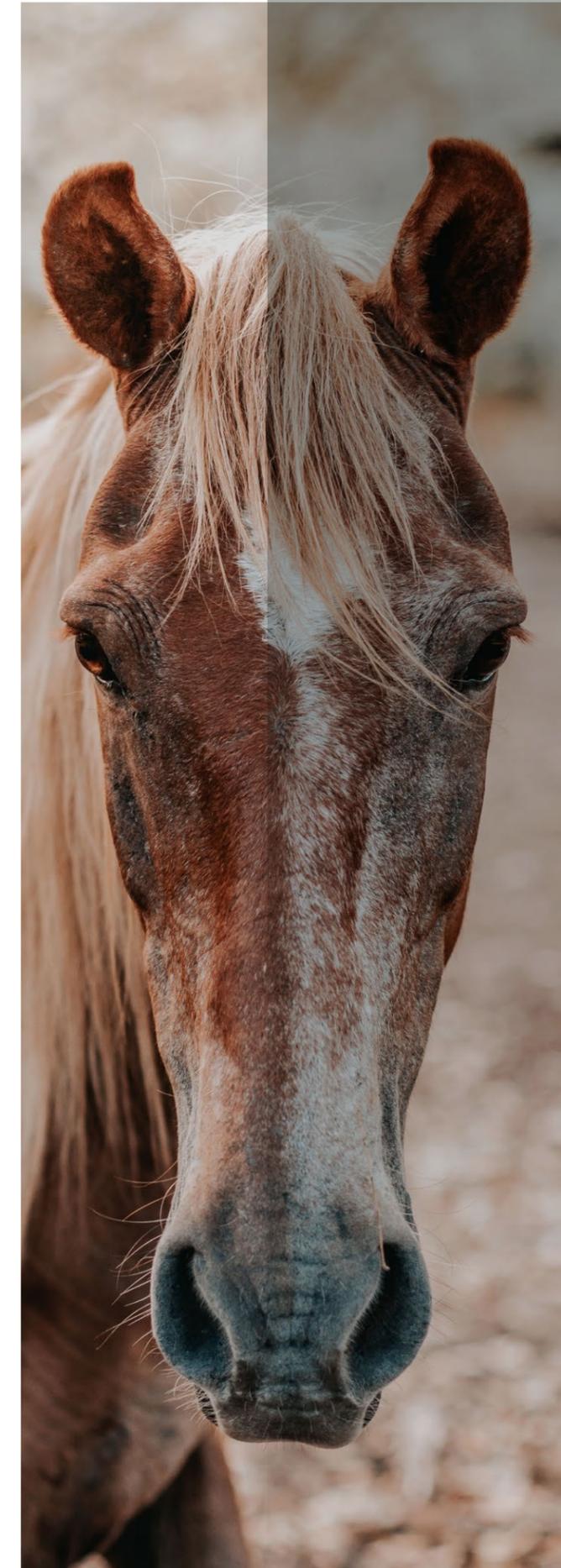
While horses do snooze while standing, they do also sleep while lying down.

When standing, a horse will doze as they have a functional aspect to their bodies, known as a "stay mechanism" that allows their muscles to relax without resulting in their bodies collapsing. However, horses do need to enter REM sleep, just like us and they can only do this when lying down, which as a bare minimum they need to do a couple of hours every four to five days. They'll do this more often when part of a herd, due to safety in numbers.

Myth – horses that don't leave the yard don't need to be vaccinated

Tetanus is a threat to all horses and a horse doesn't need to leave its field to be at risk.

Tetanus is caused by a bacterium (*Clostridium tetani*) which is found in the soil. The bacteria enter the body through wounds, with punctures of the sole of the foot a common route of infection. The bacteria then cause disease by producing toxins that affect the nervous system. In the majority of cases, tetanus is fatal. Other disease such as influenza, strangles and herpes may also be a threat depending on the disease risk to the yard where your horse is kept.





Myth – my horse's vaccination status makes no difference to any other horse

Vaccinating an individual horse will help prevent infectious disease throughout the population due to increasing herd immunity.

Although influenza is endemic in the UK, it's estimated that less than 50% of the equine population is vaccinated against equine influenza. All horse owners should be encouraged to both protect their own horses through vaccination and to play their part in halting infectious diseases in the wider equine community. Whether a horse ever leaves the yard or not, all horses are part of a herd – both those they live with and the wider equine population.

Myth – the best way for a horse to lose weight is to starve it

Horses need a constant flow of fibre through their digestive system in order to stay healthy and therefore no equine should be starved.

