

HORSE TIMES



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THE LEADING EQUESTRIAN MAGAZINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST



CELEBRATING SPRUCE MEADOWS AT 50
THE VENUE WHERE
SCOTT BRASH MADE HISTORY

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VIEW POINT FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear HORSE TIMES readers,

As the leaves begin to turn and the equestrian season reaches its vibrant climax, we launch a Fall issue that's a testament to the dedication, passion, and sheer variety of talent within the global horse community. Over the summer, our team crisscrossed the globe to chat with some of the sport's most compelling figures, and we paced them together for you here.

Our feature interview, 'Celebrating Spruce Meadows at 50', is a must-read, as the President & CEO of Spruce Meadows Linda Southern-Heathcott, shares her insights on the enduring legacy and monumental history of the event and venue as they celebrate their 50th anniversary. It's also the venue where Scott Brash made history.

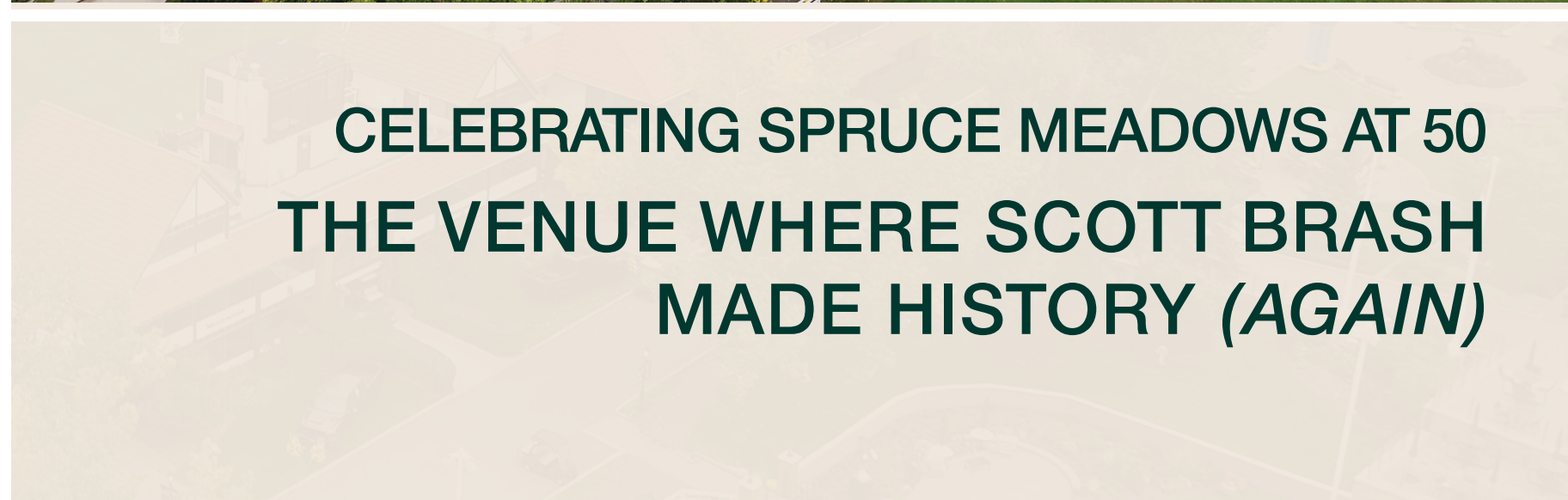
Beyond this milestone, prepare to dive into the minds of top international athletes, including a candid conversation with Trevor Breen, the focused philosophy of David Will and Darragh Kenny, and the switch from showjumping to racing with Ali Al Rumaihi. We also get junior insights from Arielle Allen, seniors Ali Al Ahrach and Abdeslam Bennani, the longstanding Chef de Equipe of the German showjumping team Otto Becker, and Stephan Barcha as they reflect on their competitive seasons. Furthermore, we hear from Niamh McEvoy on her journey in the sport.

We also explore the unique paths of Arab equestrians like Nora Al Jabr, the first certified female trainer in mounted archery and tent-pegging in Saudi Arabia, as well as Funoon Alhumaidan - an aspiring Saudi showjumping rider. And we get a fascinating look at the family bond and superstition shared by the Hughes Bravo sisters, Molly and Marta.

Issue 72 is packed with the voices that are shaping the sport today.

All the best,

Khaled Assem



(L:R) Marg Southern, Nancy Southern, Ron Southern & Linda Southern stand in front of the Riding Hall in the early days of Spruce Meadows



Nancy Southern, Marg Southern & Linda Southern

HAPPY 50TH SPRUCE MEADOWS!



1976 Original Volunteers – The Pegasus Club was established from the very beginning and has continued to grow. Here are the volunteers in 1976



WE'RE CELEBRATING THIS MILESTONE WITH THE WOMAN WHO LEADS THE WAY: PRESIDENT & CEO LINDA SOUTHERN-HEATHCOTT. GET HER EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS IN OUR OPENING INTERVIEW, AND THEN FLIP THROUGH OUR CELEBRATORY PHOTO GALLERY CAPTURING FIVE DECADES OF UNPARALLELED SHOWJUMPING MAGIC.



Jim Day wins the ATCO Cup in 1976, the trophy presented by S.D. Southern

German rider & Olympic gold medallist Albert Kley, was the original Riding Master at Spruce Meadows as part of the Spruce Meadows Horse Programme. Albert passed in 2016, but his teachings and methods are still part of today's Horse Programme



David Broome (GBR) & Queens Way Philco won the 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters' in 1981



Eddie Macken (IRL) aboard Carroll's Boomerang won the 1979 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters'



Nick Skelton (GBR) & Everest Dollar Girl won the 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters' in 1993

What's the one jump, past or present, that you feel best captures the soul and challenge of Spruce Meadows?

Spruce Meadows is about the history of the sport so the natural obstacles are the foundation of Spruce Meadows, but if I have to pick one jump I think it would be the bicycle jump. It's so pretty to look at, but don't be fooled - riders from all over the world have found it very challenging! It was shipped to Spruce Meadows in 1994, following The FEI World Equestrian Games at The Hague. It's one of our most famous jumps and it features on several new merchandise items we launched this year for the 50th Anniversary. It represents Spruce Meadows in a number of ways: it's beautiful but formidable, and it offers a touch of international flair in the heart of the Canadian foothills.

If your father, Ron Southern, could see all the non-equestrian events now - from football to concerts - what do you think he would be most surprised (or perplexed) by?

My father was always supportive of trying new things – he used to say – you will never know unless you try it. I think overall he would be proud and supportive of all the new initiatives, if anything he would be perplexed by how popular the Corgi Races are. We are all surprised! I love corgis, who doesn't? But none of us could have guessed what a hit they would be. It's something else to see the dogs all dressed up, sprinting across the rings (or, in some cases, refusing to budge).



Corgi Races at Spruce Meadows during the Tournaments are a fan favourite event outside of the showjumping



Ian Millar (CAN) & Big Ben were legends of the sport & had great success at Spruce Meadows. Big Ben retired in 1994



Linda Southern-Heathcott (President & CEO, Spruce Meadows) was part of the Canadian Showjumping Team at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta



A life-size bronze of Hickstead has a permanent home at Spruce Meadows commemorating the great horse after his passing in 2011



Rodrigo Pessoa (BRA) won the 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters' for the first time in 2000

Between your Olympic experience and your CEO role, which high-pressure moment felt like the bigger “Grand Prix” to win?

For sure having the stands full at the Spruce Meadows ‘Masters’ and the crowd being so quiet watching the \$5 million Grand Prix this year (the CPKC ‘International’, presented by Rolex), and then everyone erupting when we had a winner, it was the best! It was amazing watching Scott Brash (GBR) take the win, on the tenth anniversary of his Rolex Grand Slam of Showjumping victory, also here at Spruce Meadows in 2015. There were so many fairytale endings this year, from Vaclav Stanek (CZE) and Joseph Stockdale (GBR) setting a new 2.13M record in the ATCO Six Bar, to the British team winning the BMO Nations’ Cup for the first time in nearly three decades - in front of Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Edinburgh, who was visiting in her new capacity as Royal Patron of Spruce Meadows. You simply couldn’t make it up! But it’s always the Grand Prix of the ‘Masters’ that is the real nail-biter.

Beyond the prize money, what is the single most valuable intangible gift Spruce Meadows has given to Canadian showjumping?

Opportunities for the athletes to achieve their goals. It’s so important that athletes at all levels have somewhere to pursue their dreams - a place that inspires and drives them, and offers them opportunities they might not have otherwise. I truly believe, and have been told many times, there is no place on earth quite like Spruce Meadows. It’s certainly true that we are filling a gap in Canada and North America - there is simply nothing else like this. While, of course, the spotlight tends to fall on the professional athletes, we always try to prioritise the amateurs as well. My hope is that Spruce Meadows allows riders at all levels to share in the same incredible experiences.



Ian Millar (CAN) is a fan favourite rider at Spruce Meadows. Aboard Dixon, he won the 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters' in 2014

What's the long-term secret to maintaining a near 50-year relationship with your legacy sponsors? Is it all business, or is there a touch of "family"?

The relationships we have forged over the years are the secret. The relationships are everything and, yes, a lot of that does centre around our family. We have nearly 20 of these 'legacy' sponsors dating back to the very beginning of Spruce Meadows. These partnerships were first forged by my parents, Ron and Marg. Over the decades, me and my team have taken over, working diligently to maintain and build on these cherished relationships. The longevity of these sponsorships is a point of great pride, and appreciation, for me. There are very few sporting institutions in the world that can boast these types of enduring partnerships. Incredibly, in the last half-century, we have been able to award more than \$220 million in sponsor-funded prize money to athletes from more



Beezie Madden (USA) has had great success at Spruce Meadows over the years winning over \$6.1 million in prize money. In 2019, aboard Darry Lou she won the 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters'



In 2013 it was announced the Rolex Grand Slam of Show Jumping. Pieter Devos (BEL) and Candy won the 'International' Grand Prix at the 'Masters' that year to become the live contender



Martin Fuchs (SUI) is no stranger to Spruce Meadows crowds. The Swiss rider won back to back CPKC 'International' Grand Prix, presented by Rolex at the 2023 & 2024 'Masters' aboard Leone Jei



Known for her warm smile & exceptional talent, Tiffany Foster (CAN) is a crowd favourite at Spruce Meadows. She's had numerous wins & represented her country well in the BMO Nations' Cup at Spruce Meadows



In 2025 the ATCO Electric Six Bar record held by Jessica Kurten (IRL) was finally broken with two riders clearing a final fence height of 2.13m, Joe Stockdale (GBR) & Vaclav Stanek (CZE) – pictured here



In 2025 the ATCO Electric Six Bar record held by Jessica Kurten (IRL) was finally broken with two riders clearing a final fence height of 2.13m, Joe Stockdale (GBR) – pictured here & Vaclav Stanek



FEI Course Designer Leopoldo Palacios (VEN) learned from the great Pamela Carruthers (GBR) & continues to design courses at Spruce Meadows

than 60 nations, from the pony divisions to the world's top show jumpers. To celebrate the 50th Anniversary, I gave out 14 Linda Southern-Heathcott Scholarships of \$5,000 each to aspiring young riders who demonstrate a high level of daily care, responsibility and deep connection with their horses.

The famous "little red barn" remains. What's one brand-new, modern piece of the facility that you hope will become an equally cherished landmark in the next 50 years?

The 'Foxtrot at Spruce Meadows' restaurant – it is my gift to Spruce Meadows and my legacy project that I hope will endure the test of time. The restaurant was open during the 'Masters' for private gatherings with riders, sponsors and staff, and opened soon afterwards to the public. It's a beautiful three-story building on the north end of the International Ring with the most incredible views. There's a coffee shop called 'Café Foxtrot at Spruce Meadows', the restaurant is in the middle, with a gorgeous terrace on the third floor. It will soon feature a bar area, a bit like a speakeasy.



Team Great Britain consisting of Ben Maher, Joe Stockdale, Donald Whitaker & Matthew Sampson & Chef d'Equipe Di Lampard won the 2025 BMO Nations' Cup



Photo by Rolex

If you had to distill the entire 50-year history of Spruce Meadows down to one word, what would it be?

Resilience. There have been so many ups and downs over the years, but I'm so proud of how we have survived - and thrived. We've had snow during the 'Masters', economic fluctuations, and, most recently, Covid. It has taken until now to rebuild the venue and the team post-Corona Virus. But, like my parents before me, I wasn't going to let something like a global pandemic get in my way!

