

The Arabian Horse

Breeding, Marketing & Charting the Future

A Conversation with Scott Benjamin

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He has come a long way – from an American student willing to travel and work at the State Studs of Poland soon after the collapse of Communism, through becoming a respected trainer and judge, to earning a living as an Arabian horse breeding expert and adviser. For 20 years now, as he says – “he does eat, drink, sleep and breathe horses 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 52 weeks each year”. Privately – a Polish Arabian horse lover and probably the only American in the industry who speaks Polish more fluently than many Poles... about some of the biggest challenges of Arabian horse marketing nowadays and the keys to its success Urszula Leczycka talks with SCOTT BENJAMIN.

Tutto Arabi: Let's talk about Arabian horse nowadays... What is Arabian horse for you – being a judge, trainer, manager with several years of experience now? – Is it a private hobby, way of your professional life, a money making business or still a passion from your childhood?

Scott Benjamin: The Arabian horse has always been an all-consuming passion for me. To enjoy this passion as a profession is incredibly rewarding. The Arabian horse is my full-time job – I truly do eat, drink, sleep and breathe horses 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 52 weeks each year. When I first graduated from university with my degree in animal science, I was unclear exactly where I would end up in the Arabian horse world. 20 years later, I find myself traveling almost 250 days a year to every almost every continent annually in some official capacity as a professional working with the Arabian horse. Besides North America, Europe and Australia are the international destinations I travel to most frequently. Working with the Arabian horse on a global scale is an honour and a privilege that I never take for granted. I have been extremely fortunate to have worked with so many great horses and so many wonderful people over the past three decades. Pursuing a profession that is your passion was the smartest decision I ever made.



Scott in Poland with Estarda-1991 Polish National Ch. & 1995 European Res. Ch.

TA: Do you think Arabian horse breeding can be a money making venture or should this aim be abandoned when starting a new Arabian horse project?

SB: There is always money to be made with any business venture that is well planned and well executed. The important thing to remember is to have a product that is in demand. Breeders must always be mindful to breed a high quality Arabian – one that has a purpose and function in life as a capable, trainable and sound equine athlete, whether a riding horse or a show horse. Vision and mission are central to all successful breeding programs. Understanding from where you are starting with a confident vision of the direction in which you are headed is the major advantage in starting a breeding program. Knowledge and education are essential – always seek guidance from qualified trustworthy professionals and breeders with the experience of both achieving and failing in the business. See as many horses as you can and evaluate with a critical eye, being neither too harsh a critic or overly optimistic. All good breeders are constantly learning, eager to know, see, do and understand. They are brutally honest about their own horses as well as those of other breeding programs and quick to recognize and appreciate the inherent strengths AND weaknesses of all horses, strains, families and programs. While vision,

knowledge and experience comprise the critical foundation to a successful breeding program, all great breeders must have a heaping help of luck to find success on the largest scale. I am a firm believer that we make our own luck in life – we must always be seeking opportunities to put ourselves in the right places at the right times. With this proactive approach, luck will begin to favour the bold. Earning money at breeding Arabian horses should never be the primary aim of any breeding program. Programs that are principally motivated by achieving wealth are almost assuredly doomed to fail even before they start. Producing a quality Arabian horse, with a very clear understanding of exactly what that means, should be at the heart of an Arabian breeding program whose aim is long-term sustainability. Consistent profit is achievable with this approach, with the inevitability of lean and bonus years. Many breeders are fortunate to discover a great “nick” or to find access to the perfect stallion that compliments a particular mare band ideally. BEY SHAH was the perfect nick for TW FORTEYNA, as EUKALIPTUS was for EMIGRACJA. MARWAN AL SHAQAB was the catalyst that propelled the Ses Planes program forward to new heights, while the use of MONOGRAMM at Michalow has forever altered the international landscape of Arabian horse breeding and show success. When this genetic providence occurs, we all succeed right along with these fortuitous breeders, as the entire Arabian breed is pushed forward positively and progressively.

