

2014 U.S. NATIONALS

by ANNE STRATTON



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The good thing about the U.S. National Arabian and Half-Arabian Horse Show is that it lasts only nine days, because that's about all an aspiring titlist can stand. Tulsa Expo Square offers all kinds of conveniences, and this year plenty of people commented on how efficiently (most of) the show ran and how the schedule seemed to work—but it's still a pressure cooker of an experience for trainers and clients. Not to mention for horse lovers dashing from arena to arena, trying to catch it all. But ah, those nine days. If you're into main ring showing, this is where you see the best the breed has to offer in this country and from several others.

There were, literally, thousands of stories at this year's Nationals. Any narrative barely scratches the surface of this annual extravaganza, so what you will read here is a micro-view of the horses and people, the careful breeding and finely-tuned training, the great performances, the heritage, and ultimately, the camaraderie of the Arabian horse community.



Starting with the basic facts, the U.S. Nationals, October 17-25, 2014, saw a rise in the number of horses participating this year, said Bill Hughes, Chairman of the National Show Committee. In 2013, the total was approximately 1,750 horses; in 2014 1,795 were on the grounds, close to the maximum of what the facility can handle for this show. That was not all when it came to attendance. "I saw a lot of local people there," Hughes said. "That was really encouraging. It was like they finally realized we were there and came to support the show. There was a special excitement this year."



Most traditional disciplines were well-represented and exciting; just about everyone, when asked, commented on the general excellence of horses at the show, and there were stories of incredible performances from all the centerpiece divisions. Even so, thinking long term, the most significant story of the show may have been the extra attention paid to Trail, not normally the front-and-center activity of the show ring. This year the Trail division, which has been growing, was moved to the Pavilion in the days preceding halter competition, and English Trail was added to the routinely western tests. It was, AHA officials admitted, a gamble, but one that paid off.



The trick, Bill Hughes said, is that Trail is audience-friendly because it is easily understood. "People really get into it when they're watching it," he reported. "We see a lot of spectators hooting and hollering, and we need that. There are no politics to it because you're scoring each obstacle; you either do it or you don't, and you can look at the scorecard later and see what points you got for each one."

Its benefit to the breed goes beyond recruiting spectators, he pointed out. At this point in its development, because of its more relaxed physical requirements, retired horses from other disciplines can find new careers in Trail, which expands the market for horses and can attract new fans. The addition of English classes, which typically are shown in hunt attire, further diversifies the attraction. "That's a very growing area. You don't just change saddles to do that; you have to adjust the course for a different stride, because an English horse trots. It doesn't jog. Those are horses that would have gone into Sport Horse that can now come here and do this. We see amateurs particularly enjoying it."

The only difficulties this year appeared to be conflicts in terms of practice time in the Pavilion for the halter trainers, as trail courses were left up and start times were unclear, but management promised to rectify the situation in 2015.

The action at Tulsa was almost nonstop in three arenas, and by the end of the show, the refrain "wrote their names in the history books" was a reality for veteran performers and first-time national champions alike.



WHAT THEY SAID ABOUT *The 2014 U.S. Nationals*

"They improved the ambience of the Ford Truck Arena. That arena does not have great ambience, but they gave it a big-time horse show feeling. I noticed that as soon as I walked in and a lot of other people did too. Glen True [barn manager and Vice Chair of the U.S. National Show Commission] and his crew had a lot to do with it and are to be commended."

—Jim Lowe, *Lowe Show Horse Centre*

"At the U.S. Nationals 2014, I saw the best horse flesh that our breed has ever seen. As a breed, our trainers have mastered their craft in every division and our breeders have done the same. I salute and encourage our breeders to continue their well thought-out breeding programs (job well done). The level of competition and the quality of our horses was unbelievable!"

—Jason Krohn, *Oak Haven Arabians*

"For the most part, although the cards could be all over the place, when you looked at who won each class, you could see it. It may not have been your very favorite in the top three, but I think that whatever 'oh my' thought you might have had was more from how the horses had been scored than in the horses chosen."

—Wendy Potts, *Freewill Farm*

"I've been doing this a long time, and the electricity I saw in the ring on Friday and Saturday night was amazing—it was so positive."

—Stan Morey, *AHA Judges and Stewards Commissioner*

"I thought the quality was fantastic. As a country, I think we're breeding wonderful, beautiful, talented, and usable horses. And the AHDF fundraiser was incredible—it showed that there are people out there willing to support and get behind important programs."

—John Rannenberg, *Rohara*

The Highlights Of Halter

Again and again, you heard the observation that the quality was very high at U.S. Nationals in 2014. That may always be the official line, but this year everyone was saying it.