With the growth of urban Calgary, how do you ensure the venue, which started as a retreat, continues to feel like an escape from the city?

Continuing to be a place that encompasses, family, nature, entertainment, excitement, and a little bit of 'Camelot'. Our grounds crews are outstanding and I had so many comments this season about how the grass, and everything else, is looking better than ever. I love taking some quiet time to walk the grounds with my dogs, Tulsa and Norman, just to breathe the fresh air and take in the beauty, which changes with the seasons. We are also very invested in sustainability. We have implemented a number of initiatives--from solar energy and efficient water management to waste reduction and expansive tree planting. My son Ron now serves as Manager of Health, Safety and Sustainability at Spruce Meadows and I trust that he will do an amazing job leading us into the future. 🌱



In 2015, Scott Brash made history by becoming the first-ever rider to win the Rolex Grand Slam of Showjumping. This involved winning the Grand Prix at three consecutive Major shows: CHI Geneva, CHIO Aachen & the CP International, presented by Rolex, at Spruce Meadows

He also made history again in 2016 by becoming only the second rider to achieve back-to-back Grand Prix victories at the Spruce Meadows 'Masters' by winning the CP International for the second year in a row

This year, on Hello Jefferson, he won the CPKC 'International', presented by Rolex, on the 10-year anniversary of his historic Rolex Grand Slam victory, which marked his third win in that particular Grand Prix at Spruce Meadows. Brash took home \$1,650,000

Photos by Spruce Meadows Media - Tony Lewis - Mike Sturk - Bart Onyszko

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OTTO BECKER
**ON GERMANY'S PREPARATIONS
FOR CHIO AACHEN & THE FEI
EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS**

WE HAD A PHONE CONVERSATION WITH OTTO BECKER THE CHEF D'EQUIPE OF THE GERMAN SHOWJUMPING TEAM. HE SHARED HIS INSIGHTS ON THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR CHIO AACHEN AND THE FEI EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIPS. HE WAS EN ROUTE TO AACHEN WHEN WE SPOKE, PROVIDING US WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THE TEAM'S PREPARATIONS FOR THE EVENTS. THE RIDERS SELECTED TO REPRESENT GERMANY AT THE MERCEDES-BENZ NATIONS CUP ON THURSDAY THE 3RD OF JULY INCLUDE HANS-DIETER DREHER, MARCUS EHNING, SOPHIE HINNERS, CHRISTIAN KUKUK, AND JANA WAGNERS.



How are the preparations coming along for CHIO Aachen and for the Longines FEI Jumping European Championship in A Coruña?

We're quite excited. I am on my way to Aachen now. You must know, equestrian sport has a unifying effect because it brings together everyone; riders, grooms, fans and owners. While some people may be interested in the sport itself or perhaps not, when it comes to representing the country, it becomes something truly special. So, we are all set.

There's significant emphasis placed on Nations Cups; explain the importance and how their rewards and prestige differ from those of Grand Prix events?

Nations Cups are crucial in preparing for major championships. With my riders and their horses, I manage to observe and study the most about their abilities and how they may perform under pressure. Similarly, representing one's own country, stepping into the arena to ride as a team member, and the novelty of competing as a team is a wonderful experience.

As a trainer, how do you typically select the riders with their horses to compete at these events?

It's commonly important to make long-term plans for the jumping calendar given that the riders are busy all year long. To have good management of the horses. We try to develop a plan with the riders well in advance to ensure we know who is strong enough to compete in the 5* Nations Cup, and to also identify new combinations or young horses that we want to develop. We also focus on improving our younger combinations in the 3* levels. Keep in mind that it's also essential to stay flexible and be able to adapt when unexpected situations arise.

In my opinion, making a long-term plan is especially crucial for the top riders and horses—deciding whether they will participate in events like the World Cup or other ones. This planning makes a significant difference. For example, riders competing in the LGCT Global Tour might not be used as frequently in the Nations Cup.

How do you think riders handle the mental challenges of riding at home and meeting spectator expectations?

CHIO Aachen is a special show and Nations Cup night is a special night. We have 40,000 spectators attending and they generally expect German wins. Our selection this year is very experienced. We naturally want a win for the home crowd and also win a medal in Spain at the FEI European Championships. I think we have a strong team and they'll handle the crowds just fine.

You've been the trainer for the German team since 2009. How do you feel about the whole experience?

Well, I love the sport. But did you know I was a wine maker?! It was my passion along with riding and I am lucky to be able to make a career out of my passion. I have so much fun in the sport and during the shows. I enjoy working with the horses. The riders seem to like me and the Federation supports their choices. So, its all a very rewarding experience. 🍷

Photos by Stefan Lafrentz



Otto Becker and Co-Coach Ralf Runge



TREVOR BREEN ON HORSES, HEART & HARD WORK

FROM AN ALMOST POETIC BOND WITH HIS HORSES TO HIS UNWAVERING MINDSET DURING A DIFFICULT RECOVERY, IRISH SHOWJUMPING RIDER TREVOR BREEN IS A TOP ATHLETE WITH A UNIQUE STORY.

A SPORTSMAN KNOWN FOR HIS REMARKABLE SUCCESS AND DEEP CONNECTION WITH HIS HORSES, BREEN NEEDS LITTLE INTRODUCTION. IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH HORSE TIMES - WE DIVE INTO THE WORLD OF THE MAN, THE RIDER, AND THE HORSEMAN. HE SHARES HIS “NO PAIN, NO GAIN” APPROACH TO REHABILITATION, THE CHALLENGES AND REWARDS OF RUNNING A BUSINESS WITH HIS WIFE, AND THE SURPRISING SUPERSTITION THAT HAS FOLLOWED HIM FROM THE RUGBY PITCH TO THE SHOWJUMPING ARENA.



WHILE WE KNOW HIM AS A HUSBAND, FATHER, BREEDER, AND CHAMPION, DISCOVERING HIS PERSONAL SIDE AND WHAT TRULY MAKES HIM WHO HE IS, IS A VERY REWARDING EXPERIENCE.

You've had incredible success with horses that have a unique connection to you, from Adventure 'Addy' de Kannan with his one eye to Highland President, who was bred from a filly with the same affliction. How do you explain this almost poetic link you have with these horses?

I'm not really sure. I think, obviously, I have had both horses for a long time, which helps create a relationship.

I started riding Addy when he was just seven years old and continued with him until he was retired at 16. Over that long period, I got to know him incredibly well. It's the same with Highland President a horse we bred, so I've had him his entire life; he knows me as well as I know him.

Having that much time with a horse creates a fantastic connection. It's always going to be more beneficial than just buying or being sent an old-



er horse. While it's not impossible to build trust quickly, plenty of people do it and the longer you can spend with a horse, the more beneficial it is for both of you.

You've talked about the importance of being 100% focused on recovery after your neck and back injury. What mental exercises or techniques did you use to maintain that focus and push through the pain during your rehabilitation?

During my rehab I was always very brave and it was never a question in my mind that I wouldn't come

back. As soon as the doctors gave me the green light to move, I was ready to go. From the very beginning if they told me to take five steps, I'd take ten. If they said ten, I'd do twenty. If they asked me to walk to the end of the room, I'd go to the end of the corridor. I always pushed myself to do that little bit more.

What helped me was my love for rugby. I've seen other rugby players come back from injuries and the old saying, "no pain, no gain," really resonated with me. To recover well, you have to go through the pain and push your body to do the exercises so you can get everything working again as quickly as



possible. That was my mentality: get stuck in and don't quit. My attitude was to not only do what they said, but to do twice as much or three times as much as they asked.

You and your wife Caroline run Breen Sport Horses together. What is the most challenging and most rewarding aspect of blending your professional and personal lives in this way?

Being husband and wife in business together is both the most rewarding and the most challenging thing we do. We get to spend so much time together which is amazing, but it also means we have to

work hard to keep our professional and personal lives separate. We might disagree on a client's plan, a horse's training, or travel, and we have to put those business decisions aside without letting them affect our personal relationship or our family.

But when it all comes together it's just incredibly rewarding. We live and work in the same place, the stables are literally right outside our door. I love not having a commute or worrying about traffic. The challenge is making sure our work doesn't consume our personal space, so the horses don't



completely take over our lives.

Do the Irish conduct business deals over WhatsApp, particularly late at night, and is the kitchen/dining area a central hub for social and business gatherings, as it can be in some Middle Eastern cultures?

Well, we can make the deals anywhere! But yes, the kitchen is definitely and traditionally the hot spot of my house. It was the hot spot of my home when I grew up in Ireland in Cashel; that's probably a fair remark to make. Definitely. I suppose there are pros and cons in both of that.

You've won major titles, been part of winning Nations Cup teams, and have had a storied career. What is a specific, non-competitive moment with a horse that you cherish most?

One of the most touching moments was when Highland President arrived back at my stable after a two-hour drive. As soon as I opened the partition in the horse truck, he saw me and gave me a long look, as if to say, "Oh, it's you!" I gave him a quick hug before leading him out. He came halfway down the ramp, stopped, looked around, and took in his surroundings. He seemed to recognise exactly where he was and then walked directly to his stable. Once inside he had a big roll and a shake, and then came over to me, nuzzling into my side. It was a really special moment.

Looking at the next generation of showjumping riders, what is one piece of advice you would give them that has nothing to do with riding technique?

To be personable. To be a professional rider, you've

got to be personable and approachable. Honestly, the riding part of the job is probably only about 40% of what you do now. You need to be good at a lot of things besides riding, and I think the most important is being personable. People have to like you and you have to get along with them. You need to attract owners, sponsors, and investors, so it's a huge part of the job. You have to have great people skills, that's probably the main thing.

What's the biggest "rookie mistake" you see even the top riders still making?

Probably doing too much too soon with the horse. When a horse starts performing well, whether at Grand Prix or ranking level, some riders make the mistake of thinking the horse must stay at that level constantly. They push the horse too much too soon. I prefer to go up and down with my horses. Just because a horse jumps 1.60m once doesn't mean it has to jump 1.60m every time out. It's important to back off and give them some easier rounds at 1.30m or 1.40m. This way the horse doesn't feel like it has to bust its gut every single time it enters the arena.

Besides winning, what's the most satisfying moment you've ever had in the saddle?

I can't pinpoint one single moment but there are so many satisfying ones. It's when you're on a horse, trying to get them to understand what you want, and suddenly, it just clicks. They do realise it and they do it, and they do it well. That's a hugely rewarding feeling and it's why I do it. It's those small moments all the time, that keep me going. Some people might think it's boring, just riding in circles, but every day we're winning those small moments, getting those little bits of understanding from our horses. That's what's so rewarding.



If you had to switch to another competitive sport for a day, which would you choose?

Rugby!

What is the one thing you would change about the sport of showjumping?

I suppose that one of the biggest issues facing our sport today is the constant scrutiny and the frequent rule changes. While some of these changes are necessary, I disagree with certain regulations like the one concerning nosebands being too tight. We need these tools to control our horses properly. Professional riders always ensure that our equipment is fitted correctly and never too tight.



I'm concerned that the sport is headed in the wrong direction where we might eventually be prevented from using essential equipment. Some of the world's best horses might not be able to perform at their highest level without the right tack - and if that happens - the crowds won't get to see them do what they love to do. These horses genuinely enjoy performing; otherwise they wouldn't do what we ask of them. Many of them wouldn't be able to compete at the top levels without the specific tack that their riders know is best for them. While it's important to ban certain equipment that's genuinely harmful, I believe we need to be careful not to go too far. We must protect both the welfare of the horse and the art of horsemanship itself.

Given the significant scrutiny this sport is facing, do you believe it will still be around in let's say, the next 15 years?

I really hope so, but that's precisely what concerns me. There's a real worry that if certain people get their way, we'll be restricted in what we can do and we might even be prevented from riding at all. I would strongly disagree with that, but we have to be careful. These are critical moments. We need to preserve the right way of doing things, and as I said, keep horsemanship alive by monitoring correctly. I'm all for protecting the horse, but in the right way.

Do you have any pre-show superstitions or rituals that no one knows about?

Nothing major, but when I used to play rugby, I was overly superstitious. I've tried to get out of that but one thing that came from rugby that I still do is put my left shoe or boot on first. It's always the left one, and it's something that's still with me.



Which one horse you've always wanted to ride past or present?

I'd have to say it's Sir Milton for me. He was something special and I grew up watching him in awe. Him and John Whittaker; they were both incredible. So, yeah, he'd be the standout for me, really.

What's the funniest or most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you in the ring?

