



SHEIKH ALI AL THANI

# WHAT SEEMS TO BE MISSING

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By Khaled Assem

COUNTRY: QATAR  
DATE OF BIRTH: SEPTEMBER 1 1982  
STAR SIGN: VIRGO  
FULL PROFESSION: SHOW JUMPER  
HORSES: ADOLFO FRH, BRIGADE C.S., CASCANO,  
DUKHAN, LUCAS 149, RAVENNA 323, SANTOS &  
TAGFART 111 Z

ONE OF THE RIDERS THAT IS CERTAINLY A PILLAR IN THE QATAR SHOW JUMPING TEAM IS SHEIKH ALI BIN KHALED AL THANI. INTERNATIONALLY REPRESENTING THE NAME OF QATAR SINCE 2003 IN MANY TOP LEVEL EVENTS SUCH AS THE ASIAN AND PAN ARAB GAMES, SHEIKH ALI IS GENERALLY A QUIET PERSON, SERENE WHEN SPOKEN TO, AND POSSESSES REGAL ATTRIBUTES THAT IN A NUT SHELL, SIMPLY MAKE HIM A TRUE PRINCE.

## **You are a professional show jumper; is riding easy?**

It seems easy, but it certainly isn't. All we do is train, jump, win, gain confidence, jump again, lose, lose confidence, and then start all over again.

## **What is there to tell about your horses?**

I have ridden eight different horses in my career. They were all agile horses that can jump flawlessly. My favourite horse, Santos, is currently injured. It happened in Kentucky and so now he is taking a six month rest.

## **When did you become a professional show jumper?**

I started to ride when I was six years old in a farm in Qatar. The first time I went to a summer training camp was when I was eight, in Ireland. My father has supported me and my love for the sport throughout my life and that support still remains unmatched. 2003 was when I became what they call a "professional", and started to ride on the international scene.

## **Tell us about your training?**

Jos Lansink was the Qatari team's trainer for some time. His training helped my team member Ali Al Rumahi to win the gold medal at the Asian Games. We currently all train with Jan Tops; he is also, undoubtedly, adding to our learning experience. Most Qatari horses are in Belgium where we get all our training. Jan has a schedule comprised for us and we follow it. Seven months a year, some of my team members and I ride with the Global Champions Tour worldwide.

## **What is it like riding with the top 30 world ranked riders at the Global Champions Tour?**

It's different and hard, but it helps us gain more experience. We have good horses, maybe better than theirs, we just lack in experience. Soon though, we will reach their levels.

## **You have ridden some of the best horses in the world and trained with prominent trainers, what**



▲ At the 2009 GCT, Doha



▲ At the 2010 GCT, Monte Carlo

## **is missing that could make you reach high world rankings?**

I think if I can increase my levels of concentration on how to apply my training when it matters, and solely concentrate on the sport and just that, I can become a better rider. When I gain confidence, I need to realise that, just because I won at a certain level, it doesn't mean I will always win at that level. Confidence should come in moderation as too much of anything is not good for you, hence I need to work on that. I have not reached that stage where I can completely evaluate

myself, maybe others who know me best can, however this is what I can point my finger at for the time being.

## **Your plans for 2012 are?**

To compete and gain points for the Olympics.

## **Would you like to add anything else?**

Thank you for your continuous support for Middle Eastern equestrian sport, for this interview, and for all the publicity you give to Arab show jumpers. 