

Evergreen



With a name that rings bells everywhere, coupled with fame and recognition, **Kabbary Hammad** is considered a turning point in the history of Egyptian show jumping. Sima Fares met up with him.

This was no ordinary interview. Everyone in Smouha was expecting his arrival and waited eagerly for him. He arrived soon enough well wrapped up in a long woolen coat, beret, scarf and all. Some chairs and a table were set up for him in his favorite place, a sunny area overlooking the stables and riding arena, and it was there we were made to sit. After a brief introduction and some drinks, Hammad lit up his first cigarette, gazed into the blaring sun and began recalling his legendary past.

When Agami was still a secluded desert area, overlooking the sea, 7 year old Hammad would rent horses and take them to the beach to gallop on the warm sands for hours. For nearly two years Hammad continued to spend his time that way, never once taking riding seriously. Then one day, he noticed a French man training riders in Smouha Club. Curious, more than interested, to find out what was happening, Hammad asked to join in. It took a mere 15 days of riding before the French trainer predicted a fruitful riding career for him. From then on, Hammad trained religiously and rode his way to fame.

He posed for a moment and sipped his tea, before lighting yet another cigarette in his chain smoking sequence. He asked for his pictures to be brought and within minutes the table was spread with photos of Hammad on different horses at various international competitions. Spoilt for choice, I gathered a couple of snapshots and waited for him to resume talking.

Dates of events and names of people and horses were all swimming in his head. There were so many of them along his course of life that keeping track of everything seemed like an impossible task. Of his favorite horses, Hammad preferred two. Mishmish, a white Arabian horse and Artos, a German gelding. He won many medals with both horses.

Hammad looked on eagerly at some rider having difficulty with his horse but did not comment. He let out the last puffs of smoke from his mouth, shook his head, smiled and continued talking.

Difficulties and hardships came hand in hand with his success, but that never let him give up. An obstinate character by nature, Hammad made sure never to surrender to any problems he faced along the way. Once when he was competing with Artos, the rein got cut and slipped through his fingers; Hammad insisted on continuing by guiding Artos over the fences with his body and voice. Hammad won first place that day. Certain moments have always lingered on in Hammad's memory: In the first show jumping competition after the monarchy years, President Mohamed Naguib personally delivered to Hammad the trophy for first prize.

Contrary to the common belief, Hammad is a gentle, kind and caring person. He was a tough trainer on himself, his sons as well as others and a true believer of strict instruction. Nevertheless, he achieved worldwide recognition and his name only begins to tell the legend of an Egyptian show jumper.



*Hammad with top international riders of his time
From right : Nelson Pessoa, H.G Winkler, Alwyn Schockemohle and Hammad*

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