



An interview with *Christine Jamar*

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Christine & Kamila
during the interview

The annual Stallion Parade at Jadem Arabians in Belgium is an excellent opportunity to appreciate the beauty of stallions at liberty and to meet other enthusiasts of the Arabian breed. I was lucky to spend the afternoon with the owner of the stud, an experienced judge and an equine expert - Christine Jamar-Demeersseman, who told me an exciting story of how Jadem Arabians has developed over the years into what we all know today – a world renowned stud and the home of many outstanding representatives of the Arabian breed. Over a glass of wine, we talked about her passion for Arabian horses and her appreciation of the Polish bloodlines. Suitably for the occasion, the International Women's Day, Christine explained how it is to be a woman in this male-dominated industry and highlighted the importance of following one's dreams. When asked whether she had any advice for me, she said with the utmost certainty: 'Never give up!'. I believe this is one of the secrets of her own great success.



EKSTERN (Monogramm x Ernestyna)

Kamila: What is so special about Arabian horses that made you choose them among many other horse breeds?

Christine: Horses have always been my passion, but those days there were not that many Arabians around. I have always liked sports so when I was 12 years old I took up show jumping and I fell in love with it. Then I got engaged and my future husband did not like the idea of me being away every weekend to take part in a competition. He was quite old fashioned in this respect, preferring his wife to stay at home. I think he was also a little jealous (laughs). What is more, he did not have a clue about horses. So I stayed at home until I was 25 years old. In the meantime, I occasionally took care of my neighbour's Arabians when he was on holiday. This was when I fell in love with the breed and decided to buy my first purebreds. I travelled on my own all over Belgium and Holland in a search for the right individuals. In the north of Holland, my journey was crowned with success. I managed to buy our first two Arabian mares, one bought by me and one bought by my

fiancé, a few months before our marriage. I started breeding them shortly after. When I decided to show the offspring for the first time, the success exceeded my expectations. The colt that was only 3 months old at that time became a champion beating all yearlings, two- and three year olds. At the same show, the yearling filly won her class. I was over the moon! I never saw it coming.

Kamila: That sounds like a really good start and I imagine that also encouraged you to carry on with your breeding. Was it difficult to make your vision come true and what were the challenges?

Christine: I think the biggest challenge I faced was that my husband was not so passionate about my hobby as I was. However, I have always wanted to be independent and do things my way. To support my hobby, I wanted to make my own money from selling the foals. In this way, I was fully responsible for my breeding programme and I was free in making decisions. But that also meant my budget was limited and I had to select the breedings very

**EKSTERN**

World Medal Champion Stallions
Paris 2000

carefully. At the begging, it was difficult because I was not as famous as I am now. Luckily, I inherited the great genes of a good horse breeder from my grandfather and great-grandfather, also horsemen. I suppose, breeding is in my blood.

Kamila: *Has it become easier with time to sell your horses?*

Christine: My breeding programme is what I love and cherish the most. I also like helping people that have just started their adventure with Arabian horses. I love to buy horses for other breeders and then see them winning in the show ring, which proves I was right in my choice (laughs). There are a lot of things in life which we do not like but we still need doing. If you are truly passionate about something, you simply learn to accept them. No breeder can keep all the foals. On the other hand, there is no greater joy for me than to see the babies born every year. It makes me forget about all the unpleasant things that I need to do. Many times

I have also been asked whether it is more difficult to be a woman in this male dominated world. The answer is: no, it is not. At least not for me. What really matters is your character. I was raised with two brothers though, so I must have been well trained (laughs).

Kamila: *Why have you chosen Polish bloodlines as an important part of your breeding programme?*

Christine: This is not a difficult choice when you know the history of Polish breeding. Polish aristocracy started to import breeding stock directly from the Middle East as early as 1800's. Therefore, their breeding programme is more than 200 years old and very well established. The Poles carefully selected their horses for both beauty and performance. Training on the racetrack has always been a part of this selection process. When I started my breeding programme back in 1978, the first horses I bought were a mix of Crabbet, Polish and Russian bloodlines. As the Russian breeding programme was extremely popular at that time, I bred my mares to Russian stallions. Their progeny were amazing movers, very refined as young horses, but when they matured, they were gradually losing type. In 1985 I visited Poland for the first time. When I went to the famous Michalow Stud and I saw their mares, I realised that this is exactly what I want to breed! During my trip to Russia in 1986, I had the opportunity to see the Michalow bred stallion Gwizd (Probat x Gwiazda by Elf) as well as some of his offspring. I was quite impressed with the babies and I fell in love with Gwizd, but then I never imagined that he would become a part of my life and of my breeding programme one day. It all changed in 1990 with the downturn in the US Arabian horse industry, when a lot of horses came on the market. Many Arabians that had earlier been sold at high prices became more affordable for small breeders. Using this opportunity, I bought 11 Polish mares and I leased a son of Bandos – Pyrrus (x Pascha by El Paso). He was my all-time favourite riding horse, an excellent race horse and an amazing show horse in the US, but his progeny were not typey enough. My breeding strategy at that time was to use the Polish bloodlines and even if the foals were not pretty enough, I could still sell them for their performance abilities. The modern Arabian horse has become more and more refined, but we need to be extremely careful not to lose the horse and its riding abilities. In the end, Arabians are exceptionally beautiful horses, but we cannot forget that they are horses and not living statuettes. The challenge I am facing at the moment is to find the balance between beauty and performance. My horses need to be both pretty enough to compete in the show ring as well as good riding horses. With a limited number of available bloodlines, it has become more and more difficult. So