The love of the Arabian horse is the passion that drives my life. At the epicenter of that passion is the pursuit of breeding. I have always been fascinated by genetics and generational progress. It is at the very essence of the indomitable desire for survival – the will to survive. It was this fascination that first brought me to Poland to search for answers on the philosophy of breeding great Arabian horses. It continues to be the journey of a lifetime. Breeders are at the very heart of our international industry. They are the farmer at the very basic production level, creating the product that every end user, whether it be a trainer or victory seeking owner, desires.

We can never lose sight of the importance of the breeder. Their success, both financially and prestigiously, is imperative to the long-term sustainable success of the entire industry from top to bottom. As trainers, agents, promoters, show organizers and affiliated professionals, we are utterly dependent on the consistent creation of quality Arabian horses. Over the past 5 years, I have become utterly dedicated to the cause of the breeder. I am always looking for opportunities to bring breeders together to learn from and assist each other, as well as for ways for breeders to find greater exposure to the service professionals in the industry at large with the aim of earning the respect and support of those most influential in charting the future

course of the breed.

The California Breeders Celebration has been one of our first attempts at bringing breeders together and celebrating the Arabian horse with a broad international clientele. All breeding programs committed to producing quality Arabian matter – large or small, regardless of bloodline. It is my mission to ensure they succeed at the highest level possible. Small breeders do matter – they have been and will continue to be the backbone of the international Arabian industry. I will continue to devote my time and effort to ensure they succeed – all breeders, both big and small. Their success is key to the success of the Arabian horse in the 21st century.



Scott in Janow Podlaski in 2014



...and in 1994 with Ignacy Jaworowski & Premia-Polish National Champion



EMIGRACJA with EMANACJA, EMIGRANTKA & EMILDA - the EUKALIPTUS cross in action



MONDGI - immortal sire of Polish bred champions

TA: You said that the horses can be a business like any other – but to promote the horse and start making money don't you need big money first?

SB: Having a substantial amount of money to invest in any business endeavor at the onset is always invaluable. Invested wisely to create the soundest infrastructure, this economic advantage can be leveraged to make progress at faster pace than those less privileged. This philosophy applied to Arabian horse breeding translates into one piece of sage advice – start out with the highest quality mares you can afford. This refers to both phenotype and genotype. Both the physical appeal and the pedigree matter. More

often than not, the best mares in the breed are those with the highest price tag. Given the affordability of Arabian broodmares worldwide, however, a deep pocket book is not always necessary to find the right mare at the right price. The expensive show mares winning around the world do not always turn out to be the best producers. While the occasional dual-domination stories such as NW SIENA PSYCHE and EMANACJA do exist, they are most certainly exception to the rule. Good breeders must be smart enough to recognize the difference. Choose the kind of horse that most inspires you – the one is closest to your ideal. Trust your instinct and follow your vision. This will mature and evolve over time with knowledge, exposure and experience, but always continue to follow your passion as a breeder. All great breeders will tell you that success in foals is at least 60% the result of the mare. One or two excellent mares are worth infinitely more than 5-10 nice mares. Quantity never translates to quality in horse breeding. Once the foundation of top quality mares has been established, seek out the most suitable stallion to which you have access. Often the most desirable stallions have the highest stud fees, so financial wherewithal can be advantageous. Breeding horses is an expensive and time-consuming enterprise. One must be passionate about the Arabian horse and breeding to take on this challenging and oftentimes all-consuming pursuit. Caring for and promoting the products of a breeding program adds further to the effort, time and cost involved to create and sustain success. Knowing your existence does not depend on the financial viability of your breeding program no doubt results in a less stressful daily reality. Having more money to start out with in the Arabian horse business is only more advantageous if those funds are invested wisely and used properly.

TA: Talking about the big money – let's talk about selling pretty heads and selling pretty photos... The art of professional equine photography seems to be the biggest aid but also the worse curse for Arabian horse marketing. A lot of clients for Arabian halter horse look first, and often – only, on the head profile. In such case the photographer becomes the key for the horse marketing success – is that correct?

SB: I strongly believe in quality promotional products. These include photos and videos, both of which are used in print material and virtual media, to initiate desire and create marketability. I always inform clients to use the highest quality photos and videos available. Hire the best professionals to create these products for you. One bad photo or video of a horse can damage a reputation. NO photo is ALWAYS better than a BAD photo. Photographing beautiful heads and the art of taking beautiful photographs of heads has become important in our industry worldwide. There was a time when a full body shot and trot shot were the key to successful promotion of the Arabian horse.

