

ArabianSportHorse

Scandinavian



by Göran Ericsson ■ photos by Stefan Uppström, Gigi Grasso

It's Friday morning, 18 July 2008, just before 7 o'clock in the morning when I step out from my overnight room which is located at the west side of the old stable. It looks like the weather is going to hold out for today's outdoor activities. It's always the weather, that one thing that is out of our control and yet so important for everything to work out the way we want. Some occasional light rain is OK, we can live with that, but continuous rain or heavy rain showers would destroy or at least disturb the event schedule and could even make some outdoor events impossible to dispatch. And today is the day when the real thing starts. Formally the event started yesterday with young horses' test in showjumping, dressage and western riding and we also had quality checks for the first time ever in Sweden on Arabian breeds. But that felt more like a warm-up. The event that is about to begin now is the one that counts. The weather must hold. We will start the competitions with dressage at a lower level in two separate arenas at the same time, one indoor and one outdoor. Apart from that, we will have a lot of western competitions in the outdoor arena. My thoughts are jumping from one part of the event to another; apart from the weather, is there anything that we have missed during the planning phase that I can correct now? My experience from these events tells me that if everything is planned and prepared as it should be and everything works out, I will just have to ride around on my bicycle in a relaxed manner and just offer a helping hand or support whenever needed. Before I start my ride down the hill to the event office, I knock on the door next to mine. That is the room of Mrs. Töte Moddermann, chairman of the ECAHO sport commission. She is here to supervise the event. She has told me that she is very curious about how we manage the event, because with 70 competing horses making almost 400 entries it is probably the biggest Arabian Sport Horse event in Europe. I picked her up at the airport yesterday evening and when we arrived at the event place, she told me that she had forgotten her alarm clock so I had to give her door a knock every morning.

So this year it was more important than ever that everything worked out as it was supposed to without too much assistance on my part, so that I could be a good host and the

competitions would make a good impression on Mrs. Moddermann.

As I ride my bicycle I suddenly realize that this complete organization of about 45 persons, the buildup and organizing of The Scandinavian Arabian Sport Horse Championships is almost like assembling a bicycle;

First you need two strong, solid hubs. If they crack, the bicycle will fall apart. Our forward hub is the show office. Hm... There we have Kicki and Helena with some moral support from Arne - it will hold for everything, even an earthquake. The second one, the one with gears, consists of the team that makes the arenas change its shape to accept riders from one discipline to another. There we have Jörgen and Allan. No, there won't be any problem in that section either. If this bicycle falls apart it won't be due to weak hubs, that's for sure.

The rims consist of the judges, the arena planners, the speakers, the people who conduct the prize ceremonies, the restaurant staff. We had some problems as a couple of dressage judges suddenly had to be somewhere else, and also, very satisfying, there were a lot of entries to the dressage low levels, which put us in a situation where we were lacking judges, but in the end we succeeded in filling up the vacancies. So the judges are in place. And so are our two speakers, Stefan and Lotta, each one of them with more than enough experience from shows like this to take over my role as a show leader anytime. And then we have the other Lotta at the restaurant. A function that very often is underestimated when you have it, but very missed when it's not there. To be honest it is a very essential part of the show.

So it's confirmed, both rims are round and accurate. What we need now is plenty of spokes to support the rims and open up a communication between the hubs and the rims. These are the judge assistants, the guys who check the protocols, run with messages between the arenas and the show office, let riders in and out of the arenas, assist in building obstacles for the showjumping classes, etc. At first you might think that anyone could be one of these spokes, but that's not true. If you want everything to move fast and smooth you need highly qualified and experienced people. I slow down the bike and think... do we really have the right amount

Championships

ArabianSportHorse

Scandinavian

of qualified spokes for this bicycle? We really need a lot of spokes. I must remember to check this. Yes we could make do without one or two of them, the only thing that happens is that the other ones will have to take more pressure. But if we lack too many spokes the wheel will start to wobble and will not have a smooth ride. We will get interferences, the event schedule will not hold, people will be irritated and they will remember this and they will be very reluctant to show up next year.

