



HAIDER R. AL ZU'BI  
"CONCEPT OF THE RULE...  
CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECISION"

By Khaled Assem

COUNTRY: JORDAN

DATE OF BIRTH: JANUARY 3 1969

STAR SIGN: CAPRICORN

PROFESSION: EXECUTIVE MANAGER OF BAHRAIN ROYAL EQUESTRIAN &  
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FEI REGIONAL GROUP VII OFFICE MANAGER - KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN  
FEI INTERNATIONAL JUDGE FOR SHOW JUMPING & ENDURANCE

HAIDER AL ZU'BI, EXECUTIVE MANAGER OF THE BAHRAIN ROYAL EQUESTRIAN &  
ENDURANCE FEDERATION (BREEF) AND MANAGER OF THE FEI GVII CHAIRMAN'S  
OFFICE IN BAHRAIN, HAS BEEN WORKING IN THIS FIELD FOR NINE YEARS IN  
BAHRAIN AND IN THE EQUESTRIAN INDUSTRY IN GENERAL FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS.  
HERE'S WHAT HE HAD TO TELL HORSE TIMES.

## BACKGROUND WITH HORSE SPORT:

I'm passionate about horse sport in general and in particular about show jumping and endurance. I'm a father of two children: Hasan five, Faisal four, and married to Rana, who copes very well with my long working hours, absence, and travelling for equestrian events.

I started riding in 1989 at a private farm belonging to a friend of mine while I was in college in Austria. I then began to ride again after returning to Jordan in 1992 at the Arabian Horse Club in Amman; mostly flat work, jumping, endurance, and hacking. Becoming more involved in horse sport, I also became a very active member at the Arabian Horse Club and Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation (RJEF) and for many years I was quite close to our beloved team captain, Hani Bisharat. He succeeded in pulling me into the sport by giving me more challenging tasks and responsibilities such as judging, stewarding and many other administrative jobs within the club. I travelled with the Jordanian team to many countries and gained a lot of experience while accompanying them. We often had long, long discussions and arguments about the concepts of the rules and consequences of the decisions taken, so knowing the rules and implementing/experiencing them became my new passion; at the time there were not many technical people involved in the sport in Jordan.

I was also very close to the endurance community in Jordan, so I started judging endurance races in 1994 with the support and under the patronage of HRH Princess Alia bint Al Hussein. I was also a rider/member in the Royal Institute of Arabian Horsemanship where we used to practice war and military skills and martial arts on horses; we had a couple of successful shows in the Royal Stables in Amman. I managed to lead the technical aspects of many international show jumping competitions in Jordan, and I enjoyed organising big events with all the complications with riders, national federations, horses, officials and sponsors. I was appointed by HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein and HRH Princess Alia bint Al Hussein as the Jordanian Show Jumping Team Manager in 2003 for the preparations for the Athens Olympic Games 2004 and the Olympic Games selection



▲ With Rodrigo Pessoa at the 2011 FEI General Assembly

Trials in Aachen Germany 2003.

Being a judge as well as the Jordan Show Jumping Team Manager for many years, knowledgeable of FEI Jumping and Endurance rules, was an added value for me so I became a consultant for the Royal Jordanian Equestrian Federation for many years.

I'd like to express a large amount of gratitude and respect to HRH Princess Alia bint Al Hussein and HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein, and of course to Hani Bisharat and Waleed Assaf who had the greatest impact in putting me on track to become an international show jumping and endurance judge as well as an equestrian professional.