“One person made the comment that the scoring was a little high,” said Jack Thomas, one of the five-person halter panel of judges. “I thought, ‘But this is the national championship! The scores should be high!’ Overall, the quality was really good and the horses were presented very well. The babies were especially good—their Arabian type was so strong.”

By the time they got to the championships, he added, the judges were particularly pleased. “You could go in about any direction you wanted and you were okay because the quality was so good with those individuals.”

No one stallion’s bloodlines dominated the halter division this year, but one training operation did: Midwest, of Rogers, Minn., copped so many top titles that a recording might have been useful in announcing championships. Asked what he thought of this year’s show, trainer David Boggs responded, “That it’s time to go to Disney World! We are so grateful, we’re pinching ourselves!”



David Boggs and Janey Morse with U.S. National Champion Senior Mare Wieza Mocy.



David with Arabian Senior Stallion Champion Baahir El Marwan.

In the purebred championships alone, Boggs accounted for five wins and one reserve in the Fillies and Mares division, including both the junior and senior championships (with Wieza Mocy, Donna Molta Bella SRA, BH Beijings Velvet, and reserve titlist Leen Al Shaqab), and three national championships and two reserves in Colts and Stallions (Baahir El Marwan, E.S. Harir and reserve Sultan ORA). And then there was Midwest’s long list of top tens. “I credit my owners and my staff (Alcides Rodrigues, Dagmar Gorgiano, Rinaldo Longuini and Nate White),” Boggs said. “I got the honor of leading the horses in.

“Wieza Mocy is once in a lifetime,” he continued, citing the U.S. National Champion Mare, who is on lease from the state studs of Poland to Oak Ridge Arabians’ Janey Morse. “She’s been on a whirlwind and she’s one of the greatest, if not the greatest, mare I’ve ever handled in my life.” Before coming to Tulsa, the 4-year-old Wieza Mocy had been

named 2011 Polish National Champion Junior Filly, 2012 World Gold Champion Junior Filly at the Salon du Cheval, and this year, ABHA World Cup Supreme Champion Senior Mare and Arabian Breeder Finals Champion Mare.

“She’s so sweet,” Boggs noted of his star. “My son Jake, who’s only 8, is in love with her. He’s serious as a heartbeat when he told Janey that he’s selected her as his youth entry at Scottsdale—and Janey said okay, so don’t be surprised.”

Boggs was equally proud of Baahir El Marwan, who earlier this year had been named Scottsdale Supreme Champion Halter Horse and unanimous Grand Champion Senior Stallion. “He owned the ring and he went for it,” the trainer said. “You never want to count your chickens before they hatch, but when the judges handed in their cards, I just couldn’t imagine how he wouldn’t win because he was perfect.”

Baahir El Marwan is owned by Bassam Al Saqran, of Dubai, who also owns U.S. National Champion 3-Year-Old Filly and Filly 3 & Under (for the second consecutive year) Donna Molta Bella SRA, and E.S. Harir, U.S. National Champion 3-Year-Old Colt and Reserve Champion Colt 3 & Under.

The accomplished Midwest show string was not the whole story, however. Other faces made their presence known as well. In the Yearling Colt Championship, Conquest BR, showing with Greg Gallún, checked out with a record high score at the U.S. Nationals (398.5).

And Arabian Soul Partners Ltd. confirmed the potential they have for the future in the Arabian horse breed. The group fielded both the U.S. National Champion Yearling Filly, Pitonisa AS, and Soul Of Marwan AS, the U.S. National Champion Colt 3 & Under, who also was reserve in his yearling championship. Pitonisa AS, meanwhile, nailed the U.S. National Reserve Championship in Fillies 3 & Under. Sandro Pinha manages and shows the pair.

Arabian Soul Partners, Pinha said, came to Arabians International nearly four years ago with the goal of developing a world-recognized breeding program. “I believe we are on the right track,” he said. “You might not have noticed, but they also bred Soul Of Marwan AS.



Arabian Yearling Colt Champion Conquest BR, shown by Greg Gallún, with a record high score at the U.S. Nationals (398.5).

“From day one, it has always been about breeding good horses—the right kind of horses. Rodrigo and Alfredo love to ride; they are endurance riders (that’s how they got involved with Arabian horses). They made it clear: they want to buy horses that are sound in mind and body, and breed premium quality Arabians. We have been fortunate that since the beginning, they have walked away from every Scottsdale with a yearling champion and they have already won at Las Vegas. Now, they are ready to compete overseas. They have only started. We are beyond excited about the future.”