I'm releasing the brake on my bike, letting the speed increase as the slope declines and the road passes through the camping area. There are tents and caravans on both sides of the narrow road. People start to wake up. Some of them are eating breakfast, others are slowly moving down to the show stables to take care of their horses or prepare for the day's first contest. A pleasant feeling comes over me when I realize that this is a true Scandinavian tradition. We don't need hotels; we settle with tents and caravans or mobile homes. We can even sleep in the horse trailer once we have removed most of the manure. That's the way we are, adjustable people. These small homes vary in size and standard and they are very close to each other. People living like this for the weekend have one thing in common - Arabian purebreds. So when they start chatting to their nearest neighbor; they talk about horses, equipment, different types of disciplines and so on. Very soon these talks are spreading geographically to other parts of this small society and suddenly there are groups of people gathering around some candle lights and having barbecues and small parties in the evening. I stop my bike to take a look at this temporary village and it strikes me that the people who live in these tents and caravans come from Ystad, in the south of Sweden, and Örnköldsvik in the North - both cities are located approximately 600 km from the eventing place. So normally they live 1200 km apart from each other. And then we have some people from Norway. They have



The Swedish Arabian Sport Horse Team that went to participate in the EC in Austria and was very successful. Linda Carlsson is missing in the picture.



Greta Wilkesson - Maradonn. Parted the high point rider title with Eleonore Danielsson.



Eleonore Danielsson - Hampur. The other high point rider. And later goldmedalist in the EC wester pleasure.



probably also travelled about 600 km to get here. (Nobody from Finland or Denmark this year). And all these people meet here over one common interest - the Arabian sport horse. And not only have we created an event where horses and riders compete with each other in different disciplines. No, we have also created a party, a big fiesta, like a folkloristic holiday for Scandinavians, and since about 30% of the contestants are below 20 years of age, and therefore need the help of their parents to get to the event, and about 24% are over 35 years old and probably, in most cases, bring their own families along, it's not only folklore but also a party for families. Let's call it an enormous 4-day long Scandinavian family party! Fantastic!

My thought brings me back to the similarity between arranging this event and building a bicycle; all these people are the tires, or maybe rather the air in the tires. Yep, that's right, these people are the ones who blow this event alive and the horses are the tires that have to take the hits and feel

Johanna Frunck - Shejk El Kashmir, Showjumping Champion and also super Cup Champion. Bronzemedalist in the EC.

Championships



Our dressage ace Linda Carlsson - Chocco receiving price the swedish dressage championships from the hand of Mrs Toto Moddermann.



Linda Carlsson Showing on Chocco.

of the braking action.

My bike starts rolling again and after a short while I'm between the indoor arena and the show stables. The frame, that's what holds everything together. And the frame in this case is the place for this event, an old heritage by the name of Näsbyholm which is situated in the vicinity of the small city of Strängnäs, about 120 km west of Stockholm. This is where Susanne and Greger designed a very functional place for various disciplines in horse competitions. It's the fourth year in a row that we have used this place for the event and the indoor arena has gone through some development during the years. The first year there was room for about 100 spectators. With some rebuilding during the years, the arena now accommodates another 200 spectators. The stables went through the same kind of development; when we started here, four years ago, there was room for approximately 50 horses. Today, Näsbyholm can accommodate about 90 horses. I only have two doubts left, when it comes to Näsbyholm; have we once again grown so much that there won't be enough room for all spectators? And, apart from that, if the weather gets real adverse, like it was the first year, we would



Magdalena Trönberg - JR Lazincja - winner of the cross country.

need another indoor arena. A real aesthete would probably wish for greener surroundings, but as the old saying goes, "Rome wasn't built in a day". I arrive at the show office, which the girls of course already have opened and of which they also have total control over. They look at me with eyes that I interpret like, "If you don't have anything important to say, get lost"! So I turn around in the doorway and head for the restaurant, which is located next to the show office. I grab some breakfast and after a few seconds of reluctance, I choose to eat it in the restaurant. No one calls for me, no contestant wants to ask me anything. I can actually sit down by myself and eat my breakfast without any disturbance whatsoever. This has never happened before and I realize instantly that it is thanks to the professional girls in the show office. So I let my mind concentrate on the bicycle assembly. The driveline, the chain, that's the planning of the event. It starts in January and has meant, for a lot of persons, some travel-



The Autor and Show leader on one of the inspection rounds.