Sadly, these two mainstays of the breed have fallen by the way side and are sadly neglected, to the detriment of our breed. I understand the need to create highly artistic, dramatic photos of the best features of any horse, especially the Arabian as it inherently possesses a number of distinct and highly appealing characteristics. I am immensely appreciative of and thankful for those photographers that can capture the beauty of the Arabian and enhance its reputation with those who love both horses and art. Many have become close personal friends and are gifted artists challenging the artistic world with enormous amounts of ambition and talent. In the end, no matter how beautiful the photograph, the horse MUST live up to that image. The best examples of those horses who do indeed more than live up to the exotic images portrayed in digital imagery are WH JUSTICE and PIANISSIMA – the exhilarating experience of these extraordinary icons of the breed in person is always a thrill. Conversely, if any horse does not live up to the hype of a photograph, the fervor and excitement surrounding that individual will rightly wane. Genes, not pixels, are passed on from generation to generation. The impression must ALWAYS equal the reality. We have become too obsessed with heads as a breed. For nearly 5000 years, the Arabian horse has always been so much more than a head. Yes, the Arabian horse has the most beautiful head in the equine world. I can appreciate this beauty and exotic refinement as well as anybody. But we MUST be mindful as breeders and as modern stewards of the breed to remain true to the essence of what made the Arabian of the Bedouin the valuable horse that it was and must continue to be. The shape, quality and design of the eyes, ears, muzzle, jibbah, etc. are all elements of that classic ideal, but they are part of the greater whole. We have been entrusted with the responsibility of creating FUNCTIONAL animals. The inherent functionality of the horse to the human cause was the primary impetus for domestication of equus during our earliest attempts at civilization. Let us not be guilty of losing the plot, especially with an animal so noble and revered as the Arabian, all these millennia later. That is devolution of the species, both human and equine.

TA: Another important issue is the alteration of Arabian horse photos. This can be quite serious when purchases are made solely on photographs. Can photographs and photographers be trusted?

SB: We are all now well aware of the Photoshop perversion that currently afflicts the Arabian horse industry. We have all been wowed by a photo of a horse that looks improbably exotic, possesses an exaggerated length of neck or moves like a superior athlete. Too many times the reality of these same horses in person is offensively far removed from the photographic image. Representation of horses in any matter other than reality is fraud, plain and simple.

Utilizing Photoshop to remove a background fence is infinitely different than using the same tool to exaggerate a dish, lengthen a neck or animate a tail. Over time, the professional photographers who do utilize Photoshop to alter the actual appearance of the Arabian horse have become known to many of us worldwide, as have those who would never commit such a crime. The unfortunate result of this is now almost every photo seen in promotional products taken by these “artistically and ethically uninhibited” photographers are considered suspect and routinely dismissed as counterfeit. The reputation and future business success of the photographer will suffer the most in the end. I always recommend that all horses considered to be purchased be seen in person and thoroughly evaluated. If this cannot be done by the purchaser, it should be conducted by an honest and capable professional that he/she trusts. I do understand that traveling to see sale horses in remote destinations is not always feasible. The most lucrative and prosperous purchases however are almost always those that were the result of personal inspection and approval.

TA: The big problem we face now in Europe, probably not only, is that young outstanding horses, especially stallions are or being kept by its owners that start selling breedings before the colt is even able to produce the semen and the breeding fee raise up to the sky very quickly exceeding the financial abilities of most of the smaller breeders. More often than not young popular stallions are sold to breeders in the Gulf and Middle East and not made available to the rest of the world. Does this affect access to important genetics? On the other hand there are so many other stallions or mares that would never be top show horses. What is their chance to be successfully promoted?

