



EDUCATION FOR THE WIN

by Mirosław Kołodziej

Two years ago, we came up with a plan: let's foster a growth mindset amongst Polish Arabian horse breeders. Sounds neat, doesn't it? By then the wheels had already been set in motion to transform the Polish Arabian Horse Breeders Association into a "public benefit organisation" – this would grant us tax exemptions or free-of-charge access to public media, but first and foremost it would enable us to better educate the public about purebred Arabians and would make our charity work a lot easier. At the end of 2023, PAHBA was granted the status of PBO and it did in fact change a lot for us. For the better.

A lot has changed in recent years. First, the new Board of the Polish Arabian Horse Breeders Association were elected which turned out to be a game-changer. Headed by Mateusz Leniewicz-Jaworski who is backed-up by Tomasz Tarczyński, Magdalena Helak-Kulczyńska, Marek Błaszczewicz and Łukasz Goździalski, the Association started growing again, gaining new members and conquering new fields of activity. The biggest institution in Poland that nurtures the prosperity of state studs and private breeders alike also implemented a new social media and communications policy that would help PAHBA better promote Polish horses around the world, highlighting the successes and vision of their breeders. All that with no support from the central government or agricultural agencies, and financed solely from our members' annual premiums and generous support of our friends.

A new chapter is open

Our first course took place at the turn of September and October 2023, and you could say it was one of the final items on the checklist to become a PBO. Earlier that year, we organised a highly successful charity auction for Przyjazny Dom during the All-Polish Arabian Horse Championship in Tarnów. "The Friendly House", that's what the name of that institution means in Polish, is a foster home for local kids. It took us half an hour to raise 17,250€ after the final championship-qualifying class had ended. Our members, the Rzepka Family who own Klikowa Arabians, then invited the kids to their stables to show them Arabian horses up close. This year, we repeated the auction and raised 20.500€ for Słoneczny Dom, or "The Sunny House", another local foster home, and we will continue to support kids this way in the years to come.





The 2023 edition of the All-Polish Arabian Horse Championship was a success too. Pre-COVID, this show had been organised by Stanisław Redestowicz in Radom. It was a popular National B-show that brought together a large part of the Polish Arabian community for a laid-back weekend of fun spent in good company. It was ambitious and risky to stage a revival of a show that people loved, but already in ancient Rome people knew that "Fortune favours the bold". And speaking of favours, fate was in our favour – there can be no doubt about that...

One of the judges at that show was Bérengère Fayt of Faber Arabians, a well-known and accomplished breeder and judge with incredible insight into the purebred Arabian horse. When she's not judging and looking after her horses, she travels the world as a mentor and teacher to fellow breeders. This year, she was a guest of honour at the first-ever Arabian horse show in Slovenia organised by our friends from Vineyard Arabians, the Vrančič Family.

Make hay while the sun shines

In 2023 after the show in Tarnów, we invited Bérengère to share her knowledge, experience, and passion with Polish breeders. Come autumn, we met in Grabów nad Pilicą Arabian Horse Stud. It was the first of our courses after we'd opened a new chapter in the history of our Association. The DC & Judging Course and Breeding Seminar, at which Bérengère together with Tomasz

Tarczyński, Farhang Fazeli and Mariusz Liśkiewicz were instructors, was a triumph. Several people who participated have already finished their probation as judges and will soon become judges in their own right, others chose the path of DCs. And we're proud of them. We were still new to this even though years ago the Association did organise similar courses. Still, in a new reality, nothing ever is as simple as one would wish. But we realised it would've been pointless to rest on our laurels, because we had just identified an almost insatiable hunger for knowledge! So we continued our efforts looking for the most interesting teachers we could find.

As we all know, Arabians are not just show horses. They are both beautiful and BRAVE. That's why so many of us go to races, participate in endurance competitions, or dabble in amateur sports – leisure, fun, pleasure (and every now and then, a little gambling). It was then only logical that we organise a dressage course. We invited Agnieszka Kolek-Kowieska, a graduate of Janów Podlaski Stud and accomplished rider who has won countless awards with her horses, to play the part of sensei at our next course. She accepted and last spring she coached a group of young equestriennes in the arcane art of dressage. Some of them, you could later see participating – and winning! – at the European Championship for Arabian Sport Horses in Wiener Neustadt or at the All Nations Cup in Aachen. Education for the win, literally.

