



THE ART OF HANDLING WITH LUCA OBERTI (ITALY)

An Interview by Sonia Smaldone

Training and handling horses is a challenging occupation for a man or woman. However, Luca Oberti from Italy is undaunted. His love for horses is overwhelming, to the extent of spending twenty-four hours with the most elegant animal in the world.

Hello Luca! Thank you very much for accepting the invitation. To provide some background to our readers, could you tell us a bit about yourself, your family and your education?

Hello Arabian Horse Magazine! It is a pleasure to receive



Luca lives nearby Bergamo where he owns and operates his own Training Center. He was pleased to walk me through the main stages and highlights of his professional career as a Handler.

this invitation from you. Let me introduce myself. Besides breeding, I also train. Horses have always been a part of my family's life. As we attended the shows, other breeders always requested that we prepare their horses. Therefore, our first centre opened in 1999.

A number of years and a great deal of experience in va-



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rious countries around the world have led us to where we are today!

When have you first met an Arabian horse? Who was it?

In 1988, my family bought our first Arabian horse, a Straight Russian mare named Natovka imported to Italy by a local trader. The mare was chosen because she was in foal to Gomel, the stallion owned by the Den Hartog family, owners of the renowned Kossack Stud. Just a few days earlier, Gomel had been named European champion.

Tell us about your early stages in the show industry as a Handler. How did it all start?

When I started helping my father with the daily stable duties at the age of ten, I became fascinated with animals. He inspired me to become a trainer, so I kept following him. It was then that this great passion of mine became my profession.



As a son and then as an assistant to my father, I followed him not only in the stables but also in various shows. In the future, as a professional trainer who has been a groom for many years. The second crucial step was my stay in America, where I spent a lot of time with Michael Byatt. I learned a lot there, including the different approaches to horses and the various stages of training. As soon as I returned to Italy, I prepared and presented horses almost everywhere...

Have you developed a systematic program for handling Arabian horses of your own? In order to prepare a horse best for a show, how can you make sure that he is physically and mentally prepared? How can the horses be made to perform at their best when needed?

Each horse requires a different training and preparation program. Besides training sessions, I prefer them to have more free time to spend in the paddock, perhaps even with other horses.

Diversifying the work as frequently as possible should begin as soon as pos-

sible. This method helps relax the horses a lot. Systematizing a job is impossible for me, no matter how much time you shorten it for lack of time, you will never succeed.

Is there a limit to what an Arabian horse can be taught through handling?

Who was the most challenging horse to train? (If any)

Invictus ... It's the horse that won my heart... He's our flagship stallion! Besides breeding him, we also saw him born, raised, prepared, and then put aside to make room for the horses in the training centre. Once we had the chance to prepare him, he won some important titles at both the Italian and European levels. Every time I enter the ring with him, all those memories come flooding back, the birth, the first feeding, the weaning, the first days at work and in the paddock. Basically, I recall all those moments in three minutes, and I realize feeding him, breeding him, and showing him at shows is always an emotional challenge.

What are your favourite bloodlines? And your favourite stallion/mare? Why?

There is no particular bloodline or mare or stallion that I prefer. The breeding world and shows have allowed me to fall in love with many horses over the years. Due to its niche status in the breeding industry, the Straight Egyptian bloodline has always fascinated me. The fact that they constitute a small percentage makes breeding them even more challenging. Even so, I prefer "show bloodlines" perhaps due to the fact that it is easier to find more subjects to prepare and stallions to prepare.

What, in your opinion, really defines a good Trainer / Handler? What do you need to become a successful one?

I believe passion must always be accompanied by patience, humility, and a desire to learn, which should never cease. Understanding a horse's needs without taking them for granted is an important gift. There is more to working a horse than turning him on a rope or riding a merry-go-round. Above all else, it means making him feel

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good and loving him also for the rest of the day's 23 hours. Thus, a trainer's team plays a crucial role in making him or her an excellent trainer.

What have been the best experiences at the shows most recently? Can you tell me about the horses you presented and which stud (s) they belonged to?

My most exhilarating experiences have come with Qatari friends in recent years.

My work and show experience with Al Rayyan and Al Shaqab horses has taken me not only to Qatar but also to Italy and Europe. In this way, I got to know many outstanding horses. Especially their Straight Egyptian horses that won numerous medals.

Do you have any other shows that will always be etched in your mind as a Handler? Did it take place in Europe or the Middle East?

Brazilian Nationals, Scottsdale, Las Vegas, Paris, Aachen, Menton, Khalediah, Dubai, and Katara... They are all etched in my mind. In many of these shows, I have shown beautiful horses or worked on important horses for friends, clients, or other trainers. In the course of my intensive training, I was fortunate to be able to assist. I have a beautiful story to tell for each of these.



What do you think about the show environment of today, Luca? Would it be better to have less / more of something? Do you have any thoughts on this?

Post-covid era is not a great time. Additionally, with the war and the economic recession, the entire world is suffering a slowdown both in terms of breeding and attendance at shows. As a trainer, I would like to be much closer to all breeders trying to encourage participation and creating new national shows where even the small breeder can compare their horses on par with other small breeders without always having to come to terms with the extremely exceptional quality of the big farms.

In which country have you experienced a better quality of the organization of the shows?

Did it take place in Europe or the Middle East?

The Katara show in Doha is by far the best in terms of location, elegance, setting up the space, and VIP tables. Horses and boxes are prepared with care, and the arena is nothing short of exceptional.

What are your current commitments? Where do you see yourself, say, in ten years?

Currently, I'm running a training centre in Bergamo that

houses over 100 horses in two stables, which I have managed for 15 years. I've also trained and bred for some prestigious studs, including AL Kharafi from Kuwait, Al Rayyan Farm, and Al Shaqab Stud, which has allowed me to participate in several shows in Qatar. I also assist many Italian and European breeders in the care and breeding of their mares and their stallions.

Do you feel like leaving a message for the readers of Arabian Horse Magazine?

In Europe, we are experiencing a difficult time... Keeping the passion for breeding these fantastic Arabian horses that give so much satisfaction would be an important message. Together, united by this very strong passion, we will find a way to relaunch the show business in Europe.

Thank you AHM for giving me this wonderful opportunity to introduce myself and my Training Centre!



LUCA OBERTI ARABIANS

Via Cave snc - 24044 Dalmine (BG) - Italy | lucaobertiarabians@gmail.com - +39 3385093551

www.lucaoberti.com