

# TOP GUNS

## General Ahmed El Sawaf



Ahmed Mahmoud El Sawaf was born on Sept 22 in 1948 and had spent his childhood in Minya. He developed his equestrian passion and the pursuit of it at his grandmother's ranch. He was attracted to sports at a young age and pursued on cross-country, 'track' and swimming. He started to ride officially during his second year at the Police Academy under the supervision of Gen. Youssef Ghourab. He graduated in 1970 and worked at the Heliopolis police station where

he met Major Ihab Abdel Aziz who then offered him a job as a cavalry officer. He was immediately transferred to the Cairo Cavalry Department in 1971.

In September of the same year, he started training with Gen. Gamal Hares whom he still considers as his godfather in riding. His first horse was "Hares". Another one was "Mishmish" who was originally a local patrol horse.

His first shot at the National Placing took place in 1979 with his horse "Salam," after having been the Egyptian champion at the Modern Pentathlon in 1976, 1977 and 1978. His showjumping career in the A-Class began when he won second place in 1980, 1981 and 1983 while riding "Salam".

He was even more successful in 1984, 1985 and 1986 when he won first place at the Egyptian Championship A-Level class. 1984 was a pivotal year for Sawaf when he became the first Egyptian to buy a horse from the Dutch market. When in Holland, he bought young "Inchallah" who grew to become his top horse. In 1990, he bought "Mabrouka" and rode her in the Mediterranean Games that took place in 1991 in Greece.

General Sawaf was still on the top of the list in 1995 while riding "Caesar." His next top horse was "Green Wave" winning second in the Grade A in 1996, 1997 and 1998 where he gives credit to "Adham Hammad" who had placed first on his horse "Vision."

Lastly, Sawaf won first place in the A Class in 1998 on a young Dutch horse, "Touch Wood" who also won second in 1999/2000.

Other than his national victories, Sawaf also achieved international acclaim in countries such as France, Greece, Australia, Syria, Pakistan, Sudan, Libya, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. General Sawaf now is the Head of Training Administration at the Ministry of Interior.

**\*Why are you in this sport ?**

I love the horse and it was dedication that got me where I am.

**\*Would you recommend showjumping for the new generation ?**

No. 'Unless they have the means'.

**\*What area of the sport do you see yourself becoming involved in when your competitive riding days are over ?**

To train some riders like Gen. Gamal Hares.

**\*Are you worried about the future of the sport ? What improvements/changes could be made to insure the welfare of the sport ?**

There are some positive points. Possibility to compete abroad, increase in the number of riders and trainers.

**\*How would you describe yourself ?**

Very determined.

**\*What are the best things about you ?**

I like to learn new things all the time.

**\*What are the worst ?**

I hold on to my opinion.

I am too straight forward.

**\*What are your plans for 2000 - 2001 ?**

To be able to see my daughter Nahla at the top in her level.

## Karim Mounir Habashi

Born on April 21st in 1965, Karim started riding at the early age of 5 in the Gezira Sporting Club, then a subsidiary branch of the Suez Canal Equestrian Club. Mr. Mounir Habashi, encouraged young Karim to ride not minding the early morning JAWA motorcycle rides from their residence to the club by the local garage caretaker. Gradually Karim joined the team of legendary trainer Captain Ibrahim Abdallah at the Age of 13, with his first local bred star (Gameel).

Growing with an increased hunger for the sport, Karim joined the disciplined training of General Elwy Ghazy in the early 80's. Training with the General meant 6 o'clock in the morning on horse back, resulting in Karim's improved style and guts. Consequently, Mr. Mounir Habashi again made his mark with the purchase of Dalila, a German bred mare from Sakakini's yard, for young Karim to make regular appearances on the local show circuit.

Taking Sakakini and Adham Hammad as his role models Karim sought to improve his standards and traveled to train at Paul Darragh's yard. The genius training of Mr. Darragh quickly improved Karim's style and results.

The next stage of Karim's riding career witnessed many events. Having graduated from AUC with a bachelor's degree in Political Science, Karim had more time to devote to his riding. In 1987, Karim was destined to buy his super mount Domino, a four-year old Irish gelding, from Darragh's yard. Gradually, Karim and Domino progressed through the years, making their debut appearance in the A Class. In 1989 - 1990, the couple finished third following Hammad with his two unbeatable horses, Last Chance & Tarek Ibn Ziyad. Other notable achievements by Domino and Karim include regular standings in the National competitions (Class A), 2nd and 3rd place in Jordan (1992) and 1st in the international competition against the Libyans. Karim considers this his most valuable win with Domino as he was last to go in the jump off and competition was fierce. This victory is notable for both Karim and the Egyptian Team.

1994, was Karim's worst international experience riding his backup mount, Fireball, a 5-year old Irish gelding, representing the Egyptian team at the Mediterranean Games in Greece. Karim was chosen after the elimination of Adham Hammad with both his horses in the qualifications.

The "Irish Affair" soon came to an end, and Karim was supported by his club (Ferosseya) with two French-bred horses: Ascale and Celine de la Tour. Karim rode both French mounts in various national and international competitions, and he is competing with Celine in the A Class this season. Busy managing his own company, Itta Tours, Karim is still searching for his dream horse.

**\*Why are you in this sport**

I'm addicted to it.

**\*Would you recommend showjumping for the new generation ?**

Yes.

**\*What area of the sport do you see yourself becoming involved in when your competitive riding days are over ?**

Training.

**\*Are you worried about the future of the sport ? What improvements/changes could be made to insure the welfare of the sport ?**

Yes. To encourage sponsorship instead of letting go.

**\*How would you describe yourself ?**

Blunt and stubborn.

**\*What are the best things about you ?**

Being Blunt and Honest.

**\*What are the worst ?**

Not being able to shut up when I see something wrong.

**\*What are your plans for 2000 - 2001 ?**

Being in the Top 3 in my category and finding a nice young horse.