I'd say during one final at the Dublin Horse Show probably. I was still riding ponies and I was the last

rider to go in to a jump-off. The atmosphere was electric as it was right after the Agha Khan Nations Cup, so a massive crowd was watching, and it was all being broadcast on TV.

I was going in for the first fence but my pony slipped and I fell off before we even got to the jump. Luckily back then, you had a minute to get through the start, so I was able to get back on and continue. It was still probably the most embarrassing moment of my life.

If you had to trade places for a day with any professional athlete outside of equestrian sports, who would it be and why?

At the moment I'd probably trade places with Rory McIlroy. I love golf and in my spare time I play especially when I'm in the UAE. Actually, that's when I play most of my golf! It would be cool to see what a day in his life is like.

If you had to give one of your top horses a side hustle or a job completely unrelated to show-jumping, what would it be?

Addy was an amazing horse and he'd been an eventer before I got him and I always said I would have loved to have ridden him in a cross-country



event. He was unbelievable, he won the Eventing Grand Prix at the Longines Royal International Horse Show, the Hickstead Derby and the Speed Derby. I would have loved to have had a go around Badminton or Burghley on him just for the crack. I think he would have been unreal.

What's the most surprising or unexpected place you've ever found yourself in while on the road for a show?

I rode at a show at Posestvo Ugar in Slovenia years ago. It was a strange place. We were told there were bears in the woods just beside us so I remember thinking I'm not going to be straying down there! I'm too easy on my own as a target! It was a cool show and I really enjoyed it but it used to be quite hot in the day and then freezing cold at night as it was at the base of a mountain. Strange but a fun and weird place all at once.

When you're competing abroad what's one thing from home whether it's a food, a tradition, or a particular brand of tea that you absolutely can't live without?

When I go to Dubai every year I bring my Flahavan's porridge with me. I have porridge for breakfast every morning and I always bring my own with me because you can't find it there. That's definitely the thing I have to have.



What's the most memorable or unusual fan interaction you've ever had? Was there a particularly unique sign or something a fan said that has stuck with you?

At CHIO Aachen this year, I had a great interaction with a lovely couple in the elevator. The wife - a huge fan - looked at me and said, "Oh my God, you're Trevor Breen!" She couldn't believe she'd met me. The hotel restaurant was full since neither of us had a table as such they suggested a nice Italian place they knew down the road. Eventually we all ended up having dinner together. As it turned out, they'd flown all the way from South Africa just for the show, and they were huge fans of the sport - and me! It was a really neat experience and the conversation was hilarious. Her husband was a massive rugby fan, so we spent most of the night talking about that, while his wife kept steering the conversation back to horses. It made for a very interesting, and very memorable dinner.



* Trevor was born on 8 March, 1979.

** He's the father of Mia and Ollie, and younger brother of Shane.

*** He sustained a severe injury in May 2024 during a fall from his horse Highland President at the Longines Grand Prix of Hamburg and suffered three fractures in his lower neck and back.

****Some of his best results in 2025 include:

- 5th place on Highland President, Rolex Grand Prix of Brussels,
- 1st place on Kannoon Blue, CSI2* Chepstow Big Tour Grand Prix
- 3rd place on Konrad Obolensky, Minerva Stakes Dublin Horse Show
- 3rd place Team win on Highland President, Falsterbo Nations Cup
- 7th place on Luidam's Warrior, STAWAG-Prize, CHIO Aachen
- 2nd place on Luidam's Warrior, Clipmyhorse.tv Master's Trophy, Hickstead
- 1st place Team win on Highland President, Longines League of Nations, Abu Dhabi

Photos by Equisportif & Helen Cruden



ABDEL SAÏD

I'LL GET THAT PORSCHE
NEXT TIME



RIDING HIS GELDING CALVARO, SAÏD WAS PLACED SECOND AFTER CLEARING THE JUMP-OFF IN 39.13 SECONDS AT THE CSI3* PORSCHE GRAND PRIX IN A CORUÑA IN JULY, TAKING PLACE ALONGSIDE THE LONGINES FEI JUMPING EUROPEAN CHAMPIONSHIP. DANIEL COYLE OF IRELAND, WHO CLEARED IN 38.56 SECONDS, WON A PORSCHE MACAN ON TOP OF THE PRIZE MONEY.

So, Abdel Saïd needs no introduction, to us he's like the Ted Lasso of showjumping sport, but we'll give it a go anyway.

A distinguished rider in the international showjumping scene, Saïd has had an unwavering and relentless will to work hard and propel to the highest levels of this competitive sport. Years in the making, he's earned recognition not only for his exceptional talent but also for his entrepreneurial approach to the sport. Beyond the arena, Saïd is a sharp businessman, always seeking new ways to elevate his craft and inspire others. And despite his impressive achievements, he remains remarkably humble and gracious, exemplifying the true spirit of a champion both in and out of the saddle.

Currently ranked 13th in the Longines FEI World Rankings, he operates a successful horse stable in Belgium that offers coaching, management, and horse sales. Calvaro is one of his notable horses, who took him to win the CSI5* Classic at the Winter Equestrian Festival in Florida. He also rides Aperge Du Ru, a mare that contributed to his victory at the Falsterbo Horse Show Derby this month.

His champion mare Bonne Amie took him to win the LGCT of Doha and the LGCT CSI5* Eiffel Challenge in Paris. Bonne Amie also supported Saïd, representing Team Belgium, in finishing on zero faults during the Nations Cup of La Baule, earning second place. And together they also contributed to the Belgian

Team at the Longines FEI Jumping European Championship, helping them become European Champions.

How does he keep going?

Which rider would you turn to if you had a technical issue?

I have a few riders I enjoy talking to. I'd say Daniel Deusser, Steve Guerdat, Cian O'Connor and of course, I work closely with Marcus Beerbaum.

Which rider or who do you believe has significantly improved their game and deserves your respect?

Honestly, I think all the top riders today have worked incredibly hard to reach their level, and I respect that. In particular I admire riders who have maintained consistent success over time, such as Guerdat, Ludger Beerbaum (when he was competing), and Marcus Ehning. Their sustained success at the highest levels is truly commendable.

Where do you see yourself in July 2026?

I aim to be in the top 10 and will be working diligently to achieve that.

Tell us five things about Bonne Amie?

She's powerful, extravagant, feisty, has a strong character, and is a natural winner.



How challenging is Santiago Varela's course?

They aren't particularly scary. Santiago is a very meticulous course designer who carefully considers every element. He's fair and thoughtful in his approach.

If you become a European champion, whom would you like to see on the podium with you?

There isn't one specific person. I believe it's a team effort, so I would love to share the podium with my horses and the entire team.

Any regrets?

Not really.

How do you handle success and failure?

There's a lot to learn from both. I believe failure offers valuable lessons. I try to remain balanced during both triumphs and setbacks because dwelling too much on failure can delay the process of improvement.

How do you stay motivated after achieving so much?

The journey is long and there's always more to accomplish. I use my successes as motivation to keep pushing forward. To reach the top of this sport isn't easy. I focus on developing a deeper understanding of my horses and maintaining their health because excelling in both is essential and far more sustainable than winning at the expense of their well-being. 🐾

Photos by Helen Cruden & Christophe Taniere



MOLLY HUGHES BRAVO

IRISH WIT MEETS PORTUGUESE PASSION



READ MARTA HUGHES BRAVO'S INTERVIEW ON PAGE 90



IN THE SHOWJUMPING WORLD - SOME FAMILY NAMES CARRY A CERTAIN WEIGHT. BUT FOR SISTERS MOLLY, MARTA, AND MATILDE HUGHES BRAVO, THAT WEIGHT IS LIGHTENED WITH A HEALTHY DOSE OF IRISH WIT AND A WHOLE LOT OF PORTUGUESE PASSION.

RAISED IN A FAMILY STEEPED IN EQUESTRIAN EXCELLENCE, THIS TRIO IS PROBABLY A WONDERFULLY CHAOTIC YET FUN MIX OF COMPETITION, COLLABORATION AND, CONSTANT BICKERING. WE CHAT WITH NUMBER ONE, MOLLY, WHOSE JOURNEY WAS ALMOST PRE-DESTINED. SHE TELLS US

ABOUT GROWING UP IN A “HORSEY HOUSEHOLD,” THE UNIQUE DYNAMICS OF COMPETING AGAINST YOUR OWN SIBLING, THE SPECIAL CONNECTION SHE HAS WITH THE HOME-BRED HORSES OF HUGHES HORSE STUD (HHS) - AND - LIFE ON THE GROUND FROM HER GO-TO PRE-COMPETITION MUSIC TO THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTIONS PEOPLE HAVE ABOUT SHOWJUMPING.

With both of your parents being showjumpers and your mom running a breeding farm, it seems like horses are truly a family affair. What is it like growing up in such a horsey household, and was there ever any doubt you would follow in their footsteps?

I am very lucky to have grown up around horses and to have been around such great horse people. I always dreamt of becoming as successful as my parents. There are of course many highs and lows so there are always doubts but I try work past them and look at the positives.

You and your sister Marta are young, talented riders. How do you balance being competitive with each other while still being a supportive sister?

My sister and I are four years apart so we didn't compete much against each other in pony shows which probably was a good thing as it would have been very competitive between us. But now as we are older, I think we just want the best for each other and we try to support and help each other as best as we can.

The family business, Hughes Horse Stud (HHS), is known for producing top-quality horses. Do you feel a special connection or a certain pressure when you ride a home-bred horse?

I love riding our home bred horses. I am interested in the breeding side I find it very interesting to see off spring from horses I rode or my parents rode and see similarities come through them all and see how it all works. I don't feel too much pressure riding home bred horses I try just take the positive side of being fortunate enough to be able to ride quality horses that were bred at home.

What is the best piece of advice you have received from your parents, either about riding or about life in general?

Don't mind or care about what other people think.

As the older sister, do you feel a responsibility to guide Marta, or do you learn from each other?

I try help Marta with whatever she needs we both learn from each other.



You've had some significant wins with HHS horses, like HHS Mercedes. What makes a specific horse a "partner" for you in the ring?

I think it's very important that you and your horse trust each other in the ring, I believe that's really important for a good combination.

Looking ahead, what are your major goals for the next five years? Is there a particular championship or event you dream of competing in?

In the next five years my goals are to keep producing a nice string of horses and also compete at the highest level I can and be successful at it. I always dreamt of jumping in the 5* classes at the Dublin Horse Show, so hopefully I can try to achieve that dream in the future.

If you could have a superpower that would help you in showjumping, what would it be?

To be unbeatable.

What's a song or artist you love to listen to before a competition to get in the zone?

Hypnotize - 2007 remaster by Notorious B.I.G.

What is the biggest misconception people have about showjumping?

That it's a glamorous sport. Although it has glamorous aspects the majority of it is not at all glamorous.

Besides riding, what's a hobby or interest you have that might surprise people?

I used to play hockey which I really enjoyed and I want to eventually get back to playing again.

If you could trade places with any other athlete for a day, who would it be and why?

I would like to trade places with Laura Kraut for the day because I would love to jump her mare Bisquetta and especially would have loved to trade on the day she won the Rolex Grand Prix in Dublin this year having had the only clear round. The feeling must have been amazing.

Tell us about an embarrassing moment you had at a big show?

Just recently I was jumping a small class on a young horse and I asked my friend to video by the side of the arena and when I jumped number 12 I thought I was finished so trotted over to her to get my phone back when she told me that I still had one more fence to jump! 🐾

Molly was born on 19 July, 2002 and represents Portugal

Her best horses and results are:

HHS Tokyo: 5th at the 150m Plusvital Premier Grand Prix, 2025

HHS Orchidee: 4th at the 145m CSI2 Premier Grand Prix, 2025*

HHS Mercedes: won the 7yo Ashford Farm Grand Prix at the Sunshine Tour, 2024

HHS Ice Flo: winning the 7yo Final at the Millstreet International Horse Show and the Final in Valkenswaard and the Boomerang Final, 2024

HHS Catwalk: winner of the Portuguese Junior Championship, 2020

ALI AL RUMAIHI

FROM THE ARENA TO BEYOND



Hit Show, owned by Wathnan Racing, won the Dubai World Cup in 2025



IN THE OTHER REALM OF SHOWJUMPING IN THE MIDDLE EAST, OLYMPIC ATHLETE ALI AL RUMAIHI HAS CARVED OUT A LEGACY AS A TRUE GENTLEMAN OF THE SPORT, CELEBRATED AS MUCH FOR HIS UNPARALLELED SKILL AS HE IS FOR HIS INTEGRITY AND QUIET DIGNITY IN THE SADDLE. COMING FROM A FAMILY WITH A DEEP DEVOTION FOR HORSES, HIS WALL OF FAME INCLUDES NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS FROM REPRESENTING QATAR NUMEROUS TIMES ON THE WORLD STAGE. KNOWN FOR HIS “RING CRAFT” AND STRONG HORSEMANSHIP, HE HAS DEMONSTRATED A SPECIAL CONNECTION WITH HIS HORSES, INCLUDING NAGANO, GUNDER, AND MOST OF ALL, HIS REMARKABLE RAVENNA.