The dilemma with horses is that they are designed to eat and chew for at least **16** out of every **24** hours. Horses that need to lose weight must burn more calories than they eat and a target reduction of **1%** of bodyweight per week, or **25 – 30 kg** of bodyweight over **4 to 6** weeks is ideal. Exercise will be instrumental in helping to burn these calories. Regular weighing or weigh taping will be useful to show progress and also help with diet calculations since the forage/feed quantities will need reducing as the bodyweight decreases.

Myth - 30 minutes exercise a day is considered hard work

Assessing how much work your horse is doing can be tricky and the intensity is as important as the duration.

As the intensity is as important as the duration of the exercise, 30 minutes may actually only be light work for your horse. It is very important to feed appropriately for the workload your horse is doing to avoid any weight fluctuations.

Myth - A dental examination can be performed without a gag

The only way to effectively and safely examine and rasp a horse's teeth is with the use of a gag.

A gag will be used to allow a full visual and manual examination of the whole mouth including the teeth, palate, tongue, cheeks, bars and the lips. The majority of horses will tolerate this procedure although sedation may be required in some cases. Without the use of a gag it isn't possible to examine all of the mouth and as such, problems may be missed.

Myth - A horse's teeth will wear down naturally so only need to be examined if it is having trouble eating

Regular dental care is essential to our horses' wellbeing, to prevent disease and to ensure they are comfortable when ridden.

In the wild the horse's own chewing action generally wears his teeth evenly to prevent sharp edges forming over time. However, as it's now more normal for us to stable our horses and feed them concentrates, their normal chewing activity is reduced which can result in sharp edges forming, causing discomfort. Equally, expecting our horses to work in bridles puts other pressures on their mouths, which wouldn't normally happen in the wild.

How often routine dental checks take place varies according to the individual horse and will depend on age and any pre-existing conditions. A good rule-of-thumb is that the teeth should be examined at least annually but in some cases checks might be undertaken two or three times a year.

Myth – Horses should be stabled in bad weather

Horses are social creatures and prefer living in groups at pasture, even in poor weather.

Horses evolved as a social species living in open plains where running away was their primary method of escape from predators. Today, horses still possess an inherent aversion to isolation and confinement. Research has shown that horses with free access to both pasture and box stalls with bedding, hay and water; prefer pasture even during poor weather as long as some grass is available. While horses do need some protection from the elements - shelter, trees, barn – they don't require warm housing and have been shown to be able to comfortably tolerate low temperatures.

Myth - Putting a mare in foal will stop her getting laminitis

Putting a mare in foal may actually increase the chance of laminitis.

Although it was previously believed that pregnancy reduced a mare's chances of getting laminitis, experts now believe it can actually increase the risk. Mares with chronic laminitis are at a greater risk of lameness, particularly towards the end of gestation, due to the extra weight they are carrying. They may also be at greater risk of abortion or delayed foaling due to decreased blood flow to the placenta as a result of pain. 

TRAINING REFLECTIONS WITH MANOLO MENDEZ

PART TWO

By Caroline Larrouilh

WHEN WE SPEAK OF TRAINING USING VARIATIONS OF GAITS INSIDE GAITS, IT IS ALWAYS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT SHOULD BE DONE WITH THE DEGREE OF COLLECTION OR EXTENSION APPROPRIATE TO THE STAGE OF TRAINING AND PHYSICAL FITNESS OF THE HORSE.



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Different postures inside any one gait and different degrees of impulsion inside a lesson allows the horse's body to move its every joint, muscle, tendon and ligament without developing any kind of fixed musculoskeletal pattern. This means we are not training our horses to be stiff and crooked, but supple and straight.

We have to find the right tempo for our horse: too much energy/activity runs the horse down and damages its body. Not enough energy/activity causes the horse to become careless and indifferent and for its body to become disconnected.

Learning to recognize that a horse has a wide range of gaits that are healthy and desirable for training purposes, besides 'show gaits' or 'collected gaits', and learning to appreciate all of them and their role in helping build the horse's fitness and willingness, is one of the most important principles of

training for wellness.

So remember to vary the gaits, and the gaits within the gaits, and to vary the level of activity you ask of your horse. It is this gymnastic training that keeps the body healthy and makes collection without injury possible. In my experience, training in this manner teaches the horse that his rider is working together with him in true partnership and is aware of, and responsive to his physical and mental state. With each good ride, the rider is training the horse to become more trusting and confident. The horse can be confident that when the rider is asking for more effort, more collection or extension, more impulsion or expression, he won't be forcing him into a strict regime of frame, frame, frame and demanding the same high degree of difficulty for an entire training session.

