



HARC, BOUDHEIB ENDURANCE FESTIVAL 2017 & MONARCH AH

by Leigh Young ■ photos by Fabio Brianzoni, Leigh Young

Under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a great Equestrian Festival was held in Abu Dhabi during 8 days entirely dedicated to the Arabian Horse and its Welfare.

His Highness Sheikh Sultan has been instrumental in initiating both HARC & the Boudhie Initiative and fully supports both causes ensuring the long-term future of Arabians and endurance horses.

It all started on 4th March with a global conference & AGM for the Heritage Arabian Racing Club (HARC). HARC has now been running for 2 years and has gained incredible recognition worldwide in its endeavour to bring racing back to its traditional roots whilst preserving the bloodlines of pure Arabian race horses. HARC is a sponsor of many racing events worldwide and works hard to update the International breeders and support their growth and return to the sport.

Three main topics presented at the afternoon's conference: Racing, Marketing & Breeding for HARC did not disappoint. Fascinating talks were given by Anna Stojanowska on Polish Arabian Dam Lines from Sabda to Sephora, followed by Deirdre Hyde's wonderful 'History of Arabian Racing'. Finally on a more practical note, leading marketing expert, Evie Tubbs Sweeney from the USA, led us through the path she has taken

on delivery of a series of hugely successful HARC road shows to 5 of the top racing & Arabian show community destinations in America.

The success of HARC in improving the number of races and horses in training now has attracted 19 member countries including Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Iran, Egypt, Poland, Palestine, Russia, Tunisia, Sweden the UK & USA and many others including new to the fold, Uruguay, Italy, Spain and Romania.

Many countries and media from all over the world participated at the conference and it was a big success thanks to the events organization entrusted to Ms. Deirdre Hyde and Ms. Leigh Young. Ms. Hyde is also the Breeding Manager of W'RSAN Stables, the Arabian racing stud farm owned by H.H. Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

TuttoArabi was there to assist at the conference and report the news and we are delighted that Italy is being added to HARC's associated countries, even though for the first 2 years funding is limited in order to assist the few available HARC horses to travel & race in other European countries HARC races.

On day two, TuttoArabi had the pleasure and privilege to visit W'rsan Stables where, in addition to the beautiful

Arabian horses, H.H. Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan breeds famous desert Saluki hounds, one of the most ancient dog breeds known which, thanks to its strength and speed, has travelled through history together with the desert nomads.

The purpose of this memorable day was to honor the 30th birthday of MONARCH AH (Wiking x Sasanka by Almifar) a legendary stallion born in the USA on 5th March 1987 who is the foundation sire of W'sran. Many international guests were invited including Mr. & Mrs. Charlie Watts, Mrs. Anna Stojanoska, Mr Jerzy Bialobok and Mr. Marek Trela, (who is now Farm Manager of

W'sran.) All of them very famous breeders of Polish Arabian Horses. Of course Mr. Charlie Watts is also famous as the drummer of the Rolling Stones.

To finish a perfect day, we were then invited to go racing at Abu Dhabi race track where we had a lot of fun. W'sran Stables, the extent of which amounts to 6x4km, boasts 550 Arabian horses, enormous grass paddocks and boxes, a clinic together with its own insemination centre and great training facilities for current and future champions.

By day 3 the Boudhieb Endurance Festival got underway with 2 days of qualifying rides, followed by the much



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awaited Boudheib Initiative Worldwide conference, held at Boudheib's Endurance village in Abu Dhabi, where International guests and speakers from many major endurance countries around the world congregated to discuss the 'Welfare of the Endurance Horse'. Continuing onwards from the 9th-11th March were 3 days of endurance including the CEI 3*240km (3 x 80km) HH Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Endurance Festival Cup.

The conference was particularly interesting with introductions to the panel and thanks to His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his unwavering

support for the 'Welfare of the Horse' made by H.E. Senan Al Muheiri - EHC CEO for Activities and Events. Followed by introductions of the international guest speakers by Dr. Dwight Hooton, veterinarian, horse welfare provocateur and member of the FEI Veterinary Committee.

Honoured guest HRH Princess Alia Bint Hussein of Jordan gave an inspiring address to the packed audience, firstly honouring women around the world celebrating International Ladies Day and leading onto an in depth report on 'our fellow companions in all equestrian sports, the horse, which often is forgotten in the endeavour to



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win at all costs. Our horses deserve our respect as we are not able to achieve any results without them'. HRH Princess Alia made it clear that to win when afterwards the horse is spending the night in the hospital is no achievement!