### EXPERIENCES AS A JUDGE:

I have been judging show jumping sport since 1992 on the national level and since 1994 on the international level. In 2000 I became an International Candidate show jumping judge (Level 2) and a candidate for endurance, and I became an International Judge in 2003 (Level 3) in both jumping and endurance. I had the privilege to be nominated by the RJEF to attend my promotion course to Candidate International judge in show jumping in 2001 in Cairo, and my promotion course to FEI International Judge in Ankara 2003. I have been judging in most show jumping shows within

the Arab Region since 1998, and I officiated in many shows in Jordan and in other countries abroad such as Syria, Qatar, UAE, KSA, Turkey, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, and Germany. I have also officiated as a member of the Ground Jury in the FEI World Equestrian Games (WEG) in endurance in Kentucky USA, 2010, the Ground Jury in the FEI World Championship for Young Horses in endurance in Bábolna Hungary, 2012, and as an FEI foreign judge in Doha Selection Trials in show jumping for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The gathering together during any equestrian event for riders, horses officials is an experience by itself; however, the shows I judged in my home land Jordan are the closest to my heart, maybe because that is the place where I started. I am proudly satisfied with the progress and development of the sport in my country, and proud that many people of Jordan believed in me and had a lot of confidence in my abilities and I had really worked very hard to earn this credibility. At the same time, I love to be part of the major shows like the Olympics.

The Doha Selection Trials in Show Jumping (4\*) for the London 2012 Olympic Games held in 2011 was a great show and great success for me due to the high level of technicality and responsibilities I had to carry as a



▲ With HRH Princess Haya bint Al Hussein & HH Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa at FEI Group VII Meeting

foreign judge.

#### CHALLENGES FACED:

As the sport is developing rapidly, managing a sport federation and especially a busy equestrian federation while organising many big events in a very short season due to the climate constraints is not an easy job, it needs lots of patience and experience.

Some of the challenges are basically associated with day-to-day management such as training the staff to handle all aspects of the sport to be able to serve the equestrian community professionally. Working with the latest online technologies and data management systems such as the FEI Online Entry System, results processing, horse and rider registration system, and FEI Family, is also a very interesting challenge.

#### OTHER CHALLENGES SUCH AS PREPARING BUDGETS, FORECASTS, AND GETTING SPONSORS:

I faced many challenges at the beginning but I was lucky to work with a professional staff. We managed together to overcome many challenges such as organising mega-endurance and show jumping events, and Arabian horse shows with all the

attendant logistics and fine detail in a very sophisticated and efficient way.

Another challenge I really enjoyed was breaking the ice with the FEI Headquarters. I succeeded in working side-by-side with all FEI departments and staff, which I consider vital for all federations. I managed to do this due to my position in the FEI regional Group VII office, which opened the channel for me, so I personally knew most of the FEI staff and worked with them on a daily basis. I encourage all federations to do the same because some federations believe that the FEI is on another planet.....and I also encourage all federations to attend the FEI Annual General Assembly so they get to know all staff, managers, and directors in person.

The biggest challenge is the FEI Rules changes, revisions and amendments changing almost every year after the annual FEI General assembly, so I always make sure that I'm on top of all the changes not only because I'm a judge but because I work for the Bahrain Royal Equestrian & Endurance Federation and FEI Group VII, I feel I should always be ready to answer any question from any national federations within Group VII, as well as riders, organisers and media and to make sure they are fully aware of general, jumping and endurance rules as this might be challenging

sometimes when a rule is changed or updated.

#### WORKING WITH THE BREEF AND ITS PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT:

I moved to Bahrain after the 2004 summer Olympic Games in Athens, after I represented Jordan as team Chef De Equipe with our rider Ibrahim Bisharat who participated in the Olympics Games in show jumping.

It has been a privilege for me to serve as an Executive Manager for the BREEF from 2004 to date, and FEI Regional Chairman Group VII office manager with HE Sheikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa since he was elected in 2006. I also need to give him a large amount of gratitude and respect.

The renowned equestrian traditions of Bahrain were further enriched with the formation of the BREEF and my experience there has developed tremendously since the time I joined them. It was the unrelenting efforts and futuristic visions of the President of the BREEF, HH Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, which marked a new dimension as far as equestrian activities in the Kingdom are concerned.

