

Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi

by Simone Leo ■ photos by Irina Filsinger

For years, the world of the PBA has been wondering when a stud farm from Dubai (UAE), a city with a long tradition and an undisputed supremacy in endurance competitions and in races, would also try conformation shows and the breeding of purebred Arabians. The much awaited answer came last year, when in early 2007 the Dubai Arabian Horse Stud started a far-sighted and organic breeding program. Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi, the stud's director, began a systematic research all around to world to select bloodlines and phenotypes featuring a particular ability for conformation tests. Currently the stud accommodates more than 130 horses of a very high quality. Whoever has had a chance to meet Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi will have come across a friendly and talented person, always ready to face the challenges offered by the situation and his role. The secret of his great passion lies perhaps in the fact that before taking on this demanding role he had already bred some Arabian horses and, with some of them, had already reaped some remarkable successes. His wide-reaching and global vision is confirmed by the fact that his experience includes the breeding of several species of animals – and those who have visited his stud know what



we are talking about. In his official role, he perfectly personifies the role that Dubai has in the world of horses, trying to help as much as possible with the development of breeds and improve further the environment, making it even more interesting. In a world like ours, which has experienced an unbelievable growth over the last few years, it is difficult to keep up with the times and novelties can undoubtedly help in this sense. As everyone in our environment knows, Dubai organizes the richest show in terms of prizes. When we talked to Mohammed

and the organizers of next year's show, he came up with an idea that could make the show even more interesting. Soon the organizers of the Dubai show will propose a new scoring system that differs from the one usually used as a reference, amending slightly the traditional ECAHO method, as the world championship in Paris already does. We wanted our readers to be given a preview of this idea.

TuttoArabi: Mr. Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi, in just one year and a half you have personally visited all the most famous stud farms in the world and had a chance to meet and speak with internationally renowned breeders and handlers. Even more importantly, you saw several competitions.

What is your plan and where does it come from?

In the past people have tried to make some kind of improvements in terms of scoring, but then this was not thoroughly tested and the method remained as it was, without any noteworthy changes.

Everyone can see the high quality that has characterized conformation shows, especially in the last few years. The idea you are referring to is essentially a simple one and aims at achieving three things: making the judges' work as manageable as possible, give the right credit to the competing horses and provide clear guidelines to the breeders that work with such passion.

Mohammed: Often the atmosphere becomes really tense due to inconsistent scoring among the various judges, rather than a homogeneous one. In some cases, then, a group of judges are not very uniform in the way they adjudicate so that the score of just one single judge becomes the defining one. How might this change be received? Changes often do not turn into an improvement... I think that every improvement can be beneficial for the entire sector: for the judges, who often give scores to very high quality horses that are almost equal, for breeders, who would be better equipped to interpret the overall score given to their competing horse, and for the public itself, which would undoubtedly enjoy a more "chilled" competition. I think that half points could have a good effect, for example in "B" and "C" shows, where competitiveness has now reached international level, not to mention that the judges need tools to assess the differences between the various horses.

How could this new scoring system, which has already been tested albeit in a different way from the one you have described, be developed technically? I think that this system can be used in some shows where the prizes are of particularly high value, to take some pressure off the judges, who often are in particularly difficult situations. When I see competitions I realize that judging is a very difficult task, especially because of the high quality of the competing horses. The message I would like to put out is absolutely positive and I am ready to exchange ideas and opinion on this.

The idea, to be applied to high level competitions,



is to use all the seven judges at the same time, removing the highest and the lowest score (obviously these two scores would remain secret) and work out the average of the remaining five judges. I have discussed about this method with several European organizers from the Middle East and America, for example Las Vegas, where this system will be adopted starting from next year. Now, where it has been adopted the result may not change, but I think that in this period, when all the

world's stud are investing huge sums of money, it is necessary to keep abreast with change and constantly devise new strategies. Giving organizers an option to adopt also this system could represent fur-



Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi with Simeon Sehavi, Menton 2008

ther progress of the many changes that have already been implemented.

And so our chat with Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi, Director of the Dubai Arabian Horse Stud comes to an end. We hope to have given our readers a useful framework for discussion, in line with the philosophy of our magazine, always ready to welcome changes and give space to new ideas, particularly those that are proposed by experienced and competent people. □

Mohammed Abdulla Al Tawhidi