One of the many speakers with a wealth of endurance experience was Dr. Martha Mischeff, veterinary representative of Boudheib's Organising Committee with 20 years endurance involvement here in the Middle East, spoke about His Highness Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan's encouragement of good horsemanship. She

said 'We have for so long now seen riders, particularly the women, out on the tracks completely out of control - there is a much need for improved riding skills'.

Boudheib Organising Committee member, Ms. Deirdre Hyde, discussed statistics which included a staggering 12,000 endurance horses registered with the Federation here in the UAE. Ms. Hyde went on to recognise the many firsts credited to Boudheib: Computer Timing, GPS tracking, Presentation Time of 56 bpm, introduction of natural trails and other measures to make fair competition and objective assessment. In her frequent discussions



with H.H. Sheikh Sultan, His Highness was so distressed by the continuing lack of respect for the endurance horse, he declared 'Fix it or we stop, no compromise!' Out of this the Boudheib Initiative was born and we have been overwhelmed by the global response. Ms. Hyde is 'grateful and proud to be part of His Highness Sheikh Sultan's Initiative taking a step in what we consider to be the right direction'.

Roly Owers began his address with thanks to His Highness Sheikh Sultan for speaking at the World Horse Organisation (WHO) conference in London last

November. He went on to say welfare of the horse can never be put 2nd - the horse owes us nothing, the horse must always be put FIRST. Responsible horse sport is our fundamental and personal responsibility.

USA 3 time winner of the Endurance Triple Crown of North America and award winner for best condition at each of his three wins, John Crandell is proud that his horse is still sound and going strong at 19 years of age. John has been in endurance for 40 years and states that Endurance could be the only sport in which we truly give

back to the horse. The test for the animal, what is he prepared for? Adapted to many types of terrain and their genetics are forged for this. The horse is a great gift and we need to take care of them for generations to come.

Ahmed Samarraie's presentation on the current German situation in endurance sport was agreeing in general with views from other countries that the sport has a loss of clean image, young riders are less interested in the sport, sponsorship issues exist, there is a damaged market for endurance horses and public opinion views that there are many 'bad' international riders coming from this region.

Coach Johannes Versleijen of the Abu Dhabi Al Jazira Sports Football Club gave an address offering a link between training and injury in football and horses. Football is an interval and contact sport with specific rules to consider when training. Forward planning is paramount, always having to consider what will happen next, where are your team mates, technical skills need to be used in 90 minutes and his physical training is adapted to that time frame. No game is the same, you need stamina, strength, coordination and endurance, there can be extra time and penalties, so one needs ability

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to recover quickly. The number of high intensity runs has increased markedly in the last 10 years, now there is little time on the ball but the field of play hasn't changed nor the number of players. 'This is how I prepare my complex training sessions on knowledge of the facts & data as well as the mental, technical and physical aspects. Overtraining is a major concern as this causes stress injuries that are avoidable with full understanding of training physiology; this year there has been a decrease in injuries - training has significantly changed in the last few years and careful planning is always at the forefron.

There are many recoveries to address, from the millisecond recoveries within the muscle cells to the daylong rest following the game. Sleep, food and rest are the best way for complete recovery and the 2nd day complete rest is essential when your muscles are at their most tired.' Dr Hooton surmised later, the same principles apply in horse sport of endurance especially when training for natural trails.

Sara Bernard, specialist sport horse nutritionist from UK based horse feed supplier Dodson & Horrell told us of techniques for feeding and supporting the endurance



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horse. Twenty years of feeding sport horses in the Middle East has demonstrated that extreme temperatures, lack of natural grass, and overcoming hydration issues are prime priorities to support muscle function and recovery. Dodson & Horrell has a distributor, Horse & Coarse here in the UAE and are pleased to assist in any nutritional benefit issues you may wish to discuss. Florac's world famous Jean-Paul Boudon, has been organising Florac trails for the last 18 years and an endurance rider for more than 40. At that time J.P. Boudon began riding 160km and was part of the

world group creating the rules of endurance at the outset. He discovered all the qualities and capacities of the pure Arabian horse, and is now a breeder, trainer and trail designer. He noted 'There have been two stages in endurance, first, game & pleasure and now in the second period with business and money at its core enables breeding to continue. The tracks have become flatter and faster, evolution of horses and equipment, without generalisation, riders, trainers, breeders nowadays do not value their horses, they do it for profit in sales of horses so the horse is



no longer a riding partner. It has become a means to make money resulting in doping, cheating and lack of welfare. Thanks to the encouragement of initiatives from Boudheib, M. Boudon is very proud to announce new innovations for 2017 Florac which will now be returning to more traditional tracks, longer phases and steep hills with 10 minutes holding time for horses to drink, rest and eat in between these long loops, all new innovations returning Florac endurance back to its true origins and valued time honoured traditions, To win is to Finish!