Already, Rodrigo and Alfredo and their wives are a hit in halter circles for their enthusiasm and enjoyment of competition. When Soul of Marwan AS won his 3 & Under title, Rodrigo showed off the excitement that every owner feels—to the delight of the crowd, he bolted into the ring and leapt into Sandro Pinha’s arms.

There were also the moments that touched the heart. “One was especially moving, as we found out later,” Jack Thomas recalled. “That was when Maureen Horton’s colt [Soltire TO] won his class [Futurity Colts]. As judges, we didn’t know it was her horse, but then afterwards, we realized who it was, and that she had bred that colt with her husband Ed, who passed away last year. It was so touching; the horse was beautiful.”

“My memory of the 2014 Nationals will be a great win,” Maureen Horton reflected. “But it was bittersweet, because

for the first time since our first U.S. Nationals in 1978, my sweet Ed was not with me to share it.”

And finally, there was the scoring snafu. Ask anyone in the halter division what could be improved for next year, and that issue was hands-down the one mentioned. On Wednesday and Thursday morning, the scoring devices the judges were using in place of the traditional paper and pen failed. It was not user error on the part of the judges; they were familiar with how the equipment worked and there had been tests and run-throughs, all of which had been successful. But two classes into the morning session, there was trouble. Unfortunately, the backup paper score cards were not on hand.

Judges and Stewards Commissioner Stan Morey was, and still is, frustrated. “We had been getting scores in fast and flashing them up,” he said, “and then all of the sudden, [the system] started going down. And it went from bad to worse. We got scores that weren’t correct, and we basically



Sandro Pinha with Arabian Junior Colt Champion Soul Of Marwan AS.



David Boggs with Arabian Junior Filly Champion Donna Molta Bella SRA.

lost scores on some horses and couldn’t get them back. The paper scoring sheets were numbered and ready to go, but not where they should have been. That was a failure on our part, because we were assured that the [devices] would work—and they had worked.

“Once we started going to paper, there were no more problems,” he continued, although he agreed that the time it took for that to happen was lengthy. Also, the problem was what to do about the lost or incorrect scores. “We didn’t know anything else to do but re-score the horses. That was the fair thing.”

The trouble was, the young horses affected, having already competed once, were left standing for a long interval before they competed again, and many handlers questioned how well they showed the second time around.

“I would say it publicly and have before, that wasn’t AHA’s best day,” Morey concluded. “It was a mistake. Changes have been addressed. This will be fixed.”

2014 U.S. NATIONAL CHAMPIONS *Arabian Halter*



Arabian Stallion 4 & Over Champion **BAAHIR EL MARWAN** (Marwan Al Shaqab x HB Bessolea), shown by David Boggs for owner Bassam Al Saqran.



Arabian Colt 3 & Under Champion **SOUL OF MARWAN AS** (Marwan Al Shaqab x RD Challs Angel), shown by Sandro Pinha for owner Arabian Soul Partners Ltd.



Arabian Stallion 8 & Over Champion **SKORONEEK LA** (Ecaho x BA Famous Lace), shown by Anthony Steiner for owners Eric and Michelle Loftis.



Arabian Stallion 6-7 Champion **BAAHIR EL MARWAN** (Marwan Al Shaqab x HB Bessolea), shown by David Boggs for owner Bassam Al Saqran.



Arabian Stallion 4-5 Champion **POLIDORO FC** (DA Valentino x Abba Palma), shown by Michael Byatt for owners Stuart and Sue Larsen.



Arabian 3-Year-Old Colt Champion **E.S. HARIR** (AJ Dinar x TF Magnums Magic), shown by David Boggs for owner Bassam Al Saqrان.



Arabian 2-Year-Old Colt Champion **CADANCE PA** (Cavalli x Donatella), shown by Sandro Pinha for owner Pegasus Arabians.



Arabian Yearling Colt Champion **CONQUEST BR** (Versace x Lee Anna Psy), shown by Greg Gallin for owner Conquest BR Partners LLC.



Arabian Futurity Colt Champion **SOLTIRE TO** (DA Valentino x Sol Natiq), shown by Keith Krichke for owner Thirteen Oaks Arabians.



Arabian Stallion AAOTH Champion **RD DYNAMO** (Bey Ambition x TF Falconsimprint), shown by owner Laura Koch.



Arabian Mare 4 & Over Champion **WIEZA MOCY** (QR Marc x Wieza Marzen), shown by David Boggs for owner Michalów State Stud.



Arabian Filly 3 & Under Champion **DONNA MOLTA BELLA SRA** (DA Valentino x RD Fabreanna), shown by David Boggs for owner Bassam Al Saqr.