The horse knows that when he

works in collection and extension that there will be pauses and varied postures and degrees of impulsion ahead. When a horse learns that the work is fair and the rider is attuned to its physical and mental wellbeing, it frees him from the anxiety of anticipating relentless pressure and demands in his training sessions. With his mind at peace, the horse is able to focus more fully on the rider and learn to listen to his aids.

As the horse becomes more attuned to the rider and more aware and responsive to the rider's increasingly refined aids, as its fitness develops, it is able to perform increasingly more refined work, in growing degrees of collection, without stress or tension. This enriches the relationship and partnership between both and can help transform a timid horse into a bold and willing one and a resistant horse into a calm, keen and attentive one.

I USE THE FOLLOWING SIMPLE PRINCIPLES WHEN TRAINING TO DEVELOP COLLECTION:

1. To allow the natural movement and oscillation of the horse's spine to take place, I follow the horse's neck and head movement in walk and canter. In trot, I keep my hands neutral but never fixed. Riding in such a manner ensures I do not block the horse.

2. When turning, I am very conscious of the change in the horse's ribcage and spinal alignment. I swivel my torso so that my shoulders mirror the shoulders of the horse.

This ensures I am not blocking the outside rein, instantly making the horse stiff by blocking its spine. As you can see in the photos, the ribcage opens and closes a little bit like an accordion when the horse is on a curved line. Blocking the outside rein creates tightness in the muscles that link the ribs

to each other (the intercostals). After a period of time, the horse becomes trapped in a corset of the rider's making. This makes suppleness an unlikely outcome of training.

3. I ride evenly in two reins. When the horse is blocked ever so slightly on one rein, it restricts the range of motion of the shoulder on that side. This in turn restricts the engagement of the diagonal pair's hind leg. This in turn makes the horse crooked. Riding evenly in two reins is absolutely essential to the development of an even, straight and balanced horse.

4. The horse's noseband, flash and girth must not be tight. Every time we shut down a joint, we impact every joint in the body. Thus, closing down the horse's TMJ impacts the entire spinal

chain. Because the spine dictates what the legs do, this affects the horse's movement. A blocked back leads to what is called a leg mover which is extremely undesirable in a sport which lists gait purity as its first requirement. Where the girth is concerned, when too tight, it blocks the horse's breathing but also its ability to fully raise its ribcage between its shoulders and let the withers rise which is a necessity when collecting a horse.

Simply by being aware and respecting the need for the horse's body to move in an elastic, fluid manner, varying the gaits and posture to avoid fixity and striving to develop the best rhythm and tempo for our individual horse, we are developing an athlete that will in time be able to offer collection without stressing either its mind or its body.

BIOGRAPHY:

Manolo Mendez was the first Head Rider, and one of six founding members of the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art. Based in Jerez, Spain, the school is one of the four classical schools which also include the Cadre Noir in Saumur, the Spanish Riding School in Vienna and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art in Lisbon. A master horseman with over forty five years of experience spanning classical dressage, doma vaquera and jumping, Manolo is dedicated to what he calls "Training for Wellness™", a soft, sympathetic and thorough training method which prepares horses physically and psychologically for each stage of training from training to Grand Prix and Haute Ecole. For more information and more articles visit:



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THE HORSE ARTIST

GEORGINA LEIGH

By Nermin Marwan

WHETHER WE CONSIDER OURSELVES ART AFICIONADOS OR NOT, IT IS PROBABLY SAFE TO SAY THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF US HAVE SEEN HORSE PAINTINGS AT LEAST ONCE IN OUR LIVES. THE TRUTH IS THAT PAINTINGS OF HORSES ARE AMONG THE MOST PREVALENT TYPES OF ARTWORK, THEREFORE IT'S POSSIBLE THAT IT HAPPENED MORE THAN ONCE.

THEREFORE, WE ARE HAPPY TODAY MEETING THE EQUINE ARTIST GEORGINA LEIGH TO HAVE AN IN-DEPTH LOOK ON THE LIFE THE EQUESTRIAN ARTISTS.





Can you give us a closer look into your background and how you became interested in making art?