HE’S MOVED ON FROM COMPETITIVE SHOWJUMPING TO SERVING AS THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE QATAR EQUESTRIAN FEDERATION AND, AS OF JULY 2022, HE MANAGES THE WATHNAN RACING STUD FARM, OWNED BY SHEIKH TAMIM BIN HAMAD AL THANI, RULER OF QATAR, AND IS A MEMBER OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE FOR THE GLOBAL CHAMPIONS ARABIANS TOUR (GCAT) DOHA LEG.



Ali on Ravenna

Ali, you’ve worn so many hats. We’re trying to keep up! How did you transition from being a competitive showjumper to taking on administrative and management roles?

My responsibilities started to grow and eventually became my primary focus, which led to a natural shift away from the demands of being a top-level competitive rider. There was simply not enough time to train.

What lessons did you learn from your late father, Yousef Al Rumaihi, and how have you applied them to your diverse experiences with horses?

My father was involved in racing, showjumping, endurance, and Arabian horse breeding. Being exposed to all these different things and witnessing his passion for horses was the biggest lesson.

Your early experiences led you up the competitive showjumping ladder, from a team gold at the 2006 Asian Games in Doha to representing Qatar at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. What fuelled your competitive spirit and will to win?

I always had this feeling of wanting to give back to my country in the best way I could for all the support they give us and their vision for all sports in Qatar.

In 2022 you made a major career move, taking over as Stud Manager at Wathnan Racing. What prompted your transition from “16 hands high to two feet on the ground”?

First and foremost, I hope I live up to the expectations for this position. It was always my plan after the Olympics to move into the administrative field and gain knowledge and experience. I also wanted to pass on the knowledge I’ve gained to future generations.

By the way, how did Wathnan get its name?

Wathnan is the name of a famous and celebrated Arabian stallion owned by Al Thani family. The horse, known for his kind and eager disposition, was named “Wathnan,” which means “a crown of ears,” a reference to his pricked ears, the classic sign of a horse that is your friend.



Lazzat, owned by Wathnan, won the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee Stakes at Royal Ascot in 2025

You've always had horse breeding in your blood. Has this been something you've wanted to focus on for a while?

Breeding is simply something I love to do.

Breeding matters and breeding shows, in particular with the singular successes of Wathnan Racing since its inception in 2022, straight out of the gate earning "leading owners" recognition in 2002 and 2023 seasons and winning the very prestigious 2023 Royal Ascot Gold Cup and Queen's Vase. How did you feel when Courage Mon Ami crossed the finish?

Courage Mon Ami was only purchased a short while before the 2023 Ascot, and while we knew about his success in shorter races, we weren't sure how he would handle the longer distance. The horse showed us his true ability, and we were thrilled with the win. It was truly an unforgettable victory, as was winning the Dubai World Cup this year with Hit Show.

Do you think such successes have more to do with breeding or training, nature or nurture?

It's a combination of all of that, plus making good choices and having some good luck. Do you miss competitive showjumping?

Yes, I do, especially when I attend a showjumping competition.

Of all the magnificent horses you've been around, which one would you like to own if you had the chance?

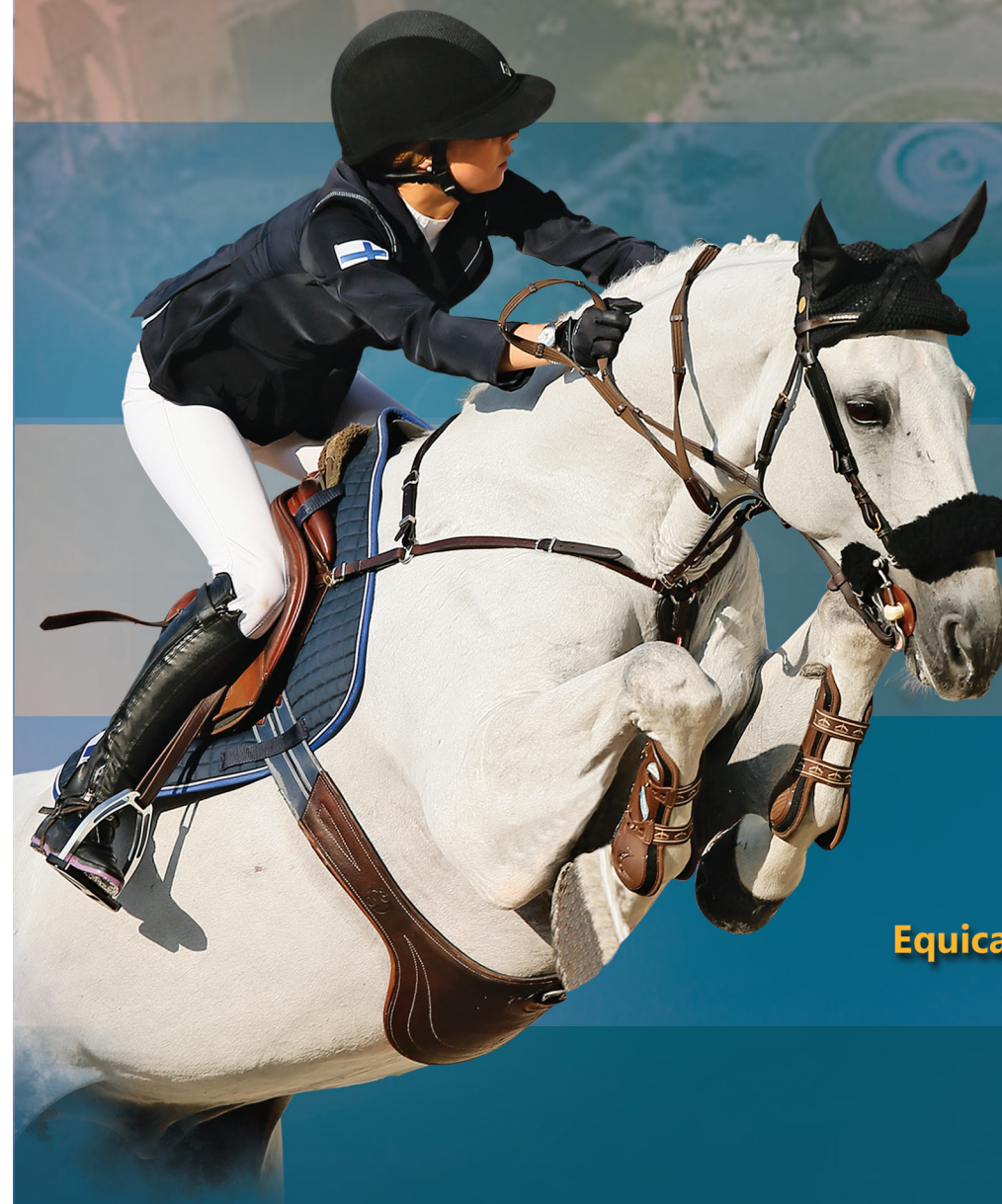
That's a difficult question because there are too many magnificent ones to choose from. But my old mare, Ravenna, will always be close to my heart.

Al Rumaihi won the 2006 Asian Games individual gold medal with Negano. He rode Ambinete 55 at the 2010 World Equestrian Games. He won the 2011 Pan Arab Games individual gold and team bronze with Ravenna 323, and was placed 16th individually and 9th in the team competitions with Gunder at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

Ravenna photo by Jacques Toffi

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A full-page photograph of Abdeslam Smires, a Moroccan show jumper, celebrating on his horse. He is wearing a teal jacket with 'MOROCCO' on the left chest and a Moroccan flag patch on the right sleeve. He is also wearing a black helmet, black gloves, and a white shirt with a red collar. He has his right fist raised in a celebratory gesture. The horse is brown and wearing a teal fly sheet. The background is a blurred outdoor arena with spectators.

**ALL SMILES FROM
ABDESLAM SMIRES**

**MOROCCO'S 2025 NATIONAL
SHOWJUMPING CHAMPION**

READ ALI AL AHRACH'S INTERVIEW ON PAGE 120



ABDESLAM BENNANI SMIRES IS AN INTERNATIONAL SHOWJUMPING RIDER NOTORIOUS FOR HIS INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM AND RADIANT SMILE THAT LIGHTS UP MANY ARENAS HE COMPETES IN. WITH A PASSION FOR ARABIAN HORSES AND A DEDICATION TO SHOWJUMPING, SMIRES (PRONOUNCED SMEERS) HAS ESTABLISHED HIMSELF AS A PROMINENT ATHLETE IN THE MOROCCAN SHOWJUMPING COMMUNITY. HIS UNWAVERING COMMITMENT AND SKILL CULMINATED IN A MOMENTOUS WIN AT THE MOROCCAN NATIONAL SHOWJUMPING CHAMPIONSHIPS THIS JULY, WITH HIM CLINCHING THE 'HM KING MOHAMMED VI GRAND PRIX' TOP SPOT. WHETHER IN THE SADDLE OR AMONG FANS, HIS WARM PERSONALITY AND SPORTING SPIRIT ATTRACTS EQUESTRIAN ENTHUSIASTS ACROSS MOROCCO AND BEYOND.

Abdeslam, so you're Morocco's National Showjumping Champion?

Yes, I am! I won the National Showjumping Championships for seniors!

How's the feeling?

It's fantastic, but I'm cautious about celebrating too much. I lost my father just three weeks before the Championships. I worked tirelessly throughout the season to prepare for this, and while it all paid off, I wasn't sure if I was in the right mental state to compete. In the end, I managed to do it - and I did it for him. Everything came together so perfectly, especially with my horse, Mister D'Eclipse. He's an exceptional partner.

So how do you pick up and keep yourself motivated and focused?

I draw inspiration from the values my father instilled in me. He used to say, "Never give up. Life goes on." I trained for this Championship all season. Once I'm in the saddle, motivation just kicks in. I also wanted to win and dedicate this title to him. Honestly, for the first time, I wasn't overly focused on the results; I just let go and trusted my horse. That's when everything tends to fall into place.

Tell us about your champion horse?

Mister D'Eclipse is a 12-year-old BWP stallion by Diamant de Semilly and out of a Caretino mare, owned by the Federation. He had an injury that made many experts think he couldn't compete anymore. I was determined to give him another chance. Over two years, with the help of our national vet, Dr. Sandrine Serfati, and a dedicated team, we worked tirelessly, doing everything from rehab to beach exercises. Now, he's sound and capable of jumping four courses over three days in a championship.

Who is your trainer?

I currently train with Thierry Klein, our national trainer. His methods resonate with me and I find myself aligned with his instructions. In the past, we trained with World Champion Philippe Le Jeune, but his approach was more restrictive. Thierry's style suits me much better.

Who do you turn to for advice?

Well, I joke and say ChatGPT! But seriously, I rely on close friends. I stay in touch with our former national trainer Philippe Rozier. I also work closely with Jerome Guery, as we co-own horses. My stable



neighbour, Ali Al Ahrach, is a good friend, and El Ghali Boukaa is also someone I consult regularly.

Are you always based in Morocco year-round?

The Royal Moroccan Equestrian Federation typically sends riders to Europe for six months during the summer to train and compete. This year I only participated in the Sunshine Tour before returning in March to compete at national shows. I have several horses, and I'm very pleased with the results I achieved this season.

How does the Federation decide which horses to pair with riders?

The Federation owns several horses that can compete at different international levels. Together with the national trainer and President Cherif Moulay Abdallah Alaoui - who's also a former rider and a true horseman - they select the best fit for each rider.

What's your opinion on rising entry fees at shows? Do you think this trend limits opportunities for amateur and aspiring riders?

The sport has become very expensive. Whether you're an amateur or a professional, the costs are overwhelming: entry fees, travel, accommodation, and more. Without sponsors, it's nearly impossible to participate regularly. For example, I own my horses, but to compete with them, I bear all their expenses myself.

If you could own any horse, which one would it be?

There are many I'd love to own, but if I had to choose, it would be Leoni Jei. He's an extraordinary horse; he's powerful with blood to win Grand Prixs.