SB: We have made tremendous advances in equine medicine and management over the last two decades. We now live in a world virtually without borders where horses, semen and embryos travel with seamless fluidity. In many ways, these technological advancements have been extremely beneficial, allowing for worldwide access to quality genetics, extended reproductive life to valuable stallions and mares and earlier assessment of young breeding stock. When used correctly, these innovations can greatly improve the long term fortune of the discriminating program. As with all innovative technology, however, these privileges can be and are misused and abused. The issue of young high quality stallions being restricted to exclusive breeding programs is not a new issue. Long before transported semen, young stallions from reputable breeding programs with good pedigrees were restricted geographically. Unless mare owners were willing to ship mares cross country or cross border to be covered naturally onsite or via artificial insemination, the genetics and potential positive influence of those young stallions was

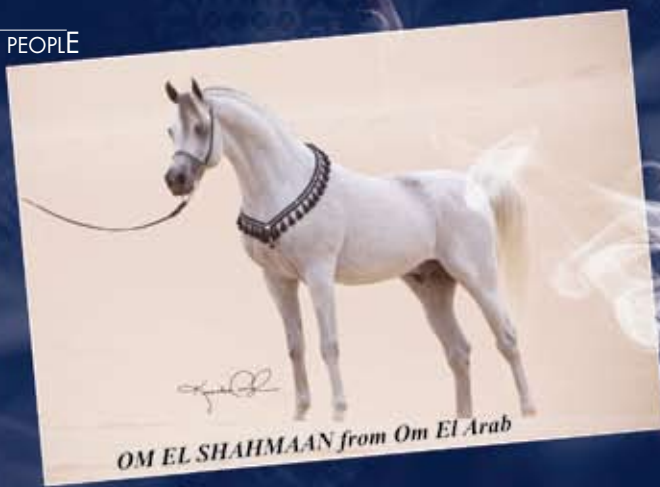
limited to a small number of mares. If bred responsibly, however, with access to the right mares the genetic legacy of these stallions was significant, with the influence felt for several generations. Think EL SHAKLAN or ALI JAMAAL for a significant portion of their lives. Breeders could travel to different regions within larger countries as well as to individual countries and discover a unique style of Arabian with very unique genetics. This restricted flow of genetics in many ways made the breed stronger and more diverse, with increased genetic variance and greater opportunity for outcrossing at large. If responsible breeders of financial means have the desire to restrict breeding access to young stallions or to maintain an exclusive market on the get of a particular stallion, it is certainly their prerogative. We must all rely on these breeders to make good breeding decisions for these stallions and to create quality sons and daughters in the next generation. It is then these stallions and mares that we must then reintroduce to the global breeding herd to ensure advantageous genetics are not lost. There is also insightful merit into creating less of a valuable product, i.e. a lower number of a high quality get by any significant stallion. If the aim of breeder is to sell the get for high value, demand is sure to drive up the price on the best progeny. We are always willing to pay more for exclusivity or for something we think we cannot have. These breeders also take a great risk, conversely, of making themselves inconsequential if the foals do not turn out as expected or another stallion with more foals on the ground and greater public access begins to achieve success in worldwide show rings on a greater scale.

We are all easily impressed by large numbers of high quality get achieving deserved success – the “MARWAN-athons” of recent years in international show rings across the globe are a testament to the frenzy that can be caused by a popular and prepotent young stallion.

Small breeders with limited financial means will always be challenged when competing for the same buyers and breeders as the larger, more cash-flush programs. This does not mean however that they cannot find success. Breeding to the popular stallion of the moment has never been the surefire method of breeding acclaim. All successful small breeders do introduce some outside genetics from popular bloodlines from time to time, but remain devoted to the proven bloodlines that have been the continued source of their success. Om El Arab, Haras Meia Lua, Ses Planes and Simeon Stud are amongst the best examples of this approach to breeding. Successful promotion of any breeding horse or breeding program can only happen with quality progeny. A breeding farm must produce quality foals year after year and generation after generation to remain relevant. Promotion in magazines, on websites and at shows with the same horses over and over again does not equate to success in the breeding barn. These programs and horses may dominate the headlines of the moment and may make the most noise in the industry, but the long term impact of these horses and breeders will be of no consequence. Look for results and substance to back up all proclamations of success. Hype is NEVER enough – the one who speaks the loudest with the boldest claims is very rarely the best.