what I am trying to do now is to continue what worked for me in the past. I try to introduce stallions like Gwizd to my breeding programme and cross them with very typey mares. Foals by Gwizd showed a substantial improvement in type when compared to their dams. At the same time, they inherited big dark eyes, a good neck and an amazing trot. Next year we will see whether this strategy works out yes or no! (laughs).

Kamila: *Is it always so difficult to predict the final outcome?*

Christine: It is all about having a dream and trying to make it come true. Another important thing in life is to never give up. If there is something that you really want, never ever give up in your pursuits. 9 times out of 10 it works! A good portion of luck, comes always in handy!

Kamila: *Speaking of dreams, let us talk about Ekstern. You had chosen him for your breeding programme before he became famous. What was so special about him?*

Christine: When I first saw him, he looked like a ball of fur! I went to Michalow to see Werbum (Wojslaw x Werda by Piechur) because they were selling him at that time. I liked his damline but when I saw him I knew that my breeding programme would not benefit too much from him. And then I saw Ekstern - a white ball of fur trotting like crazy over the frozen ground in the middle of the Polish winter. He had the most beautiful dark eyes and a very pretty face. I was mesmerised! Besides, he has a short back and a long croup, which I thought would work perfectly for my Eukaliptus and Bandos bred mares that had longer, softer backs and shorter croups. Mrs. Urszula Bialobok, who saw I was interested in this stallion, took me by the arm and led me to her husband's office. She showed me the pictures on the wall with beautiful white mares that all belonged to the same family as Ekstern. I immediately decided to lease him, but I was told he was not available for lease. I was so determined to have him that later in the evening I called my husband and asked whether we could come back to Michalow in the following week to offer double the usual lease price. Fortunately, this time it worked! I was so happy! I remember when the two directors (Jerzy Bialobok of the Michalow Stud and Marek Trela of the Janow Podlaski Stud) visited Jadem to have a look at the first foals by Ekstern. The look on their



IA BALITISTA
MOTTO 2015

EMERALD J (QR Marc x Emandoria) and **GALLARDO J** (Emerald J x Gomera J)
both Gold Medal Champion, Dubai 2015

faces is something I will probably remember for the rest of my life. They could not believe what they saw. They both believed more in Ganges, another Michalow bred son of Monogramm (x Garrona by Fanatyk). Ganges is a very good horse but not really my type. Ekstern was exactly what I wanted. And when he returned to Poland, his best foals were born in Janow Podlaski, possibly due to the fact that the Michalow mares were genetically too close to him. The foals by Ekstern out of the Janow Podlaski mares were both typey and successful on the racetrack. Esktern himself won two races, but according to his trainers, he liked the show ring much more than the racecourse (laughs).

***Kamila:** The Janow mares by Ekstern were usually a massive improvement over their dams. His offspring inherited a lot of his amazing attitude. I remember*

when I saw Ekstern in one of the shows in Poland. Mariusz Liskiewicz, who was his handler at that time, could not run as he had gone through a serious illness a few months before and was not completely recovered. He walked and Ekstern was dancing around him. It was a truly unforgettable moment!

Christine: Ekstern has always loved to be in the show ring. When he was on lease to Jadem, he was shown by Erik Dorssers. There was a special bond between Erik and Ekstern – they truly loved each other and they were very successful in the show ring together. Everybody will agree with me that it was a pleasure to see Ekstern in the showing.

***Kamila:** Let us talk about another very successful horse – Emerald J. I am really curious how it all started. How did*

Christine & Guy



the idea of breeding Emandoria to QR Marc become at all possible?

Christine: I was the one who discovered QR Marc in the USA. I purchased him for Mr Gheysens of Knocke Arabians. I loved this stallion very much. At roughly the same time, Emandoria was leased to the USA. When I bought QR Marc and went to collect him, I was accompanied by Greg Gallun as the one that knew the stallion's owner. On the way to Florida, Greg mentioned that one of his clients leased Emandoria and they had an embryo for sale. My immediate reaction was: I need to have it! So without thinking twice, I decided to buy it. It was very expensive! My own husband had not found out about the purchase until a few weeks before the foal was born. And it took us two years to obtain the embryo. But it was worth a try! I loved Emandoria very much as to me she has always been an embodiment of femininity. A cross of QR Marc with Emandoria was a dream come true and I was obviously hoping for a filly! Two or three weeks before the baby was born I had told my husband that after the Las Vegas show we needed to visit Om El Arab because I was expecting a foal there. He did not say much. I suppose he was well aware that I knew what I was doing. I was a bit disappointed when Sigi Siller called to inform me that it was a colt. When she said that it was a cute colt, but nothing spectacular, I could live with it because his pedigree was really important. I first saw Emerald J when he was about three weeks old. Sigi was right. It was a cute colt with good body and very correct, but nothing outstanding. However, as a yearling Emerald changed completely. I remember that a trainer at that time, suggested that we should try to clip the colt. I asked him to wait till the