Arabian Mare 8 & Over Champion **MYSTIC ROSE BHF** (Padrons Psyche x NV Ali Bey), shown by Keith Krichke for owner Jessie Szymanski.



Arabian Mare 6-7 Champion **GHAZALA EL JAMAAL** (Marwan Al Shaqab x Foxbriar Parysel), shown by Greg Gallin for owner Paul Anthony Clark.



Arabian Mare 4-5 Champion **WIEZA MOCY** (QR Marc x Wieza Marzen), shown by David Boggs for owner Michalów State Stud.



Arabian 3-Year-Old Filly Champion **VALENTINO'S ANGEL MI** (DA Valentino x Always An Angel), shown by Andrew Sellman for owner HRH Prince Abdullah Bin Fahad Al Saud.



Arabian 2-Year-Old Filly Champion **DONNA MOLTA BELLA SRA** (DA Valentino x RD Fabreanna), shown by David Boggs for owner Bassam Al Saqran.



Arabian Yearling Filly Champion **PITONISA AS** (Ever After NA x Psyche's Amber Dream), shown by Sandro Pinha for owner Arabian Soul Partners Ltd.



Arabian Futurity Filly Champion **BH BEIJINGS VELVET** (Beijing BHF x BH Versaces Velvet), shown by David Boggs for owners Judith Burton and Robert Burton IV.



Arabian Mare AAOth Champion **KHARISMAM** (DA Valentino x Kharmel BR), shown by owner Anthony Marino Jr.

MAGICAL *memories*

"My best memory of Nationals was winning on SA Gisele. She was raised at our home in Rancho Santa Fe until she went into training at Kiesners' as a 3-year-old. This was my first year showing 'our baby' and she has been undefeated all year long in the junior (with Joel) and amateur division. When her name was called out for national champion, I was flooded with emotion, and just such a proud 'mom!'"

—Lori Lawrence, Starline Arabians

"My best memory was seeing Conquest BR be U.S. National Champion Yearling Colt. Why? Because he recorded the highest score ever in the U.S. National Championships."

—Neil Braverman, Conquest BR Partners LLC.



Arabian Gelding 4 & Over Champion **BLACK OPZZ** (Aria Impresario x Miss Enzo JB), shown by Jeff Schall for owner Shuster Arabians LLC.



Arabian Gelding 3 & Under Champion **VINCENT PCF** (PCF Vision x Que Psarah), shown by Andrew Sellman for owner Culbreth Equine Training & Management LLC.



Arabian Gelding 8 & Over Champion **DC BENEDICT** (Besson Carol x Just One Look), shown by Andrew Sellman for owner Rica Mendel.



Arabian Gelding 6-7 Champion **PSUPERSTITIION** (Psyncopation x RAS Mirrada), shown by Andrew Sellman for owners Leslie and Michael Kvistad.



Arabian Gelding 4-5 Champion **BLACK OPZZ** (Aria Impresario x Miss Enzo JB), shown by Jeff Schall for owner Shuster Arabians LLC.



Arabian 3-Year-Old Gelding Champion **VINCENT PCF** (PCF Vision x Que Psarah), shown by Andrew Sellman for owner Culbreth Equine Training & Management LLC.

MAGICAL *memories*

“My best memory will be my colt Soltire TO, coming into the ring with Keith Krichke with such a big trot and showing himself so beautifully. And then winning the title of 2014 U.S. National Champion Futurity Colt. This grey colt struck me as very special from the day he was born. His dam, Sol Natique, is a great mare. She has produced many champions, but the most notable is Vitorio TO, owned by Janey Morse, a full brother to Soltire TO. I feel confident that this is just the beginning of a memorable and exciting journey with my ‘Solo’.”

—Maureen Horton, *Thirteen Oaks Arabians*

“My best memory was watching LLC Fasario on live feed during the supreme championship. He looked amazing to me! The most positive thing was that my very special horse was National Reserve Champion in a show that is very dear to me.”

—Luciana Fasano, *Fazenda Floresta*



Arabian 2-Year-Old Gelding Champion **VALLDEZ** (Valerio x AW Fortune Ngold), shown by Jeff Schall for owners Steve and Darla Miles.



Arabian Yearling Gelding Champion **TRULIA PRINCE** (Trussardi x Bella Satinata), shown by Jeff Schall for owner Dean Meier.



Arabian Futurity Gelding Champion **RD TEXCELLO BEY** (Bey Ambition x Enchanteress), shown by Claudinei Machado for owners Murray and Shirley Popplewell.



Arabian Gelding AAOTH Champion **DIGNITY ER** (Denali BHF x VH Starlight), shown by Sarah Medina for owner Sharon Day.