During my tenure as a Manager for the BREEF and FEI Regional Chairman Group VII office, I have dedicated myself to promoting, communicating, mediating and coordinating the development and the activities of equestrian sport within the federation and within GVII Federations.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT OF EQUESTRIAN SPORT IN THE MIDDLE EAST:

In the Middle East, equestrian sports have grown substantially. It is a widely known fact that the Middle East is one of the fastest growing hubs of equestrian sport and, therefore, is one of the most promising locations for sport development too. Veterinary issues, horse transportation difficulties and subsequent quarantines are limiting the number of venues available and participation. There has been a lot of improvement on many fronts, but still some effort needs to be done to achieve the highest standards possible. In my opinion the remarkable development of sport and the equestrian activities in the Arab

Region still need to solve/ focus on the following issues:

**The following issues are still to be considered:**

- Identifying issues regarding the movement and transportation of horses and the distinction between sport horses and farm horses.
- Finding solutions for horse transportation and movement as well as veterinary quarantine problems.
- Continuing to work with governments while establishing a global communication network to develop and intervene when required, for solutions towards horse movement.
- Addressing the key decision makers worldwide to bring out common solutions in regard to the ongoing problem of horse movement.

**FEI WORLD CUP ARAB LEAGUE:**

In 2004 I was a believer/supporter, like many good friends in the field, that something had to be done at the level of FEI Group VII participating National Federations in order to consolidate and give direction instead of individually isolated and scattered efforts at organising international show jumping events. Until now, GVII National Federations were content to organise, to a certain success, some regional as well as Pan Arab events and the occasional commemorative CSI. A structured, credible and well organised set of events will surely provide impetus for riders as well National Federations to plan, prepare, organise and participate/compete. The FEI World Cup Series was thought to be the ideal venue, providing clear rules and regulations, a set Calendar and a WC Final most riders would cherish to be part of.

I witnessed the project “FEI World Cup Jumping - Arab League” after the accord of the FEI Regional Group VII participating members was presented to the FEI Jumping and World Cup Committees. The concept was accepted as well as the rules and regulations set to define how the League operates.

**ENDURANCE:**

Endurance is becoming an



▲ With HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa - King of Bahrain

increasingly popular equine sport in the Middle East. Ever since its start, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, Jordan, and KSA have seen a steep ascension of this fascinating sport. Unlike many other octane powered sports, the equestrian sport of endurance spans history - speaks all languages and transcends age and gender with a contagious spirit. It is family oriented. It demands dedication, courage, confidence and commitment. The recent UAE results in the individual and team gold titles of the Longines FEI World Endurance Championship at Euston Park in Suffolk, UK, where a total of 152 riders from 38 countries from all over the world lined up at the start-line to compete for the prestigious title, proved a great success.

**SHOW JUMPING:**

Show jumping is a relative newcomer to the region's equestrian portfolio and the consensus among the top Arab jumping nations is that the Saudis have been doing it the longest on an international level. Back in the 1980s enthusiasts in Saudi, Jordan, Kuwait, Syrian, Qatar, and Egypt were copying European course designs and borrowing race horses to jump them. In 1994, the Saudis formed a jumping federation and two years ago Saudi Equestrian, an organisation that acquires and owns show jumpers for the country's international riders, was established. With a top-10 team finish in the World Equestrian Games and a team Gold at the Asian Games last year, Saudi Arabia is blazing a trail

for Arab nations in international show jumping.

Riders from Saudi, Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE have now competed at many Olympics, while Abdullah Sharbatly's individual silver at the World Equestrian Games marks the first time a rider from the Middle East has reached the top four in a world championship. Arab nations, including the UAE, the team silver medallists at the Asian Games, are making great leaps in the international arena, but right now the Saudis are the ones to catch. They are said to have a budget of US \$ 100m (Dh367m) to acquire the best horses to carry them to the very top in the sport and the Saudi team Bronze at the London 2012 Olympics is proof.

I also must praise the significant evolution in equestrian sport in Qatar as they are organising the first CHI (multi discipline event) held at Al Shaqab from March 27-30, 2013. Al Shaqab – the event venue – is an equestrian institution in Doha, which is part of the Education City complex developed by Qatar Foundation for the people of Qatar. It is dedicated to the advancement of the Al Shaqab stud for Arabian horses, education and training in equestrian sports and industry.

I also must praise the huge and tremendous evolution in equestrian sport in Morocco, as they are also working very hard on a new equestrian institution in Rabat. 