

# MANAGING ATHBAH STUD

## Interview with Ward Bemong

Interview by Urszula Leczycka

Photos: Athbah Stud archive photos





Mares of Athbah Stud



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It seems that the ground of Athbah Stud is especially lucky to every horse appearing in its barn. For the last few seasons the stud owned by HRH Prince Abdulaziz Bin Ahmed and managed since summer 2010 by Ward Bemong, was proudly collecting the trophies for every horse that was competing under its flag being on lease – such entitled show stars like Girlan-Bey, El Saghira, Parmana, and the great Aja Justified. Each of them, either already with show successes on the account or a new comer to the shows with Athbah they added a pretty nice lines of titles to their careers. Athbah seem to be one of the first and most active promoters of some best show horses. Just in between the fastly ending European show season and the beginning of Middle Eastern one Ward

Bemong, Belgian from the origin for whom Saudi Arabia began a new home found a while to share with Tutto Arabi readers a glimpse of the great Athbah Stud life, its past successes and some future plans...

**Tutto Arabi:** *Ward, is there any particular show star standing at Athbah Stud barns that deserve the best appreciation of the owner and if so – who is it?*

**Ward Bemong:** At Athbah Stud we don't really focus on one horse as we think they are all important from broodmares through foals to the stallions...

**TA:** *Will we have the opportunity to see some new, impressive show winners competing under the name of Athbah also in 2011 season? Can you tell us a bit about the future show hopes bred by Athbah Stud and waiting for their first show appearances?*



LVA Maximus  
2004 Res. Junior World Champion  
2009 European Reserve Champion Stallion





The mare Ermina (Galba x Echidna) purchased by Athbah Stud at 2010 Pride of Poland sale



**WB:** For 2011 we have several young horses that will make their debut... like: the beautiful grey daughter of Marwan Al Shaqab and MA Bint Azadik - Sadeem Athbah or very nice and showy colt, Mergaah Athbah, again by Marwan Al Shaqab out of the beautiful Laheeb daughter - Egea. Additionally, the promising AJA Justified fillies - AJA Asia and AJA Rosada will also make their debut for Athbah Stud!

**TA:** *Does the breeders of Athbah prefer to work with some certain bloodlines and families?*

**WB:** We don't really breed horses for certain bloodlines but we rather do look very carefully at their pedigrees because this is a very important factor in making every breeding decision.

**TA:** *What is the key to select the stallions for your mares and which stallions did you use in your program in 2010?*

**WB:** For 2011 we expect most foals to be born sired by Eden C as he was leased by Athbah Stud during the 2009 season. This will be very exciting to see his foals being born as he did a very good job so far producing beautiful offspring. Foals sired by Marajj, Marwan Al Shaqab, F Shamaal and Abha Qatar are also on the way...

**TA:** *Can you tell us what is the main breeding vision at Athbah nowadays – did it change in time or it was continued the same since the breeding here began up to this day?*



Aja Justified







Hanoua Athbah (Enzo x Walsa El Ludjin)



**WB:** I think the main breeding vision like in any other farm is to improve the foals' crop quality every year. Till one year your vision is born and you want to breed a foal like that every year! But always keep in mind that sometimes you need to take a step backwards to go forwards in the future...

**TA:** *Athbah Stud seems to be very "European" amongst Middle Eastern stud farms. Not only in the personalities of its managers but you also cooperate strongly in leasing horses from Europe, and even – unlike the most of Middle Eastern studs, you are offering some of your great horses for sale. Is it the way Athbah would like to follow - opening the doors of Middle East to the outside countries?*

**WB:** In my opinion it is very important to have a good relationship with all countries and people all over the

world. And at the end it is an inner circle. The market needs to be able to keep going around.

**TA:** *Can you share with us some of your visions for the future activity of Athbah Stud?*

**WB:** For the future we would like to have every year a very nice foal crop of around 20 to 25 foals from our best mares. And to be able to be big competitor on national and international level with mainly Athbah bred and born horses!

**TA:** *You are the manager of one of most active Arabian horse studs nowadays that is reaching the top show results very quickly. How the story of your cooperation with Athbah began?*

**WB:** The cooperation between Athbah Stud and me





Parmana (Al Maraam x Palmira) - Top Ten Junior Filly in Paris 2010



began in the middle of August 2010. The first event I attended as manager of Athbah Stud was Arabian Horse Days Poland where we purchased the elegant Emigrant daughter Efuzja and the stunning Galba daughter Ermina... Starting from there the International Show in Lier, UKIAHS Towerlands, All Nations Cup, El Zahraa International Show and the European Championships followed.

**TA:** *Did you find it easy to start working with Athbah? We know that unexpected death of Wojtek Kowalik – so closely related with the stud success was a hard time to everybody.*

**WB:** The vision of HRH Prince Abdulaziz Bin Ahmed and me as for the whole team at Athbah Stud runs parallel. We all want to achieve the highest standard!

**TA:** *What are the most important features of good manager in the Arabian horse world nowadays in your opinion? What is the key to the success in this field?*

**WB:** Several years ago I decided I wanted to be the manager of a farm and luck and support from other people like Sheikh Khaled Bagedo of Al Khaled farm, Mieke Opsteyn, Eric Dorssers, Ludie Jeukens, the whole team at Schoukens Training Center, Robin Hopkinson, Michael Byatt, just to name a few, got me to the level I am at now. I thrive on challenges and stress and always want to try to become better and learn every day new things that can help me in order to do my job in a better way. At the end I believe as a manager of a farm you need to be up to date about everything that is going on in your farm as well as around. Of course it is impossible to do everything alone and you need a great team behind you to become





Aja Justified winning 2010 European Championships

successful because you will achieve nothing without them! The main professional dream at this moment for me is to manage a great horse being bred and owned by Athbah Stud to become World Champion!

TA: What is your best dream regarding this work?

**WB:** Every manager has his strong and weak points and manages his farm in a different way. This he or she does this in the way that suits his or her farm best and it is not

up to me or anybody else to criticize this as long as that particular manager achieves his or her goals... For me the main key to success are several things... Honesty, hard working, committed, loyalty, a great team and last but not least the love for the Arabian horse!

**TA:** *We are sure these goals you have already reached with Athbah Stud. We wish you a good luck and great foals in 2011!*



Ward and Maria Jodłowska







Celebrating Aja Justified - 2010 World Champion and Triple Crown!







Celebrating Aja Justified - 2010 World Champion and Triple Crown!









Ghanyah Athbah ( Eden C x JJ Ali Baska ) - Junior Champion Filly - International Show Egypt 2010