We first met you in 2009 in Morocco, handling an Arabian horse. Do you still breed Arabians?

Yes, I do actually. While I don't show them internationally, I breed them at our Selmam Marrakech stables. I prefer showjumping because it's straightforward, if you knock down a fence, it's a fault. Arabian horse shows, on the other hand, can be quite subjective, with judges varying from three to twenty. 🐾

Abdeslam Bennani Smires is married to Yasmine and is father of Ammer and Chams. With his family, he owns Selmam Marrakech, a luxury hotel that is also home to some of Selmam champion Arabian horses.



DARRAGH KENNY
PRECISION IN MOTION



READ ARIELLE ALLEN'S INTERVIEW ON PAGE 108

DARRAGH KENNY IS A STRAIGHTFORWARD SHOWJUMPING RIDER KNOWN FOR HIS GROUNDED AND PROFESSIONAL APPROACH AND BRILLIANT TALENT IN THE ARENA. CURRENTLY RANKED AS THE WORLD NUMBER 11 IN THE LONGINES FEI RANKINGS, KENNY HAS DEMONSTRATED REMARKABLE CONSISTENCY AND DETERMINATION THROUGHOUT 2025, ACHIEVING OUTSTANDING RESULTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE.

His impressive performances contributed to him being selected as part of the Irish team for the 2024 Paris Olympics, and some of his recent results include podium wins at Spruce Meadows and the Traverse City Horse Show with his horses Colibelle Hero Z, Lighting and Zero K. And just a couple of weeks ago, he secured a commendable seventh place at the Longines FEI European Jumping Championship in A Coruna with his gelding Eddie Blue, as well as a second place with Diaroubet at the \$75,000 CSIO 3* Traverse City Nations Cup.

With such focused dedication to the sport, Kenny is now planning to make a major impact at this year's Dublin Horse Show, aiming to add yet another significant victory to his already impressive career.

Can you tell us about the horses you'll be participating with?

I have LE Coridal, Zero K, and my good horse Eddie Blue here. Eddie Blue jumps in a small class the next few days and hopefully I'll be part of the team for the Nations Cup on Friday. They haven't announced the team yet, but I'm one of the five riders being considered. And then of course, also with Eddie Blue, I'll compete in the Rolex Grand Prix of Ireland this coming Sunday.

How do you prepare Eddie Blue for jumping on

grass after competing in a sand arena?

This summer I took him to Spruce Meadows in Canada for two weeks to get him accustomed to jumping on grass. It helps him transition smoothly between surfaces.

Is there a specific routine you follow before a major event like the Dublin Horse Show?

Honestly, I keep it simple and consistent. I focus on ensuring the horses are fit, healthy, and happy. Since they're experienced horses, I believe that maintaining their usual routine and staying relaxed is the best approach. Preparation should be about consistency, treating the day like any other show, but with extra care for their well-being.

Do you seek technical advice from anyone?

Not typically. I handle most of the technical aspects myself at the moment. However my family is quite involved so if I need advice, I always turn to them.

Do you invest in mental preparation before big events?

I used to but not so much in recent years. For me, the key is to stay consistent and not overthink. I believe that maintaining the same mindset and



treating the show like any other helps ensure success. Trying to do more or different often can be counterproductive.

You're known for your speed against the clock; what skills have you developed to ride so quickly?

I think smoothness is crucial. Many riders think they're going fast, suddenly become erratic, so they end up being slower. The best clocked riders make their speed look effortless which is the trick; speed combined with precision and fluidity.

Out of your horses, how did you choose Eddie Blue for this event?

This is a very important show for me, being at home in Ireland. I brought my best horses to compete here, and Eddie Blue is currently my top horse. I plan to ride him in both the Nations Cup and the Grand Prix because I believe he has the potential to perform very well.

You're the owner of Oakland Stables in the USA. Are all your horses owned by you or do some have other owners?

Most of my horses are owned by a wonderful group of owners I'm very fortunate to work with. I own a few myself, but the majority are owned by others.

Is there a message you'd like to share with your owners through this interview?

Absolutely. I'm incredibly grateful for my owners, they're a fantastic group. I truly appreciate their

support and trust. Their backing means everything to me and my team, and I'm thankful for their continued partnership.

You're often referred to as Ofally's Darragh Kenny in Irish publications. Is there a distinction between counties in Ireland?

Yes, that's correct. It's a reference to where I'm from. It's simply where I grew up, my childhood home. It's part of my identity and background.

Beyond showjumping, what are your other interests?

Right now I'm very focused on the sport. But I do enjoy relaxing with good dinners, spending time with friends, traveling, and enjoying quiet moments at home. When I'm not competing, I like to unwind and recharge.

Have you ever travelled to the Middle East?

I've only been to Doha, Qatar.

Do you think there's a question we should've asked you but didn't?

No, I think you covered everything quite well.

Was a pleasure speaking to you Darragh and many thanks for your time. We'll be watching you and all the best! 🍀

Photos by FEI/Benjamin Clark





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WIZARD IN THE SADDLE SAVVY IN BUSINESS

DAVID WILL IS A SEASONED AND VERSATILE SHOWJUMPING ATHLETE BALANCING MULTIPLE ROLES: CO-RUNNING A BUSINESS, SERVING AS THE CHEF D'ÉQUIPE OF AN OLYMPIC ARAB SHOWJUMPING TEAM, AND COMPETING INTERNATIONALLY. HIS ADAPTABILITY AND INSIGHTFUL APPROACH STEM FROM HIS EARLY WORK WITH A DIVERSE RANGE OF HORSES, EMPHASISING THE IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING EACH HORSE'S UNIQUE MINDSET AND CHARACTER OVER BREED OR SIZE.



His journey includes time in professional stables near Frankfurt, where constant exposure to new horses sharpened his ability to quickly adjust and excel in dynamic environments, an experience he considers vital for any aspiring rider.

Beyond technical skills, Will's philosophy focuses on fostering balanced relationships with both horses and riders, encouraging self-development alongside strategic guidance. His active competition schedule keeps him connected to the latest sport advancements, ensuring his methods stay relevant and effective.

During our talk time with Will, we learn that he's deeply passionate about nurturing talent and embracing new challenges, always striving for growth.

Can you explain to us how you adjust yourself to work with different types of horses?

I think that's very much a learning process. I've been fortunate that after finishing school, I first worked at a stable. Actually, I was more focused on dressage, but my boss at the time did both dressage and jumping. So, right from the start, I had a variety of horses to ride, which gave me a solid foundation in working with horses from a dressage perspective. Later, I went on to ride at Dietmar Gugler Horse Stables near Frankfurt, which was like a real professional stable. That experience was incredibly beneficial for my ability to adapt to different horses because, unlike working with a string of five horses over five years, you constantly have new horses coming in. You quickly need to adjust, whether they're big or small, quick or slow - there's no time to waste.



For a young rider, this environment is an excellent upbringing. Being forced to ride all kinds of horses naturally teaches you how to adapt, which I believe is very important, especially nowadays, as top horses are becoming more and more difficult to find. Limiting yourself to a specific type of horse just makes it twice as hard.

Since you mentioned types of horses, what is your favourite type, and how is it working with different personalities?

Honestly it's not so easy for me to pick a favourite type of horse. What truly separates top horses from good ones is their mindset and character. If a horse has the right mental attitude, or if it genuinely wants to be a winner and always gives its best. That's what I value most. It's not about the size of a horse or its breed; it's about their brains. Naturally, I prefer a quicker horse over a slower one because ultimately, winning is the goal when riding against the clock. But what I enjoy most is a horse with the right mindset.

What are you aiming to achieve with your ongoing partnership with Richard Vogel?

Richard Vogel's girlfriend Sophie Hinnert, is also involved in our team. She's riding for us, and she's been doing very well. Our initial goal in partnering was to expand beyond working individually. In the horse world riding alone can be very limiting. If you want to pursue a professional career, you often only have time for one student or one focus. To do more whether it's competing in different disciplines or managing a variety of riders, you need a team.

We see ourselves as very much sports-oriented and business-minded. Our aim is to grow and excel both in sport and in our business. And quite frankly it's been a working formula over the years; we've expanded from 20 boxes in one stable to rent four stables with many more horses. We have three riders, additional show riders working with us, and the team keeps growing.

Recently, we took a big step forward by purchasing our own stable near Frankfurt—just 20 minutes from the city centre and the airport. It's a fantastic location for international clients, and the area is very central. The stable is in a quiet, private setting, yet highly accessible. There's still a lot of planning



and construction ahead, but we hope to start operations by the end of 2027.

Do you think within the next five years we might see David Will and Richard Vogel hosting 5* shows together?

Yes, that's the idea. The stable's design allows us to host such events. It's a third or fourth step in our development although first, we need to complete the construction on the stable, settle in, and then, when the time is right, host bigger competitions. We

want to make sure everything's properly planned so that we're ready when the moment comes.

You're currently the Chef d'équipe of the Saudi Arabian showjumping team, tell us about your training philosophy and how you stay up-to-date with the latest developments?

My philosophy? It's hard to pin down one approach. I believe a key element is maintaining the right balance between guidance and encouraging self-development. Nobody wants riders who can win a

Grand Prix only when I'm there. They need to learn to do it themselves.

Providing help and advice is essential, but so is allowing riders to gain their own experience and develop their own style. Staying current is crucial. I find that one of the biggest advantages for me is that I'm still competing myself. Many trainers give advice based on what worked decades ago, but the sport evolves rapidly; courses, techniques, shows all change. Being active in competition keeps me connected to these developments. This way, my



training philosophy remains fresh, relevant, and I can relate to what riders are experiencing, which helps me offer better guidance.

Have you had to adapt your training style to meet the needs of specific riders?

Absolutely. To do a good job, you always have to adapt. Just as with horses, you can't approach every rider the same way. You need to accumulate experience with each individual which allows you to tailor your methods. For example, before a Nations Cup I might need to boost a rider's confidence.

Another rider might perform best under pressure. It's about understanding their personalities and adapting accordingly whether they're from the USA, Europe, or elsewhere. People involved in top-level sport tend to have strong characters, and that requires a flexible, individualised approach.

When training, how do you handle challenging athletes?

It depends on the situation. For instance at a Nations Cup, if I see a rider heading in the wrong direction, I do what's necessary to be most successful in

that moment. But sometimes, that might not be the best long-term approach. It's about context; at a big competition, you might need to be softer or more calming. At home, you might set firm boundaries and push harder. Timing and approach are everything. It's always a balance, and you have to deal with each situation thoughtfully.

When you hear the title "Chef d'équipe" one might automatically picture someone in their 50s or 60s. But as an athlete in his 30s, how did you bump into this job? And what are your thoughts on showjumping in the Middle East?

I've worked extensively in the UAE and competed there multiple times, probably around eight. Through that, I got to know many riders and developed mutual respect. That's how I came into this role.

The sport in the Middle East is developing with an exceptional spirit. There's a real drive to grow—new stadiums, more riders, programs for young talent. I see a very motivated community eager to improve personally and professionally. It's inspiring.

Compared to Europe, where shows can attract tens of thousands of spectators, the Middle East doesn't have that large audience yet. Do you think that's why some European riders hesitate to compete there? And could more promotion help?

The region's sport scene has definitely been on the rise the past ten years. The motivation to advance and grow is strong. More international riders are coming for winter circuits, and with significant investment like Qatar's events with €10 million in prize money, top athletes are motivated to make the effort. And as more top riders participate, the quality and excitement will increase, making it more appealing to a broader audience, similar to football. I am a huge football fan, but I do not follow all the leagues for example.

Who is your favourite team?

Bayern Munich of course! I was born near Munich so it's always been my team. I love watching the Champions League because it's the best against the best. That level of competition makes the sport much more exciting.

Have you been to Egypt before?

Just once as a child on holiday.

If invited for a training clinic, would you consider it?

I don't usually do many clinics as my time is limited, especially with the travel involved for the Saudi team. But I'm open to supporting any clinic if the opportunity arises.

Before competitions, do you have a routine?

Not specifically. I try to have a clear plan for each event, what I need to do to reach my goals, whether that's winning or preparing the horse for future events. But I avoid rigid routines because honestly, sometimes the best-laid plans don't work out.

As a young rider, what was the hardest move to master?

Patience. It's a vital trait. When I was young I wanted quick results, but horses require time and calmness. Learning patience, including dealing with setbacks and disappointments, was essential for my growth.

What's your most embarrassing moment in the ring?