winter was over as it was still pretty cold weather and the horses spent most days outside. The trainer then started to gradually condition Emerald and it was when the colt changed. His offspring are exactly the same. When they are 12 – 18 months old, they change completely. I think it is thanks to the presence of Gazal Al Shaqab in Emerald's pedigree.

Kamila: *I thought you might have hoped for a filly.*

Christine: But now I am really happy that it was a colt. He is such an exceptional stallion, a dream come true. The most important is that he crosses very well with my broodmares.

Kamila: *I know that it is always a difficult question, but if you were to choose one horse that you have loved the most, which horse would that be?*

Christine: Ekstern. He really means so much to me! I owe him so much! The mares I bought in the US were good but not exceptional. At that time, I could not afford to buy the pricey mares sold at the Polish auctions. Ekstern managed to vastly improve my breeding programme in just one generation. Some may think it is ridiculous, but I have so much respect for this horse! Every time I saw him in Michalow, he touched me so deeply that I started crying. Please do not laugh at me!

Kamila: *I would never laugh at you! I feel exactly the same when I see some horses. You cannot help it, they just make you cry!*

Christine: They do! Director Bialobok knew I felt this way about Ekstern, so every time I visited Michalow, he

liked to add oil to the fire when presenting this stallion in public as he knew it would make me cry (laughs). Ekstern has a special place in my heart. But the truth is that I love all my horses. Emerald J is now on lease to Ariela Arabians in Israel and I know they take very good care of him, but I still miss him a lot.

Kamila: *I wish I could have seen him today.*

Christine: I am sure you would love him. He is bigger and much more masculine than his sire. Playing and showing off is what he loves the most. QR Marc is a very sweet horse who does not really like to play, which is quite unusual for a stallion.

Kamila: *There is no doubt that you are a very successful breeder, but if there was one thing that you could change, what would that be?*

Christine: When I purchased horses from the US in 1990, I would have bought fewer mares but of higher quality. I had two very good ones, with the rest being just mediocre. Buying higher quality mares would have probably saved me some time. Luckily, Ekstern managed to vastly improve my breeding stock. He saved my life (laughs).

Kamila: *Actually, Ekstern also owes you a lot. It was you who discovered him. His breeders were not as excited about him as you were when he was back from the racetrack.*

Christine: Both directors could not believe how successful he was. I still remember that he received the score of 14 times 20's in the Towerlands Championships in the UK, the first A-show that he attended. To be honest with you, I was equally surprised to see him showing off like that. Even the judges were curious about where I had found this stallion.

Kamila: *Let us talk a bit about judging. As an accomplished international judge, what advice have you got for a person that would like to pursue this career path?*

Christine: I believe that one of my strongest points as a judge is the fact that I spent a lot of time learning from people that judged sport horses. For almost 10 years I was shadowing one of the best judges of warmblood horses in Holland. Observing sport horses teaches you

all about the structure and conformation of a horse, i.e. how a good leg should look like. If you think you do not need it as a judge of Arabian horses, you are wrong! You need it to tell the difference between a very good horse and a superhorse. Preparing to be an independent judge involves a lot of studying as well as shadowing more experienced judges. Another highly effective method is to learn from the experts that spent most of their lives breeding horses. One very important thing I have learnt from an American breeder is that a horse must be happy to win. This is what I always tell my trainers.

Kamila: *You have an amazing team of handlers at Jadem!*

Christine: I do, but I have to train them too! Sometimes I ask them to take the pressure off. The horses cannot cope when stimulated too much. You really need to know when to stop. It feels as if the horses talked to me. I can always tell when something is wrong.

Kamila: *Is it one of the secrets of your success that you understand the horses so well?*

Christine: I think it is true about all the breeders who truly love their animals. If one of mine feels unwell, I will immediately know that I need to go to the barn. It is something I cannot explain. Maybe in a few years I will find out what that is.

It may be just a lucky guess, but I think it is the love and passion for Arabians that make Christine understand the horses so well. If you could only see the sparkle in her eyes every time she mentioned Ekstern... She dedicated her whole life to breeding and promoting Arabians, being one of the greatest ambassadors for the breed nowadays. It was a great privilege and honour to be the one with whom

Christine shared the amazing story of her success. The success that required a lot of hard work, determination and risk-taking, but was definitely worth the effort. 'Never give up!' - a cliché that I had heard a hundred times before, acquired new meaning when used by a person who actually put this belief into practice. The story of Jadem Arabians could be an inspiration to anyone who is unsure about pursuing their dreams. Without a doubt, it has been an inspiration to me! □

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