I can't actually remember a time when I became interested in making art. I think I was born with a pencil in my hand! Drawing and creating has just been something that I have always done. I see a surface and I see potential for art..normally involving a horse related image. *Condensation on a window?* A great opportunity for a drawing in my opinion. *Go to the beach?* Let's make a galloping horse making its way to the surf. I think I was probably quite predictable to everyone around me, but I enjoyed (*and still do*), being creative about every opportunity possible.

My mum is also a quietly creative person, I have vivid memories of her painting beautiful delicate flowers and floral patterns onto fabric lampshades in the evenings, and I later found out that these were destined for Liberty in London!

After school, I went to Oxford to study a foundation in art and design, and then following this to Bath Art School for a further three years. Both are stunningly beautiful cities to study in. I feel very lucky for these experiences.

Specializing in equine art, you must love horses. What is your story with horses?

Art and Horses have been in my life, one way or the other, since

I was very small. I think if you love horses you are in love with the very essence of horses and not just in the animal itself. What horses give to humans (*who want to receive from them*) is just incredible. Horses are definitely a mirror to humans. They are so sensitive and intuitive to emotions. I swear my horse can understand my thoughts even before I can.

My mum first introduced me to horses as a child. She had horses that she kept in livery when I was very young and then later when we moved to an Oxfordshire village, we were able to keep them at home, which was idyllic, and also meant that we had space to get a pony for me! He was a very naughty Welsh Section A, and I nearly gave up riding because

he scared me witless with his cheekiness. After a while I gained confidence and balance and was able to ride him regardless of the shapes he was creating under me...he soon gave up when he realized I didn't care what he did anymore.

Today I have two horses and I treated myself to my dream breed when my third child was 2 years old, A PRE Andalusian. I have owned him now for over 10 years and I still feel like I'm learning more every time I am in his presence.

Do you have a muse that inspires and drives your creativity?

I guess my horse is my main muse. The whole reason I began focusing on painting horses was

my gorgeous PRE Andalusian. I needed to earn some extra money to pay for his keep, dressage lessons and competition entries and with the children still being small I had to come up with a plan whereby I could remain at home for them and earn money without affecting their routine and still be able to do the things I wanted to do. I started offering portraits of friends' horses at very low prices and built my name from there.

What enhances your motivation and do you paint every day or when the mood strikes you?

I paint or draw every day; speaking to clients and potential clients about their horses and their motivations for having a portrait created is a huge motivation for

me. I completely get their love for their horses and why they would want to commission an image to remember their relationship and special time with them.

Using my creativity to give back to the horse is also a huge motivation. I have always felt compelled to help charities and organizations and I am absolutely able to do that using my art creations. I have been involved in all sorts of interesting projects including a sculpture trail for World Horse Welfare, Holiday card designs for The British Horse Society and more locally I organized an impromptu auction of my artwork to raise awareness for Hannah's Willberry Wonderpony.



All photos by artist GEORGINA LEIGH

Do you have a favorite painting in your own collection?

This is such a difficult question to answer. Each painting I produce is so special to me. I try to ask as many questions as I can, or do my research into the horse, if it is relatively well known, so that I can get a better understanding of its character and abilities and also to see as many images of it as I can find, as I mainly paint from photographs that have been provided. So I think I get to know the horse as if it were my own, and spending so much time in the

process it's always a bit sad to say goodbye to them.

Do you have a story for any of the paintings that you would never forget?

Yes, a non-assuming watercolor. The painting is of a snowy early evening scene at my childhood home. It is an image of my late dad's horse Beau and her two babies Honey and Molly whom my mum bred shortly after my Dad passed away. They are keenly looking over the fence and willing us to bring them

in for their evening hay. The photograph was taken by my sister and I just had to paint it. A perfect and timeless winter scene of home, and memories of my very much missed Dad.

What was the most challenging period in your life?

If things were easy then everyone would be doing it right? There are constant challenges to running your own creative enterprise. It was particularly challenging starting out, juggling a number of

different hats. I actually spent more time marketing my art, rather than creating it which was frustrating sometimes, but I am finding that I need to do less active marketing nowadays which is just as well as I am being asked to paint more and more gorgeous horses for clients.

What is your goal or your lifelong dream?

In my fantastical made-up dream world, I would love to own my own equestrian themed gallery in the center of Bath (preferably in a Georgian building with large and quirky shop front windows and a welcoming bell at the door for good measure!).

Do you have a role model that inspires you?

I have lots. Franz Marc was the first artist I noticed who had a passion for representing animals in their own world. Another artist is Sir Alfred Munnings, he captures the light so beautifully and makes you feel that you were there too. 🐾

ART

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