Examples of unaltered natural refinement: WH Justice & Pianissima



This waste of valuable time and resources is unnecessary, but inevitable in any industry where competition, prestige and significant financial investments are involved.

There are many in our industry worldwide that are embittered by the shift of power to The Gulf and the Middle East. The once mighty bastions of influence in North America and Europe are no longer calling all the shots in terms of breeding, marketing and promoting the Arabian horse. While my involvement within North America and Europe is decades long, my experience in the Middle East and The Gulf is much more recent. While I have witnessed some unsettling trends in the region, I can say, unequivocally, that the rekindled passion of the Arab people for THEIR horse is a wonderfully positive outcome for the entire global Arabian horse industry. They have embraced their horse with fervent enthusiasm and have invigorated markets, show rings and breeding barns in every corner of the world for the last two decades or more. Many of the best Arabian horses in the world now reside in this region. The success of these programs is critical to the long-term success of the breed everywhere in the world. We are just now beginning to witness the efficacious impact of these breeding programs. It is my great desire to see these programs thrive and grow as we all need the genetics that have moved into this region to flow back out to the rest of the world in refreshingly innovative combinations to keep the breed healthy, strong and diverse. While some programs may maintain an unnecessarily stringent exclusivity, there are simply too many quality programs now based in this region to believe that a more than adequate number of horses and breeding programs will continue to be made available to breeders around the world. The Western World has had the chance to create the modern Arabian horse over the last 100 odd years, and certainly within the last 50. The time has now come, as a result of financial wherewithal and desire, for the Arab to play his part once again in shaping the destiny of the Arabian horse, just as his ancestors were charged with responsible stewardship for millennia upon millennia before the Christianized world was even remotely concerned with the existence of the breed. The relationship of The West and the Middle East/Gulf is not yet a perfect one in every respect. But both

sides must work together to find common ground for understanding and cooperation with the ultimate goal of promoting and advancing the Arabian horse that we all love and cherish. Our destinies are most assuredly interconnected.

TA: In your opinion – is it difficult to sell an Arabian horse nowadays?

SB: We are at a critical juncture worldwide in terms of promoting and growing the Arabian horse. There are many who believe we are fighting for survival. While many markets certainly are suffering and shrinking, there is always potential for growth and outreach. We spend too much time as breeders, owners and professionals marketing the Arabian to those already involved in the breed. I understand the necessity of this, but we absolutely must devote a significant portion of our effort on those outside of our industry. As a breed, we need to focus on what the Arabian does best and promote that with zeal. There is a special affinity that humans and horses share that is unique – no other animal is more responsible for our civilized success as a species than the horse. We have the greatest story of any equine breed to share with the potential horse lovers of the world. We must commit to sharing that story and sharing the horse. Once they experience the Arabian, the horse will do the rest. The recent Arabian Showcase, inspired by the Arabian Breeders World Cup in Las Vegas, has refreshingly and successfully introduced the Arabian horse to an eager previously untapped market of horse loving people attending Equitana Australia in Sydney this past November. The positive effusive responses from dozens of enthusiasts in attendance about the beauty, intelligence and versatility of the breed was overwhelming. Events such as these are inspiring to us all, providing hope and encouragement for the future. As for marketing the horse within the breed, the answer to the original question posed is “it depends on the horse”. The highest quality show and breeding horses – those capable of winning Scottsdale or Paris – are always in demand and continue to command the highest six and seven figure prices. There are always a

small number of these horses available worldwide in any given age group and plenty of eager buyers ready to procure the next superstar. This high end market has remained healthy and active despite the global economic downturn. The challenge has now developed in marketing every other Arabian, which comprises more than 99% of the breed. We must all take responsibility for these difficulties as we have failed to do enough to promote the Arabian horse at the lower levels – as a riding horse, a pleasure horse, a performance horse and a companion. Our impassioned focus on breeding and turning out horses capable of winning at the most elite level has become our singular obsession. While we all enjoy celebrating the best our breed can be, we must be constantly mindful of how to market and promote the remaining good horses that have great use as breeding, performance and lower level show horses.

