

The ALJASSIMIYA

AMATEUR CHALLENGE

by Emma Maxwell

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Arabian show horses can be divided broadly into a tiny “celebrity” division and vast background of “citizen” horses. The ECAHO show pyramid was originally set up with a large number of C shows, intended to provide a competitive base for the ‘citizens’. There were a smaller number of top level of A shows to provide a Championship level for the very top end of horses; with B shows as a bridging level in between. The Pyramid was set up when there were many more breeders in Europe of a significant size and most people showed most horses within their general location. Large distances were only travelled with a select few horses to the high end shows. Now the top level shows are dominated by an international ‘celebrity’ horse circuit of horses which can travel three continents in one year. This has sucked up the attention of all breed fans and changed the show landscape all the way down the C level. C level shows are now sometimes only providing a qualification level for ‘wannabe celebrities’, presented by the same professional handling teams you can find at top level. The owner who wants to show a good “citizen” Arabian in



his own area without excessive expense has nowhere to go without feeling like the extra in a film set, told to go and stand in the background, with no lines to say.

Many shows tried to tackle the problem restricting entry by geography or Amateur status but the one which got its foot in the door was the European Amateur Cup in 2014 which devised an Amateur only system with a new judging perspective. They use not only the usual five topics but an additional two categories which assess the performance of the horse and handler combination with an advantage awarded to horses shown in a balanced and respectful way. Firstly “Presentation” which assess the accuracy of the stand, walk and trot and secondly the “Harmony” of the interaction between horse and handler. Furthermore the Amateurs are graded by level of experience so true Novices do not have to share the ring with handlers who have already completed some years at showing, and are expecting to do a more flamboyant style of show. It is not just the halter classes which made the show stand out but also the addition of three simple riding



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classes, in Classic, Hunter and Western styles run under ECAHO Green Book rules, plus the Trail division. Trail is an American class from the Western division which was not widely used in Europe before but which offers a really fun way of training your horse to be obedient and accurate over a selection of obstacles. Once started the Trail classes have gradually grown in popularity and are now contested by all age groups from our youngest competitors of 8 years old to some of our A list judges ! These three divisions halter / riding and trail provide a more attractive view of the overall qualities of the Arabian breed displaying that the Arabian is not only beautiful but can also be rideable, intelligent and good natured and the 'citizen' Arabian has found his place.

In 2015 two shows were held in Belgium which built upon the success of that first show and the European Amateur Cup Show Organisation (EACSO) ideas. These shows and the idea behind them caught the attention of Sheikh Jassim Bin Khalifa Al Thani who was looking for ways to encourage more young people into the breed. He offered a sponsorship to

the shows and developed attractive prizes for the winning handlers to come to Paris as guests of Aljassimya Farm and the Aljassimya Amateur Challenge (AAC) started on its journey. Every year more shows and more countries have been invited to join and the top handlers/ riders and trail winners come to Paris each year - each accompanied by a guest, where they can enjoy the World Championships amongst a group of like-minded Arabian fans. Additionally a Prize Lottery Draw is held each year for the Paris ticket winners and three people win the chance for a Special Prize Destination - again with a friend and these six people have a fully hosted week by Aljassimya Farm. The 2018 winners have just returned from California where they saw not just horses but Yosemite Park and other local attractions.

Three of the early EACSO members are still on the Aljassimya Amateur Challenge Committee, Rob Rens, Ilse Verbruggen and Ronny Vosch, aided now by me, Emma Maxwell, and we are all dedicated to try and help bring new faces into the arena in a friendly atmosphere and to provide

Californian guests 2019. Right to left: Jose Blanco Estevez, Jo Cooper, Megan Walsh, Anna Matthews, Pat Cooper and Jesus Manuel Casal Lopez.



Challenge Committee member Ronny Vosch with Sandra Christiansen from Denmark with Jullya Bey Jamaal by Jullyen El Jamaal

Challenge Committee member Rob Rens with Jose Blanco Estevez from Spain with Ja Pyndyna by Rawalpyndi



all the help we can with answering any questions about showing the Arabian Horse! In 2019 nineteen shows were held across Europe, in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany Italy, Holland, Spain, Sweden and the UK. They are affiliated to ECAHO as Amateur shows – which costs nothing and run under ECAHO rules which mesh with the requirements of the AAC rule book. Some of the shows are small and some are now between 80 and 115 entries, but

Owner Handler from Germany Jenny Pohl with Kuna Asil by Kunar T



The 2018 Paris Ticket winners

Challenge Committee member Emma Maxwell with Sarah Holm from Sweden with Wares by Piruet

Owner / Breeder Handler from UK Loiusa Biles with Adaliya by Adawy



across them all we have welcomed over 250 more people to the Arabian show arena in just this year. It has been very rewarding to watch people take their first steps into the ring and enjoy the magic of the Arabian horse. You do not have to show your own horse, you can borrow or lend one and indeed we have some very hard working horses in the system who patiently escort different people around the ring at different levels and different divisions.

We would like to put out a call to all European breeders to consider these shows, if you have horse for sale as a general pleasure horse – the Amateur shows offer a fun space for them to participate with a new owner. Or even if you have some beautiful horses in the field that should see the world and be seen, even if you do not want to show them yourself you can lend your horse to an interested youngster. Give up some time to teach them the basics and then enjoy the relationship



Larissa Heiss from Austria with gelding MM Fabius



Jorn Theys from Belgium with Joarah Magdalena by GR Marvel

Virginia Lozano from Spain with Pawik El Marwan by Marwan Al Shaqab in Ridden Trail

Annelieke Stoop from Holland with Kashmira Lazize by Idzard in Hunter Pleasure



Anna Matthews from UK with HS Bellatrix by Lothar El NhyI in Classic Pleasure

that develops. There is no future for breeders if we breed horses to leave them in the field until they grow old – if there is nothing for them to participate in, we make them valueless. We have spent too long paying all our attention to the ‘celebrity’ horses, the majority of Arabian ‘citizen’ horses need a function, to have competitions where they can reach achievable goals and teach whole new generation of owners about the unique qualities of the Arabian horse. The Aljassimya Amateur Challenge is an opportunity to build this foundation for our horses in Europe.

Additionally we want to expand the education available for people who want to learn. More about presenting horses. We had several training days / clinics in Northern Europe



Giuseppe Alberti from Italy with Piccadilly by Ajman Moniscione



Partbred Arabians can also compete Louise Hopquin from France with Shetland Arabian cross Vitamine

in 2019 and we would like to add to those education days across Europe – if you have the time the knowledge and the facilities and want to be a positive force in the Arabian breed, get in touch with us to see if you can start a show in your area or provide an education day. We want to welcome everyone ! Very big thanks are due to the show organisers and helpers , judges, photographers and exhibitors who have joined us so far, and of course to Sheikh Jassim who wants to continue to develop the good work into the future. □

Everyone can take part - Jose Antonio Conde & Maria Dos Santos from Spain who share riding the gelding Jeque



Erik Blaak our announcer from Holland in In Hand Trail with Prussia MI by Abha Qatar



Jessy Loockz from Belgium with MJ Wild Narcize by Profender in Western Pleasure