That's a fun one! I once competed in Aachen's European Grand Prix with a horse named Coleridge. I was eager to win and approached a jump that looked like a post stamp at a high speed. I misjudged the distance, and we clipped the top of the jump, pieces flying everywhere. The horse ended up sitting on his bottom, unsure how to get up because of all the debris. It was quite the memorable and embarrassing moment! 🐾

David was born on 21 March, 1988

On his gelding C Vier, Will won the 2021 Rolex Grand Prix of Rome, followed by a team silver win at the Longines FEI Jumping European Championship in Riesenbeck, Germany. His other results include winning CSI4*-W AlShira'aa Longines FEI World Cup Grand Prix riding Babalou HD, winning team gold in the Longines League of Nations in Abu Dhabi, team silver in the Longines League of Nations in Ocala.

Photos by FEI/Christophe Taniere - FEI/Stefano Grasso - Baroness Ludwiga von Korff



STEPHAN BARCHA & PRIMAVERA A MATCH MADE IN NIRVANA

BRAZILIAN SHOWJUMPING RIDER STEPHAN DE FREITAS BARCHA'S GROUNDED DEMEANOUR AND EXCEPTIONAL TALENT HAVE ENDEARED HIM TO EQUESTRIAN FANS WORLDWIDE. HE REPRESENTED BRAZIL AT BOTH THE RIO 2016 AND PARIS 2024 OLYMPICS, AND IN 2023, HE ACHIEVED A HISTORIC MILESTONE BY WINNING GOLD AT THE PAN AMERICAN GAMES ON HIS VERY POPULAR MARE, CHEVAUX PRIMAVERA IMPÉRIO EGÍPCIO, CEMENTING HIS STATUS AS A LEADING ATHLETE IN THE SPORT.

HIS FLAMBOYANCE AND VERSATILITY WERE ON FULL DISPLAY AT CHIO AACHEN THIS YEAR; HE WON THE STAWAG OPENING JUMPING COMPETITION WITH HIS GELDING, CHEVAUX HEX LUP IMPERIO EGIPCIO, ON DAY 1. AND DESPITE SUFFERING A SERIOUS FALL DURING THE MERCEDES-BENZ NATIONS CUP ON DAY 3, HE GOT UP, PICKED UP, AND REGROUPED WITH CHEVAUX HEX LUP IMPERIO EGIPCIO - TO WIN THE FEINKOST KÄFER-PRIZE ON DAY 4.



AND TO TOP IT ALL OFF, HE CALMLY AND CONFIDENTLY, CLEARED 3 ROUNDS IN THE ROLEX GRAND PRIX ON DAY 5, ALSO WITH PRIMAVERA, TO FINISH IN AN IMPRESSIVE FOURTH PLACE.

IN THIS INTERVIEW WITH BARCHA, HUSBAND OF ROBERTA ALFINITO AND FATHER OF EDUARDO, MARIA CLARA, AND MARIA JÚLIA ALFINITO, WE GO BEYOND THE TYPICAL QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE HIS PERSONAL METHODS AND THE QUALITIES THAT DEFINE HIM.

Why horses, why not football or tennis?

It's simple really. As a professional rider, I need to take care of my body and avoid injuries. I follow specific training techniques to stay fit, but overall, I'm a fan of good sports—whether equestrian or otherwise.

How did you come back to win a class at CHIO Aachen following your serious fall?

My knee and back hurt terribly that night, but I had to get up and carry on. It wasn't an ordinary week, being in Aachen is important for us riders. And even though I was aching, I told myself to keep going. Walking was painful, but riding felt easier because I was doing what I love.

How do you choose a horse and how did you choose Primavera?

Funnily enough, she chose me. Perhaps this is a bit superstitious, but that's how I feel. She came to me while I was training a client's son. She's strong, has scope and a lot of



character. She was difficult to ride at first, but she knows how to jump perfectly. She knows the job. I got her when she was 6 and she's been with me for 8 years now.

Which methods do you use to build a bond with a horse?

With Primavera for example, she's a blood horse and so paying attention to her details really works for us. I take great care of her. I really do. I mean, she's provided with better facilities than myself! Basically, I had to adapt myself to meet her needs. I believe any rider needs to adapt to and respect the horse's way—that's how I get the best out of her.

What is your pre-show routine?

I'm generally a calm person and I approach big shows as if I'm going for a walk. I try to enjoy the moment and stay relaxed.

What are your thoughts on the Longines League of Nations?

The competition format is fine, but the venues are questionable. Starting in Abu Dhabi, then going all the way to the USA, then back to Europe. It's a bit of a criss-cross. Personally, I do not think it is a winning and lasting formula.

Which horse would you really love to have?

Generally I like to ride brave, fast, and careful horses. But specifically, I would love to own Caracole de la Roque. She's not for sale, but if I could choose, she'd be the one.

Barcha was born on 27th of October in 1989 and operates Chevaux Team, a team based in Brasilia and Sao Paulo, and specialises in coaching and horse development.

Photos by Rodrigo Torrezan & Luís Carlos



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MARTA HUGHES BRAVO
TALL HORSES
FAMILY BONDS & SUPERSTITION



AFTER SPOTLIGHTING THE FIRST OF THE HUGHES BRAVO SISTERS, IT'S TIME TO MEET NUMBER TWO, MARTA. OVER THE SUMMER, SHE TRAINED IN CANADA WITH TEAM MILLAR, THIS TALENTED 19-YEAR-OLD RIDER IS QUIETLY MAKING HER MARK ON THE INTERNATIONAL SHOWJUMPING ARENA. CURRENTLY TRAINING WITH IRISH SHOWJUMPING RIDER JACK RYAN, WE DELVE INTO HER SPECIAL BOND WITH HER "HORSE OF A LIFETIME," HHS FIGERO, UNCOVER HER FAMILY'S UNIQUE TRADITIONS, AND GET A GLIMPSE INTO HER LIFE AS SHE NAVIGATES SOME OF THE TRIALS THAT COME WITH HER SPORT.

As you continue to walk your own showjumping path, what type of horses do you feel are uniquely "Marta"?

The tall, scopey and slower horses compared to Molly and Matilde whom much prefer the blood ones.

Tell us about HHS Figero, how has he helped you grow as a rider?

Figero is a very special horse to me. We were both born in the same year and at the same place. He was produced here at home until he was eight years old and then sold to Alexandra Thornton. I've had him for four years now, and even though he's 19, he's still jumping at high levels and feeling as good as ever. It's truly great to still be able to compete with him. He's a horse of a lifetime, and we've built a really strong relationship and bond that has continued to grow over the years.

You've competed at some big shows. Is there a particular win or moment in the ring that you're most proud of?

Yes, when we won the CSI1* 1.40m Trofeo Porsche class at the LGCT in Madrid.

What is the biggest challenge you face as a young rider on the international stage, and how do you overcome it?

Competing against professionals with a lot more experience than me; I try overcome it by being the best I can on the day.

Growing up, were there any "behind-the-scenes" showjumping rituals or traditions that were unique to your family?

My mum and her mare HHS Fortuna always had a great partnership when I was growing up and their ritual was to always compete with three plaits at the top of her mane.

Your mum Marion, runs the family breeding farm, HHS. What's it like to be so closely involved with the horses from the very beginning of their lives to their careers in the ring?

It's very cool to be able to watch the horses grow and evolve, and to especially see the foals from my mum and dad's best horses now being produced and jumping at a very high level. It's also great to see the horses we've produced moving on and doing so well in their new homes, and keeping track of their progress is very interesting.

What's the best advice you've received from your parents that has nothing to do with showjumping?

To not to give up and to just keep trying.

If you had to describe your relationship with your sister Molly in one word, what would it be and why?

Entertaining! We get on very well and have a lot of fun together.

If your horse could talk for one day, what's the first thing you think he'd say to you?

Can we go for a hack instead of dressage?

What's a piece of gear or a good luck charm you absolutely have to have with you on show day?

My lucky charm that I wear on my ear bonnet.



When you're not riding or travelling, what's your go-to way to relax and unwind?

To spend time with my friends at home.

What's a song you listen to for fun, not necessarily to get in the zone, that might surprise people?

Novacane by Frank Ocean.

Beyond showjumping, what's a talent or interest you have that no one knows about?

I don't have many other talents! 🐾

Marta was born on 14 February, 2006

Her best results and horses are

HHS Figero -1st place at CSI1 LGCT Madrid Grand Prix, 2023*

HHS Figero – 3rd place and double clear at the FEI Youth Nations Cup Sentower Park, 2025

Miss Belgium 111 - 3rd place at CSI3 Sunshine*

NORA ALJABR
FROM HOBBY TO HORSEWOMAN
HARNESSING HERITAGE



IN A COUNTRY WHERE HISTORY IS ETCHED IN BOTH SAND AND STONE, NORA ALJABR DISCOVERED HER PURPOSE IN A FORGOTTEN EQUESTRIAN ART. IT WASN'T ABOUT STARTING SOMETHING NEW, BUT ABOUT RESURRECTING A HERITAGE THAT WAS FADING AWAY. FOR ALJABR, THE GALLOP OF A HORSE IS MORE THAN A RIDE; IT'S A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME AND A CONNECTION TO ARAB WARRIORS WHO ONCE DEFINED HER CULTURE.

A TRAILBLAZER IN A MALE-DOMINATED FIELD, SHE'S BECOME THE FIRST CERTIFIED FEMALE TRAINER IN MOUNTED ARCHERY AND TENT-PEGGING IN SAUDI ARABIA. AND IN THIS EXCLUSIVE HORSE TIMES INTERVIEW, ALJABR SHARES HOW HER PERSONAL PASSION EVOLVED INTO A MISSION TO BRING THESE ANCIENT SKILLS BACK TO LIFE, ONE POWERFUL STRIDE AT A TIME.



What sparked your interest in horses?

From a very young age I felt a natural bond with horses. They fascinated me; not only for their beauty and strength but for the deep role they have always played in Arab culture. My first encounter wasn't just about riding, it was about feeling a part of something larger, a tradition that runs through our history. That spark never left me.

Your equestrian journey began as a hobby and evolved into a mission to revive a buried tradition. What was the turning point for you?

At first riding was simply my passion and my escape. But as I grew older I realised that many equestrian traditions that once defined Arab identity such as mounted archery



and tent-pegging were slowly fading away. The turning point was when I discovered classical texts and stories about how vital these arts were in our history. That's when my hobby became a mission: to revive what was almost forgotten and to give it new life in Saudi Arabia.

You are recognised as the first certified mounted archery and tent-pegging trainer in Saudi Arabia. What was the journey to achieving this certification like, and what challenges did you face?

The journey was far from easy. When I started, these disciplines were not common in Saudi

Arabia and training opportunities were almost non-existent. I had to seek knowledge abroad, learning from international masters and traveling to gain certification. Being a Saudi woman in a male-dominated field also came with social challenges but I was determined. Those obstacles only pushed me harder to prove that Saudi women can master and lead in these fields.

Mounted archery and tent-pegging have deep roots in Arab history. Can you tell us more about the historical significance of these sports and why it's important to you to preserve them?

These sports were not just entertainment; they



were once essential skills for Arab warriors and horsemen. Mounted archery was a form of survival and strength, while tent-pegging trained precision and speed in battle. They represent discipline, courage, and a bond between rider and horse. Preserving them means keeping alive a living connection to our ancestors and showing the world the depth of Arab heritage.

You've noted that these sports were not widely practiced in Saudi Arabia. What is the process of reviving these traditions and encouraging new equestrians to participate?

The process starts with awareness—sharing the



history and beauty of these arts with the community. Then comes accessibility: creating training programmes, organising events, and opening the doors for youth and women to try. Social media has also played a big role; once people see these traditions come to life, their curiosity grows. Slowly, step by step, we are building a new generation of riders who are proud to practice them.

You now organise training sessions that are popular among women. What kind of impact do you hope to have on other Saudi women and girls who are interested in equestrian sports?

I want them to see that they have a place in this

world, that equestrian sports are not limited by gender. I hope to inspire women and girls to embrace their strength, discipline, and cultural pride. When a young girl takes up a bow on horseback for the first time, she's not just learning a sport, she's connecting with her heritage and proving to herself that she can achieve anything.

Could you describe the feeling of freedom and connection you experience while practicing mounted archery?

It's indescribable. When you gallop on a horse, bow in hand, and release an arrow into perfect flight, you feel absolute unity with the horse, the weapon, and the moment. It's freedom, focus, and peace all at once. Time slows down and it feels as though you are living the very essence of our ancestors' spirit.

What is the most challenging aspect of mounted archery and tent-pegging for a beginner to master?