The market that is most challenging is the broodmare market. High quality broodmares, including former champions that have produced international champions, are selling from \$10,000 to \$75,000. While the top end figure is respectable, the lower end figure is not. These quality mares with proven records are the foundation of our breed. Their genetic contribution to our breed is crucial if we are to maintain diversity. Show and breeding horses solely out of World Champion mares will never be enough to sustain the breed long-term, no matter how many embryos one is able to flush. By supporting breeders and breeding, we can buoy this market and establish a more respectable baseline value.

Breeding stallions are also a difficult market. For those breeders focused on creating international quality halter horses, the trend exists to breed a small number of popular stallions, those who are either winning or those that are siring top winners in the show ring. While breeding to those stallions of merit is important, so is the need to maintain genetic diversity in the breed. Many times, the best breeding and show horses are sired by non “brand name” sires. This is healthy for our breed long term. We need more breeders and buyers with the courage to take a risk on quality breeding colts that fall outside of the currently fashionable bloodlines and sire lines.

TA: The market is narrow and a lot of horses are left looking for buyers every season. Do you think we face overproduction?

SB: Overproduction of horses by popular sires may be an issue, but overproduction in general is definitely NOT an issue worldwide. The number of Arabian horses is shrinking everywhere in the world. An incredible opportunity exists for the astute breeder to meet the inevitable demand for high quality breeding and show horses – those with the courage to breed enough horses to satisfy this market will succeed greatly. Now is the time for the small breeders to reassert themselves.

TA: On the other hand we face the problem of narrowing the

gene pool of halter horses – I think with just few fingers we can count the world's leading sire lines... Where this will lead us?

SB: We do need to be careful of narrowing the gene pool as we move forward. There are just a few main sire lines in the world of the major halter winners. The NAZEER sire line in particular has become incredibly influential amongst almost all major halter winners worldwide. Responsible breeders must continue to look for outcross blood and for mares that add genetic diversity to the next generation. Transported and frozen semen are the culprits of this genetic bottleneck. While I do believe that the availability of quality genetics via frozen semen in the more remote corners of the world has strengthened the breed, we must continue to look for diversity and outcrosses. Show ring success should never be a primary incentive for the responsible breeding program. Quality, intelligent, trainable and versatile athletes must be the central driving force of every great Arabian breeding program. Success at all levels – from the most elite to the most fundamental – is inevitable with this approach.

TA: We claim to enjoy and love the Arabian horse yet we subject them to intensive training, no pasture, clipping, washing, hair extension, etc. We produce several embryos out of a mare annually and sell the unborn foals with determined sex... Is Arabian halter horse still an animal or just a marketed thing? Or is Arabian horse breeding divided into “natural” one and “success-oriented” one?

SB: Show ring success comes with a price. There is always a trade-off if one makes the decision to pursue competitive accolades. In the case of the show horse, we make that decision on behalf of the athlete. Most horses would be happier running free in a lush green paddock with abundant feed and a safe shelter. But that does not mean that we cannot provide a physiologically and psychologically nourishing environment for those horses whose destiny is linked to intensive training and showing. Horses are profoundly social animals which thrive on routine and relationship equity. What we are asking of far too many of our halter horses at the elite level blurs the boundary of sound responsible horsemanship. The vast majority of Arabian halter horses at the biggest international shows are under enormous stress and not allowed to express the best elements of Arabian type. The “show” has become more important than the horse. This must change or we run the risk of losing the right to show the horse in any capacity. Allowing the Arabian horse to express itself more naturally is the direction in which we must be headed as an industry. This approach is better for everyone involved – owner, breeder, trainer, show organizer – and most importantly for the Arabian horse. I long to see more performances such as BEY AMBITION at US Nationals in 2009, or EKSTERN in his multitudes of wins in 2000. Both Claudinei and Eric exemplified the best the breed can be with those demonstrations of skillful intuitive

horsemanship. Maximizing reproductive potential of a horse can also be done without violating the sacred nature of the animal. Embryo transfer and artificial insemination are invaluable tools that have the potential of maximizing the best genetics in the breed. These can be pursued while being mindful of the natural order of things.

TA: But is it possible to stay a horse lover respecting the welfare of the animal as well as a successful Arabian horse dealer or trainer fulfilling the always increasing expectations of a client?