Next came the ECAHO DC Course which preceded





the 2024 All-Polish Arabian Horse Championship. Here the teachers were Janet Court and Dr Nils Ismer, and it was the first time the Association organised an international teaching experience. We had students not only from Poland, but also Italy, Denmark, even Kuwait and Australia! But this time, the course was a lot more complex and tough, as the practical part lasted two days. That's right: two days in the scorching sun labouring as disciples of Janet, Nils and Farhang who joined them to help them get a massive group of followers under control. Once again, we were pleased to hear two magic words that Janet spoke with a broad smile on her face after the show: "Everyone passed".

Aim for the stars

The news that the Polish Arabian Horse Breeders Association organises international courses for breeders and professionals working in the purebred industry seems to be travelling far and wide. This autumn, back by popular demand, we put together another Judging

Course and Breeding Seminar, this time at Klikowa Arabians. We had 25 students from all over Poland, but also from Iran and a delegation from our fellow Arabian horse breeders association from Sweden, Svenska Arabhästföreningen. Those were two very intense days, packed with so much knowledge that even though we started in the morning, it took us until the early evening to cover the entire curriculum.

Even the list of teachers was quite impressive: Scott Benjamin, Allan Preston, Kathleen Ohlsson, Antonia Bautista, Łukasz Goździalski and Tomasz Tarczyński. By the way, when is the last time you had six lecturers and instructors take you on an educational journey to the realm of Arabians over a mere weekend? If you're thinking it must have been a crazy experiment on our part, you'd be right. But as we've said ourselves a couple of paragraphs above "audentes Fortuna iuvat".

We began with the most rudimentary of fundamentals, going as far back in history as 50 million years, all the way to the fox-sized forest-dwelling cute Eohippus. We





covered the basic anatomy of modern horses, analysing all major body parts one by one, sometimes in excruciating detail, and still the students would ask questions. We discussed the purebred Arabian type, how and where this majestic breed evolved, most frequent and commonplace posture defects, faults and deficiencies, all four correct gaits, some of the most famous Arabians that roamed the global show stage over the past several decades, but also how to score, how to judge, what to look for in horses and why. It took us “only” 18 hours to do that and our teachers were gracious enough to answer all questions and dispel any doubts their students might have in a very thorough manner, for instance taking them step by step through the process of judging.

What the students also loved, and I’m not afraid to use that word, are the private, at times almost intimate, insights that our six mentors shared with them. Kathleen, Antonia and Łukasz told them their life stories, how they discovered Arabian horses, their first adventures in the world of purebred Arabians, their dreams and ambitions from the time when they were kids and teen – and how it impacted their decisions as adults. They spoke of their successes, mistakes, the horses they were proud of, what they personally look for in horses. They shared something of a more intangible nature that you simply won’t find in any textbook. And whenever they would share those special memories, you could see how the room fell silent, everyone taking in every little word spoken.

After all that, came the practical part. Whoever thought judging was easy was ruthlessly proven wrong. Maybe not ruthlessly, but stripped of any illusions judging is not a challenge nonetheless. The Rzepka Family hand-picked several horses from their stables, among them Prometeusz, the handsome son of Pianissima by FA El Shawan. Equipped in various scorecards, the longest of which had 24 items to be evaluated, the students got to work. The mock classes were followed by a mock championship, so they could test their skills to the fullest extent and after they were done, they returned all their scorecards to Tomasz Tarczyński. What followed was a written open-book exam – again, not as easy as it may sound. If one hadn’t been paying attention, well... you know the rest. Nevertheless, from what I was told, it looks like we are going to have some new probationer judges at European shows, so job well done!

More in store

Education is one of the Associations statutory objectives and we take it very seriously. This hunger for knowledge is not going away and even the best videos are not going to replace a real-life course during which you can freely interact with teachers, colleagues and fellow breeders. Next year, we will continue organising courses and everyone is invited – no matter where you’re from, come and learn with us.

And make sure to save the date 5-6 July 2025! The success of the two editions of the All-Polish Arabian Horse Championship in Tarnów as a B National show prompted us to once again refine the formula. Next year, there will be two back-to-back shows in the former city of the princely Sanguszko Family: B International and European. We shan’t tell you more now, however, we are certain this will be major Arabian horse event strategically organised between the two continental European legs of GCAT 2025. We hope to see many horses from all over Europe and farther corners of the world, and we count on you to enter the best you have in your stables. Have we got a deal? □