The challenge is balance and focus. Riding alone requires skill and shooting a bow or striking a peg adds another level of difficulty. For beginners, controlling nerves and staying in harmony with the horse is the hardest part. But with patience, discipline, and consistent training, it becomes second nature.

What is your vision for the future of traditional equestrian sports in Saudi Arabia?

My vision is for Saudi Arabia to become the leading hub for traditional equestrian sports in the world. I want to see arenas, schools, and academies where these arts are taught to both men and women, and for our country to host international tournaments. Ultimately, I want these traditions to be recognised globally as part of our living heritage.

How has the Saudi Equestrian Federation and the Ministry of Sports supported your efforts?

Their support has been crucial. The Federation and Ministry of Sports have started opening doors for new sports and recognising traditional



ones. Their backing allows us to create official competitions, gain exposure, and encourage more people to join. It's a step forward for the entire equestrian community in Saudi Arabia.

You have competed internationally, representing Saudi Arabia as the first female horsewoman in tent-pegging in Jordan. How did it feel to represent your country on a global stage?

It was an honour beyond words. Riding with the Saudi flag, knowing that I was the first Saudi woman in that field, filled me with pride and responsibility. I wanted to prove that Saudi women can not only compete but excel internationally. It was both a

personal milestone and a national one.

You are often seen wearing traditional attire during your performances. How does this connect to your mission of preserving Arab identity and heritage?

Clothing is a form of storytelling. By wearing traditional attire I am visually reviving the image of Arab horsewomen from history. It's a reminder that these arts were once lived daily by our ancestors. My attire is not only aesthetic; it is a declaration of identity and pride.

Do you think there is a question we should have asked you but did not?

Perhaps: "What drives you every day to continue despite challenges?"

The answer would be simple: a sense of duty. I feel that I carry not just my passion but the responsibility of representing my culture, inspiring women, and ensuring that this tradition lives on. 🇸🇦

Photos by Buthaynah AlHarthi,p Bader A. Sanad - Naif Almuhawesh

FUNOON ALHUM AidAN

A HORSE SERENADE

FUNOON ALHUM AidAN IS A VIBRANT 24-YEAR-OLD SAUDI SHOWJUMPING RIDER WHO EMBODIES BOTH A MATURE OUTLOOK ON LIFE AND A FEARLESS SPIRIT. CHEERFUL, GIGGLY, SHARP AS A TACK, AND BRAVE AS A LION, SHE'S UNAFRAID TO SPEAK HER MIND, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO KEEPING POLITICS OUT OF HER BELOVED SPORT. OFF THE ARENA, SHE REVEALS A SOULFUL SIDE, PLAYING THE OUD TO SOOTHE HER HORSES DURING CHERISHED MOMENTS TOGETHER. ROOTED IN KINDNESS, COURAGE, AND AUTHENTICITY, SHE STANDS OUT AS A PROMISING ATHLETE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ARAB EQUESTRIAN SPORT.



When did you start riding, who are your trainers, where are chiefly based, and who are your sponsors?

My family played a significant role in helping me discover my passion; they encouraged me to explore many sports and activities. In 2012, I found myself truly drawn to the joy and connection of horse riding. Over the years, I've had the privilege of working with many talented trainers both in Saudi Arabia and abroad, but the ones who have influenced me the most are Mazen AlYousef, Cédric Triolet, and Sergio Neuppman, Jr. Their guidance has shaped me as a rider and inspired me to keep pushing forward, always striving to learn and improve.

Today, I am grateful to be surrounded by a dedicated support team: with Mazen AlYousef as my head coach, Ahmad Ezzat as my trusted groom, and the unwavering support of my sponsors, Al-Samawwy Stables and Ouma. Every achievement and podium moment has been a collective celebration shared with my team.

Tell us about being based in Saudi Arabia and riding there.

As a Saudi female rider, I truly appreciate the advantages of being based in my own country, where supporting women in sports is a core goal of 'Saudi Vision 2030'. It's inspiring to see how Saudi Arabia is fostering opportunities for women to excel in fields like showjumping.

Why did you choose showjumping as your sport?

Showjumping was my initial choice, but if I had to pick again, I'd still choose it! It combines techniques from various disciplines, which keeps it exciting. I love the adrenaline and the constant challenge, there's always something new to learn.

How do you choose a horse, and how do you bond with them?

In my view, you don't exactly choose a horse, there's a spark that develops after spending time with them. Bonding requires good intuition and proper care, both inside and outside the ring. It's about building trust and understanding, which forms naturally through consistent care and shared experiences.



Who do you turn to for advice on the sport?

I like to gather perspectives from different people, so there's no single person I rely on exclusively. Of course, I value the insights of those with extensive experience and a deep understanding of the sport.

How do you handle pressure?

Pressure and fear are what keep me motivated; I don't try to suppress them. Instead, I work with these feelings, facing whatever challenges come my way to achieve my goals.

What are your thoughts on rising entry fees at most shows? Do you believe this trend limits opportunities for average and aspiring riders?

It largely depends on the prize money involved. If the rewards are worth it, higher entry fees might be justified. However, I believe these increased costs can create barriers for riders who lack the financial means to compete frequently. This could hinder many aspiring riders from gaining vital experience. One of the most beautiful aspects of showjumping is its ability to bring together people from diverse backgrounds, united by their passion. It's important that opportunities remain accessible to this di-

versity and that the unique spirit it fosters continues to thrive.

Is there something you'd like to change about the showjumping industry?

One major issue today is the high prices of horses. I believe establishing a clear range or average price for horses at each level, based on their characteristics, could be a game-changer for the industry.

How would you respond to those who claim that Saudi Arabia violates women's rights or to those who chose not to cover the 2024 FEI



World Cup in Riyadh, citing feminism as a justification?

I'd say that those who speak without understanding are like empty vessels, loud but lacking substance. Saudi women in sports let our results and actions speak louder than words. Our achievements, both nationally and internationally, demonstrate the progress we're making. The Saudi government has been incredibly supportive, creating opportunities for women in sports including showjumping. Over 1,000 women are registered with the Federation, and they've even established a women's league with a points system.

Showjumping, at its core, is about uniting people through passion and excellence. That power surpasses outdated stereotypes or selective narratives.

If you could swap lives with any celebrity for a day, who would it be and why?

Richard Vogel, just to experience what it's like to ride United Touch S.

Any guilty pleasure TV shows or TikTok trends?

I'm not someone who spends hours on TikTok. I prefer to keep my mind sharp and stay updated on recent scientific studies.

What did you study in university, and how did you balance studying with riding?

I earned a Bachelor's degree in Life Sciences from AlFaisal University here in Saudi Arabia; I like to think of myself as a scientist! The programme was demanding, with long hours from 9 to 6. I'd bring my riding gear to the lab, and once my classes were over, I'd quickly change into my riding attire and head to training.



If you weren't riding, what do you think you'd be doing?

Karting. I'm a huge fan and love racing whenever I get the chance.

Where's your dream showjumping destination?

Visiting the World Equestrian Center in the USA is definitely on my bucket list.

What emoji best describes your personality in the ring?

The lion.

What's the best piece of advice you've received at a show?

Focus on giving your best with every round, rather than worrying about outperforming your competitors.



Funoon was born on 17 December, 2001.

Her best horses are Underline Des Marais, Oliver Twist VD Berghoeve, and Matcho van de Maashorst, and some of her notable results with Underline Des Marais include:

- * 1st place at the Grand Prix of the Amir's Sword in Doha*
- * Best Saudi female showjumper*
- * 2nd place in the small tour at the Saudi Equestrian Federation Finals*
- * 1st in the 3* small international tour*
- * 1st in the 2* small tour*

Other significant results include:

- * 2nd in the individual and 3rd in the team events at the Arab Women's Sports Championships, fully supported by the Saudi Equestrian Federation*
- * 2nd place in the Saudi Games final*



JUNIOR PROFILES

ARIELLE ALLEN

DATE OF BIRTH: 16 MARCH 2010

COUNTRY: IRELAND



TALENTED 15-YEAR-OLD ARIELLE “ARI” ALLEN, A RED-HAIRED SHOWJUMPING RIDER, IS MAKING WAVES IN THE JUNIOR EQUESTRIAN WORLD. HAILING FROM THE RENOWNED HORSEY FAMILY, THE SYCAMORE STABLES IN IRELAND, ARI’S PASSION AND SKILL HAVE LED HER TO ACHIEVE REMARKABLE RESULTS WITH BOTH HORSES AND PONIES. BEAUTIFUL AND SHY, SHE CARRIES HERSELF WITH QUIET CONFIDENCE AND A DEEP, UNDOUBTEDLY INHERITED, LOVE FOR THE SPORT.

WITH A CERTAIN FLAIR, LITTLE-MISS-ALLEN IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE TO WATCH AS SHE CONTINUES TO SHINE IN THE SHOWJUMPING ARENA. SHE IS COMPETING AT THE DUBLIN HORSE SHOW THIS WEEKEND AND ONCE THE EVENT IS OVER, SHE’LL BE REMOVING HER TONSILS THEN STRAIGHT BACK TO COMPETING AGAIN.



STARTED RIDING: probably before I started talking or walking? My family breeds horses and they all ride, so it was a natural process for me. I love riding and competing and I generally love animals.

HORSES: I compete with my main mare Kandice Z and a couple of other young ones, six and five-year-olds. I also compete with my pony Marchesi Gem Stone.

TRAINERS: I train with my mother Joanne and with Sameh El Dahan. And on occasion, we seek the guidance of Youth showjumping Chef d’Équipe Denis Flannelly.

SPONSORS: because I represent Sycamore Stables, I am sponsored by the same brands such as the feed and supplements. However, I am also sponsored by Jod-Z, an Irish equestrian brand focusing on children’s horse-riding leggings. I am their brand ambassador and I was picked to represent them from a handful of other children. And, I will be collaborating with them on a new range very soon.

BEST RESULTS: some of my best results include finishing third along with my team mates Matilde Hughes Bravo, Misha Lennon and Henry Sinnott, in the ‘Children Nations Cup’ in Zurich - and coming in second in the ‘Dublin Horse Show Children on Horses’ Grand Prix, both in 2024. I also won the 1.30m Grand Prix in Spruce Meadows in July as well as being placed in the top 10 in several classes. I compete all over Ireland and as a result this year is the third time I managed to qualify for the Dublin Horse Show. I was also placed third in the ‘1.30m Two Phase Jumping Competition’ at Hickstead in July.

FAVOURITE ATHLETE: Sameh El Dahan!

ASPIRATIONS: to win the Dublin Horse Show, and an Olympic medal and to win every other horse show that comes to mind right now!

OTHER INTERESTS: I was on the Northern Ireland Netball training squad for under-14s. I enjoy skiing very much so I do that.

NIAMH MCEVOY SADDLING UP FOR STARDOM & SUCCESS

NIAMH MCEVOY (PRONOUNCED NEEVE) KICKED OFF HER SHOWJUMPING ADVENTURE IN 2019; SHE GALLOPED HER WAY TO TEAM GOLD AT THE FEI EUROPEAN PONY CHAMPIONSHIPS IN STRZEGOM, POLAND. AND IN 2022, SHE SWAPPED PONIES FOR JUNIOR TEAM BRONZES AT THE EUROPEAN JUMPING CHAMPIONSHIPS IN SUNNY OLIVA, SPAIN.



That same October, McEvoy jumped into the big leagues with her senior Nations Cup debut at CSI3* Vejer in Spain. Not only did she make her debut, she also rode her horse 'Templepatrick Welcome Limmerick' to victory in the 1.55m Grand Prix.

When she's not busy making fences look like mere stepping stones, McEvoy dazzles at the RDS Dublin Horse Show, where she has become one of the young stars of the event. Riding 'Flora du Mensil', she snagged the CSIO5* 1.50m 'Dublin Stakes for award of the Wylie Perpetual Trophy' - a title that sounds fancy enough to make a crown blush - and impressed the crowd with her fancy footwork and a sprinkle of horsey magic. And let's not forget, she's also a bit of a multi-horse whisperer, winning several national classes during the five-day Irish extravaganza.

But who is McEvoy when she's not soaring over jumps? We wanted to find out more about this talented equestrian, her passions, quirks, and what fuels her fire beyond the arena.

Are all the horses you ride owned by Greg Broderick Ballypatrick Stables?

Yes, most of them are. I've been working at the Ballypatrick Stables full-time for three years now, jumped straight into it after finishing school. Before that, I was kind of doing a bit of part-time work, traveling up and down the country. I'm from the other side of Ireland, so I've had quite the journey. Greg is also my trainer.