SB: It is – and it must be a priority for all of us. I understand the tremendous pressure trainers are under to succeed. Owners and breeders must be realistic and fair with the expectations of the horses put in training. Horses are athletes - living breathing beings – that have psychological and physiological needs. They are not race cars that perform without feeling or cognizant experience. A horse show is exactly just that – a horse show. Show ring success should not, nor should it ever be, the singular ultimate goal of any breeding program. Unrealistic expectations of ALWAYS winning, and at any cost, are not healthy for the horse, the people involved or the industry at large. As more breeders around the world continue to be successful in creating more quality Arabian horses, the competition at the elite level will become less clear-cut. If three world-class horses are in the ring on any given day and all perform well, it does no matter really who wins, as long as those horses finish in the top three. It may be a little extra spark of something that the winner exudes on that particular day that allows him/her to rise above the others. I look forward to the day when there are 10 such horses in each class. When this happens, and we should all be aiming for this level of consistent quality, then it will be impossible for one horse, or one trainer or one breeding program to dominate. I look forward to this healthier level of competition and more quality horses being bred all over the world.

TA: So what is the key to the successful marketing strategy of Arabian horse nowadays?

SB: The most important element of any successful marketing strategy is a quality product. All ethical salespersons, marketers and promoters must have confidence and a firm belief in the product they are advocating. The next step is to create demand for the quality product, through selective advertising and promotion and through achievement in the competition and breeding. All the fancy advertising in the world will not make any horse successful long term if the horse does not conform to breed type and conformation standards, does not achieve in competition and does not have progeny of quality that are capable of achieving. Horses that are

accomplished and credible, however, all need a successful marketing strategy behind them. It takes careful planning and patience to establish a marketing campaign of any horse or program into the collective psyche of the industry worldwide. Selective periodical exposure, a dominant, visually stimulating and user-friendly web presence, physical presence at important industry events and the steady reminder of the accomplishments of the horses and programs being promoted are central to a successful strategy. Quality images are absolutely essential – we must always put our best face forward of the horses that serve as the poster-children of any program. A broad active network of breeders, trainers, promoters and equine professionals is also essential to spread the word of quality horses and programs. Personal testimonials often achieve more than pages of glossy advertising. Breeders must establish brand identity with the target community - whether that target is local or global – with the goal of earning “household name” status. When a name is mentioned, either of a horse or a breeding program, a positive vision of the horses and people associated with those names should be evoked in the mind. Creating brand identity on the level of Coca-Cola, Apple or Nike is the goal, with the common thread of quality product that is has consistent demand as the key to success. This has been our aim with the Mulawa Arabian Stud brand over the past three years. We are only ever as good as our last success – we must constantly be vigilant in achieving and promoting that success in the most intriguing, visually stimulating and forthright way possible.

TA: Let's bring some examples on the table – the most brilliant marketing strategy in Arabian horse world you saw by now was...

SB: I cannot recall any single brilliant marketing strategy. The key to success is consistent quality – captivating images, appealing presentation, poignant message and, most importantly, a superior product – great Arabian horses. The most well respected and successful breeding programs have done this without fanfare or hype. They have both the horses and the achievements to support their position. The State Studs of Poland are a prime example of good marketing strategy – it is the quality proficiently presented that motivates the buyers to return each year to share in what is indisputably the most successful long-term Arabian breeding program in the last 50 years. Ajman Stud is one of the very best from amongst the breeders in the Gulf region to present his horses and his program in the most effective manner. Al Shaqab does an outstanding job as well with the capable help of Michael Byatt and his extremely productive and creative marketing techniques.

A great marketing strategy in the Arabian horse business must always begin and end with great horses. The best marketing strategies focus on consistent results of those

horses and breeding programs that are setting the standard of excellence worldwide. Honesty and integrity are the qualities that define success at the highest level – these attributes are never negotiable in the best marketers, promoters and marketing approaches. We can and should continue to push the envelope in looking for innovative and creative ways to promote and market the Arabian horse. This noblest of equines deserves our very best – we as the modern-day stewards must continue to strive ensure the most promising legacy for the Arabian horse.



Aja Angelo & Scott