ArabianSportHorse

Scandinavian

ling by car, meetings, telephone conferences, and for my own part 509 incoming emails, which I have answered all and sent at least 100 more of my own free will. If the planning isn't good enough, if each link in the chain isn't perfectly manufactured, it will break sooner or later and the whole event will stop. Fortunately, most of us have enough experience to repair it, at least temporarily, so the event can go on.

So now the bicycle is ready for use. Who's riding it? Which is the strength that makes it move forward and who is steering it? Well the strength, the muscles, is delivered by SAHF (The Swedish Arabian Horse Association). It makes the bike move forward, and takes the economic consequences if needed. The brain that moves the bike in the right direction, and shifts gear when necessary, is AHIS (The Swedish Arabian Sport horse association).

I wake up from my dreams by Mrs. Moddermann, who takes a seat on the opposite side of the table and says with a smile "This is going to be so exciting".

And it really became exciting. Mrs. Moddermann witnessed the high quality of contestants and, to quote her own words, "both when it comes to riders and horses". As I understood it, she thought that the quality of both riders and horses was slightly higher than the European average and it holds true for all levels and disciplines. I was later to discover that this lady, sitting opposite to me, has a fantastic eye for riders and horses. She is actually able to tell the score each rider would get in the dressage contests before they entered the arena. This is true! When I checked the scores for some of the riders I was amazed to find out that there was just one or two percent difference between the judges scoring and what she had predicted beforehand. She is, as a true Arabian horse lover, also fascinated when she sees high class riders and horses. And when our Swedish Arabian horse dressage ace, Linda Carlsson, made a world-class performance, (I'm not exaggerating), on her horse Chocco, performing an Intermediare dressage course, Mrs. Moddermann said that if she rides like that during the EC, she will win for sure. (By now we all know that she ended up with a bronze medal, trailing by only 1% from the silver and 4% from the gold. The 2000-kilometer trip had probably taken some strength away from Chocco). I'm also quite sure that the cheerful and happy atmosphere that was there all the time, even though the contesting was taken seriously, made a great impact on Mrs. Moddermann. Have I started bragging now? Anyhow I'm sure it's true, and it is what



Our Pole bending Queen, Josefine Ågren - Diesel. EC gold medalist in Show jumping and Cross Country.



Caroline Ericsson - Rүүben, tried very hard to beat everyone else and ended up as no 3 in the alround super cup.

I've been telling everyone. I'm also sure that the large and interested audience made an impression too. So was there no criticism at all? Of course there was. Our speed was not exactly according to Green Book. The remarks are noted and we will correct next year.

So I don't think that we got the highest grades from Mrs. Moddermann but I'm sure that we passed the test.

The fact that we succeeded to invite the audience to some free clinics like Arabian horse racing, show and halter, re-mounting a lost horseshoe, saddle testing, debate about the dressage judges, evaluation of the Arabian horse compared to the warmblood, and the extra dressage shows that Linda Carlsson and Tina Karlsson let us enjoy made this event a little bit more educating and extensive than what's common, and I think it's really great that we were able to offer that to all these contestants that are training and trying so hard to learn more and to ride the Arabian horse better.

I'm not going to bore you all by telling you about all the thoughts that I had every time I was riding my bike up and down the hill between my overnight room to the show office, but I'm going to tell you about one last thought that I had. Sunday, when the prize ceremony was over and I was riding my bike for the last time to my room and I saw everyone packing and demounting their tents, I was hoping to see them all next year and that the space for each tent is smaller, because that means that there will be even more contestants, making this huge family and Arabian Sport Horse party even bigger and letting more people from different part of Scandinavia meet each other and talk Arabian Sport horses. And next year, I will set my bike saddle a little bit higher, adjust the handlebars just a tiny bit, and put a few drops more oil into the chain. □