Are all the horses you competed with at the RDS Dublin Horse Show, Irish-bred horses?

Most of them are. They're mostly bred here in Ireland, either owned by Greg or by people connected to him. I've also jumped a couple of horses for my family - the Lismore Stables - but the majority are Greg's. Greg's sister Cheryl does a lot of light breeding, so a lot of the young horses I've competed in the national classes were bred by her. It's really special.

How do you pick a horse? Which ones suit you?

There are so many horses here, and Greg's got a real talent for matching riders with the right horses. He has a great eye for it. I definitely lean towards the more spirited horses, those sharp, blood-type horses. I love a bit of a cruiser ride too. Being based in Ballypatrick has taught me to ride all kinds: big, slower horses, and more energetic, blood horses. We try to keep them all as conventional as possible so we can help them perform their best.



You've taken a year off to focus on riding; is this your final decision and competing professionally will be your chosen path?

Absolutely. When I finished school, I initially applied for accountancy and business management, and my parents were probably hoping I'd go to university. But honestly, I kept saying, "Just one more year," and here I am, definitely sticking with horses.

How do you handle the pressure?

Pressure is part of the game, but I believe it's a privilege to compete at this level. In Ireland and worldwide, we get used to it from a young age. The biggest help is having a fantastic team around me. Greg is brilliant especially during warm-ups and big classes. He really boosts your confidence. Then there are also so many reliable people on the ground; they take a lot of stress off my shoulders.

Do Greg or your family invest in mental prep or sports psychology?

We've done a bit of that through the Young Riders Academy, working with Poppy Blandford. But honestly, I haven't delved too deep into it, just tried to stay focused and positive.

If you could ride any horse in the world, which one would it be?

Dynamix De Belheme. Definitely.

If you could swap lives with any celebrity for a day, who would it be and why?

I'd love to swap with Laura Kraut. She's always been one of my idols, and I think it'd be fascinating to see how she manages everything. Plus, her performance at the Rolex Grand Prix of Ireland last Sunday was just incredible.

What did you think of that Grand Prix especially since out of 40 riders, only Kraut cleared?

It was super interesting. The course was tough and the tension kept building. But Laura made it look so easy; she's unbelievable. Honestly, it was one of the most exciting Grand Prixes I've watched.

What's your go-to pump-up song before a competition?

Maybe Eye of the Tiger?

Any guilty pleasure TV shows or TikTok trends?

I'm not a huge TV person, but I started watching Yellowstone slowly. I've only watched the first episode so far. I do check TikTok, but I wouldn't say I'm up-to-date with the latest trends.

If you weren't riding, what do you think you'd be doing right now?

Probably something sporty. I've always been active. Or maybe studying, since I love sports and staying busy.

Where's your dream showjumping destination?

Aachen, without a doubt. And I'd love to jump in the Nations Cup or the Grand Prix there someday. But if I had to pick anywhere in Ireland, it'd be Dublin. The Dublin show is my favourite of the year,

Tea or coffee in the morning?

Neither, actually.

If your horse could have a social media account, what would they post about?

Their adventures! They love hacking out with

their friends, so I imagine they'd do a daily vlog of their escapades.

What emoji best describes your personality in the ring?

The fighter emoji.

What's in your show bag that might surprise people?

Rosary beads, just to keep me safe.

How would you sum up your riding style in three words?

Kind, feeling, determined.

What's the best piece of advice you've received at a show?

To watch everything, learn from everyone.

Who in the horse world, past or present, would you love to have dinner with?

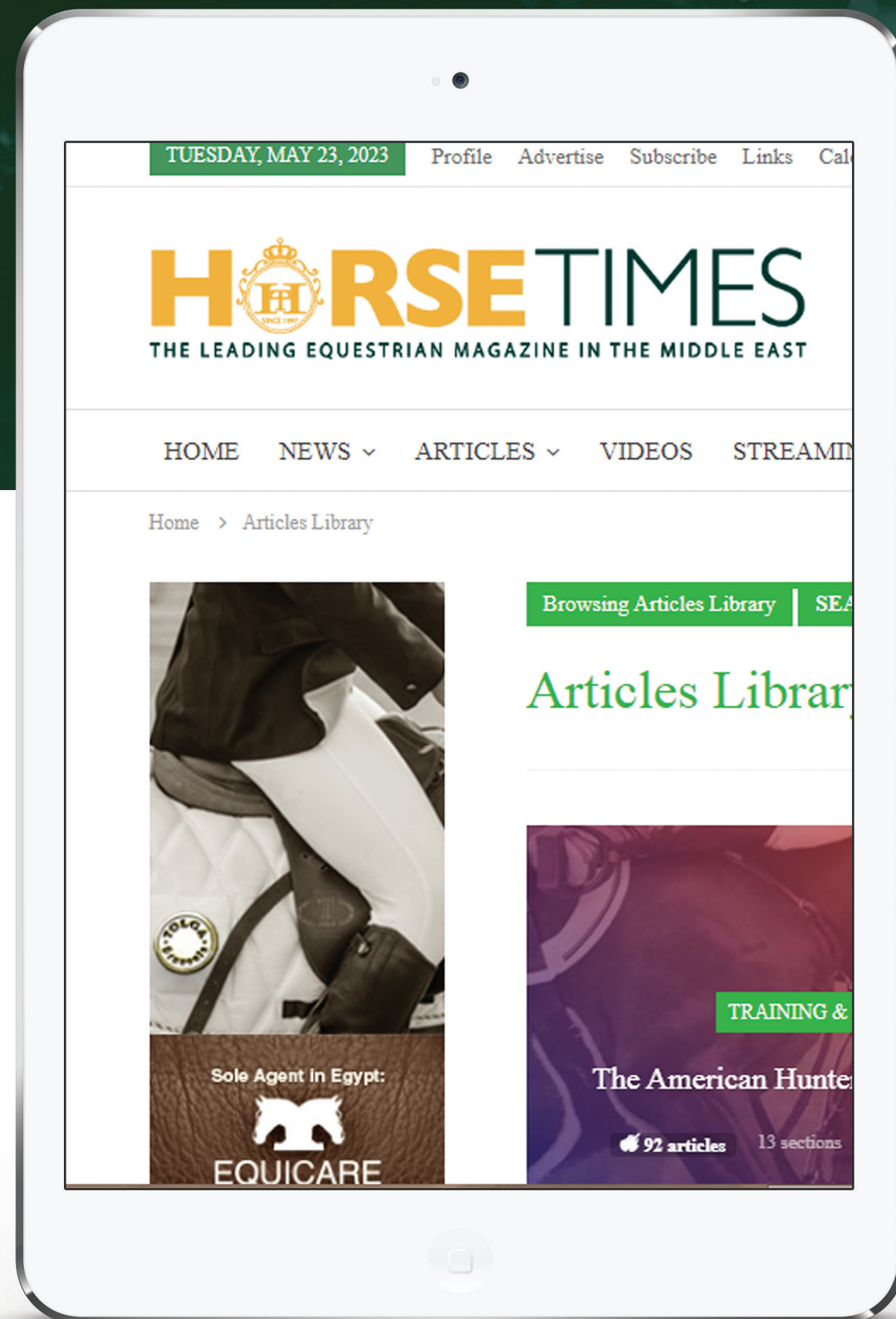
Probably John Whitaker. He's an absolute legend. I think it'd be fascinating to hear his stories and interesting to see how the dinner goes. 🍷

Niamh McEvoy was born on 6 April, 2004.

Niamh is a Gaelic name and is pronounced Neeve



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ALI AL AHRACH
SHOWJUMPING PHILOSOPHY

PAITENCE & PARTNERSHIP
IS THE WAY



MOROCCAN SHOWJUMPING ATHLETE ALI AL AHRACH IS GEARING UP FOR A HIGHLY ANTICIPATED SHOWJUMPING SEASON IN MOROCCO. BEFORE HE HEADS TO TETOUAN FOR THE FIRST LEG OF THE MOROCCO ROYAL TOUR ON 18 SEPTEMBER 18, WE TOUCHED BASE WITH HIM TO DISCUSS HIS RIDING METHODOLOGY.

AL AHRACH HAS RISEN TO COMPETE INTERNATIONALLY WITH A SIMPLE YET PROFOUND PHILOSOPHY CENTRED ON PATIENCE, CONSISTENCY, AND RESPECT FOR THE HORSE. HE SHARES THE TRAINING SECRETS AND KEY MOMENTS THAT HAVE DEFINED HIS CAREER, FROM THE FUNDAMENTALS OF FLATWORK TO THE PRESSURES OF AN OLYMPIC WARM-UP. HE SHOWCASES A DEEP-SEATED PARTNERSHIP WITH EVERY HORSE HE RIDES.



Ali and El Ghali Boukaa



You've had success with a variety of horses throughout your career. Can you describe your fundamental training philosophy?

My philosophy is simple: patience, consistency, and respect for the horse. Every horse has its own personality and rhythm, and my job is to adapt to each one, to help them build confidence step by step. I believe in strong basics, correct flatwork, and creating a partnership where the horse wants to give its best.

Moroccan showjumping is developing on the world stage. How has the training infrastructure in Morocco influenced your own training methods?

Over the years Morocco has invested in equestrian infrastructure, both in facilities and in competitions. Training here has taught me to be resourceful; that gave me discipline and creativity in my methods, and it pushed me to maximise every opportunity for learning and progress.

In a high-pressure environment like the Olympic Games or a major championship, what are the key technical points you focus on during the warm-up to ensure your horse is mentally and physically prepared?

In big championships, less is more. I keep my warm-up short, precise, and focused on rhythm, balance, and responsiveness. I make sure the horse is confident and not overworked. Mentally, I try to stay calm because the horse feels everything.

Can you tell us about a specific moment in a competition where your deep understanding of your horse made the difference between a fault and a clear round?

I remember a Nations Cup round where my horse hesitated at the water jump. I felt it a stride earlier, so I softened my hand, gave him space with my body, and encouraged him to take off. That small anticipation, that trust, turned a potential fault into a clear round. These little invisible moments are what define partnership.



As a multiple-time Moroccan champion, what do you believe are the most significant factors that have contributed to your sustained success at the national level?

Discipline, hard work, and surrounding myself with the right people. I believe in constant learning, every round, every horse, every mistake is an opportunity to improve. Having a supportive family and team has also made a big difference.

Looking at the global showjumping circuit, which riders or training programmes do you admire, and have they influenced your own approach to the sport?

I admire riders like Marcus Ehning for his feel, and Scott Brash for his consistency at the top level. Their ability to stay composed and adapt to any situation has definitely inspired me.

What is the process like for developing a young horse in your programme from a raw prospect to a Grand Prix contender?

It's a long journey that cannot be rushed. I start by giving young horses confidence in small classes, focusing on rhythm, balance, and exposure to different environments. Step by step, I increase the level, but always making sure the horse enjoys the process. The goal is to build both their body and their mind.

What message would you give to young, aspiring riders in Morocco who dream of one day competing at the international level like you have?

Believe in yourself, work hard, and don't be afraid of failure. Each setback is a step forward if you learn

from it. And above all, never forget that it's about the horse; respect them, and success will follow.

In a sport that's heavily dependent on the quality of horses, what is Morocco doing to breed and acquire top-tier showjumping talent? Do you see a rise in Moroccan-bred horses on the international stage?

Morocco is making real efforts in breeding with improved bloodlines and more structured programmes. We're starting to see Moroccan-bred horses competing abroad which is encouraging. It will take time, but the foundation is being built for the future.

Tell us about your trainers and sponsors?

I've been fortunate to learn from great trainers throughout my career, each bringing different perspectives. As for sponsors, I'm very grateful for their trust and support—it makes this demanding sport possible at the highest level.

What other interests do you have besides showjumping?

I enjoy spending time with my family as it gives me balance. I also love sports in general; they inspire

me to stay fit and disciplined.

If there's a horse you could own, which one would it be?

There are many, but honestly, I always believe the best horse is the one under my saddle today. That's the one I want to focus on and believe in; Ike 1348.

If your horse could talk, what is the one thing you think they'd tell you?

"Trust me, and I'll give you everything."

Tell us about humbling moment you faced in the arena?

Once in a Grand Prix I misjudged a distance, and my horse stopped. I nearly fell off in front of the crowd. But it taught me to stay focused and not let pressure take over.

Do you think there's a question we should've asked you but did not?

Maybe about the future of Moroccan showjumping? Because I believe the next generation has great potential, and I'm proud to contribute to building that legacy. 🇲🇦



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