With an eye to one of Sheikh Sultan's keen interests encouraging good horsemanship to young people coming into the sport of endurance, Sybille Merkhart, well known international endurance rider from Southern Germany, is very involved in teaching young riders new to endurance and is very keen to promote the word of Boudheib in her homeland, installing the importance of the welfare of the horse to young riders.

Belgium's Leonard Liesens, head of endurance, recounted that he was on the verge of giving up and became

ashamed to say he was an endurance rider due to the cheating, doping, death of horses and increasing lack of horsemanship. 'Horse & rider should be in full harmony. Crewing is becoming paramount in the minds of many and they don't listen to the horse any more, reading the trail and giving the horse the opportunity to slow down and recover after a steep hill, thus allowing your horse to use less energy and is thereby better able to continue.' Leonard believes one can see the light vanishing in the horses eyes - they are subjected to having water poured over them instead of being able

to drink, and in the middle east riding has become a jockey endeavor promoted by the trainer. Leonard has an idea, 'the Boudheib Protocol is something fantastic', and thanks to Sheikh Sultan the solution can probably be adapted to all rides in Europe. Having ridden the Tevis from start to finish, it is only the horse and rider alone; Liesens suggests new regulations to slow speed and reduce abusers of the horses. Snacks & water for both horse & rider at various rest areas, no crew allowed to touch the horse, same discipline at the vet gates with riders only able to take care of his horse (if the rider is

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not able to do the trot up, then he is not a fit sportsman so cannot continue). Once again, as has been discussed many times throughout the Boudheib conference, good horsemanship is key. John Crandell concurred, having taken part and won in the USA Cavalry rides of 160km these are exactly the principles, horse & rider are one, there are NO crews!

Dr. Dwight Hooton's summary of the day reminds us all that the horse should be fit to continue at all stages including the finish, and that fit to finish is not an acceptable criteria. Horses "dead in eyes" and unable to prick their ears due to exhaustion may continue to trot until they collapse but this does not represent "fit to continue". The Boudheib Protocol is still in a developmental phase and the intention is to create an app to follow progress throughout the races. Dr Hooton also asked that we specifically define 'what is horsemanship?' as this vital concept is key to the future success of horse sports.

The Boudheib Initiative Worldwide conference was an incredibly powerful salute to the endurance horse and its future welfare. Huge thanks were expressed to all the speakers concerned for their commitment to ensuring a healthy future for the sport and gratitude was expressed by all concerned to His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan for his continuing efforts in

Driving the Future of Endurance.
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Invited guests & Speakers included:
 HRH Princess Alia bint Hussein of Jordan
 Roly Owers, UK
 (World Horse Welfare)
 Melanie Scott, AUSTRALIA
 (AERA President)
 Jean-Paul Boudon, FRANCE
 (Organiser FLORAC)
 Christele Derosch, FRANCE
 (Organiser PERSIK TRAIL)
 Ahmed Samarraie, GERMANY
 (Holds National Champs)
 Leonard Liessens, BELGIUM
 (Head of Endurance)
 John Crandell, USA
 (Endurance Promotion)
 Susan Koekemoer RSA
 (Organizer RSA largest Endurance Club)

Sybille Merkhart, Southern GERMANY
 (Endurance Organiser)
 Kevin Croke IRELAND
 (FEI 4* Judge)
 Kseniia Horbunova, Ukraine
 Francois Kerboul FRANCE
 (FEI 4* Judge & Boudheib Official Timekeeper)
 Christian Lozano FRANCE
 (Head of Boudheib Vet Delegation)
 Franz Arts, NEDERLANDS
 (Senior Endurance Vet)
 Sarah Coombs, UK - Foreign Vet delegate (Vet Panel)
 Antonia Mota, PORTUGAL
 (Vet Panel) (President Vet Commission)

Enjoy the pictures from the conference.
 We invite you to be in Boudheib next year and follow HARC's news by our email blasts and HARC's website: www.harchorses.com and you can follow Boudheib endurance on [www.facebook@boudheib](https://www.facebook.com/boudheib). □

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