

photo: Gabrielle Boiselle

Nasr Marei

Tutto Arabi interview



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Dr. Nasr Marei, the owner of Albadeia Stud Farm in Egypt, has been one of the leading breeders of Egyptian Arabians for over four decades. Throughout that time, he has seen many changes in the breeding world as well as establishing an international reputation as a Judge, major breeder and professional photographer.

Tutto Arabi recently interviewed Dr. Marei on a wide range of subjects central to the Arabian breeding world.

PC: *Now that you have been breeding for over 40 years, your program shows the results of an evolution in your thinking. What do you feel are the major changes in approach at Albadeia since you took over the breeding decisions?*

NM: *I took over the full responsibility of managing the Albadeia breeding program early in 1990. However, I was actively*

involved with my father in shaping the program since 1971. Over the years, my father had build up the foundation and created a very rich and concentrated gene pool on which I depended a great deal. As in every aspect of human endeavor, the newer generation evolves and applies their own ideas as they venture into new areas. That is what I did at Albadeia.

I was fortunate to have a much wider international exposure that my father did because his responsibilities as a prominent statesman in Egypt did not allow him the opportunity to study directly what other breeders do in the rest of the world.

My general strategy was:

- 1. To maintain the quality and Type that already existed in the horses*
- 2. To recognize and identify the conformational defects and shortcomings*
- 3. To eliminate these defects through careful breeding decisions*
- 4. To constantly refine these qualities and improve the Albadeia program*



Al Maraam
(Imperial Imdal x The Vision HG)

I believe that this is exactly what I have been able to achieve in the last 20 years and I must say that I am very gratified at what I have been able to accomplish to date. Having said that, I must add that I am trying always to evolve and remain dynamic in my thinking. In order to do this I had to eliminate certain individuals and sometimes lines all together. In order to reach some of my goals, I have used outside stallions, acquired new mares and attempted to reach the vision of what I wanted to attain.

PC: *What was important to you in the early years and what has become important in the current phase?*

NM: *In the earlier phase, what is important was to set an image of an ideal horse (my ideal horse!) and to attain that type. My current objectives are to maintain this vision and continuously improve it.*

PC: *How have you developed the way that you look at and evaluate a horse?*

NM: *Since childhood I have been fascinated by these noble creatures. I grew up loving them. Being passionate as I am, over the years I have developed a critical "eye" and sharpened my skills in evaluating horses. I have seen and studied thousands of horses over the years both here in Egypt and in the rest of the world; actively judging internationally, discussing and learning from more experienced people, reading and watching videos all of which were important elements in building up my knowledge. Once you learn and have the "eye" being able to critically evaluate horses becomes easier.*

I must add that I am still learning every day. I also never thought of myself as THE perfect evaluator! Therefore, I am always seeking more experience



Laheeb
(Imperial Imdal x AK Latifa)

PC: *What are the major influences on your planning? How do you incorporate your individual vision of how the horse should look and move?*

NM: *I really do not believe that I am any different than any other serious breeder. I study the qualities of the two horses that I am about to breed, and determine how can they compliment each other by keeping the best attributes and overcoming the defects.*

I have been able to bring a great degree of success to improving my herd in the followings areas; croup, neck, legs and movement. At the same time, it was essential that I keep the Albadeia look in head, eye, ears, conformation and substance. A successful breeder has to have an artistic sense to understand, beauty, balance and harmony.

The other paramount element is knowing the pedigree and the

ancestors of the horses I have and what kind of horses they were and what they produced so far.

PC: *How are you influenced by what you see as you travel and judge throughout the world?*

NM: *It is a continuous learning process for me. I study trends and the changing taste in shows. I do NOT COPY but try to see if I can improve something that I missed in the past. I have my own Albadeia Type which I am keen to keep. I have my signature on my horses but if I see that I can add an element that will get me closer to my ideal horse, I would.*

PC: *You brought Laheeb (Imperial Imdal x AK Latifa) to Albadeia for the 2008-09 season . What did you see in that particular stallion and how did you integrate him into your program?*

NM: *Laheeb, to me was and is one of the most complete horses*

**Asfourat Albadeia
(Farid Albadeia x Simeon Safir)**



**Yasseen Albadeia
(Laheeb x Asfourat Albadeia)**

that I have seen and fits my criteria perfectly. Of course, his pedigree was and is a great attraction to any breeder. He has the body, neck, topline, legs, balance and movement that I want. This is in addition to a very special charisma. Naturally, he also has some shortcomings that I put in consideration when matching him with a mare. No horse is perfect!

The foals I had (seven colts and seven fillies) are proof that I had made the right choice of a stallion. He added exactly what I wanted, size, long neck, tail carriage and conformation. I am very happy with the foals and consider them a great addition to Albadeia breeding program.

PC: Who were the mares to whom you bred Laheeb and what did you hope to achieve by some of these selections?

NM: I had chosen fourteen of my best mares. To name a few: Galagel, Asfourat, Hekayet, Sondos, Semha, Kamarain, Isaad, Zaghroudat, Bahga and others. All of these mares are my breeding and carry the Albadeia name. They are somewhat

individual in looks as you can imagine. Each one though has something special. Offering a variety like this to one stallion really gives him a chance to express himself with maximum possibilities. What I got proved to be unmistakably Albadeia foals and all with added qualities.

PC: Earlier on, you brought Simeon Sharav (Asfour x Simeon Shuala) to Albadeia in 1998. What has he contributed to the overall look of the Albadeia horse? In which areas were his most dominant contributions?

What has been his influence on the international scene?

NM: Simeon Sharav, again was a great success story. He has given me some wonderful stallions like Tammam, Haytham, Ghaith, Gameh and Saheel. He also produced some superb mares, like Itlalah, Tarneema, Tasaheel and others. They themselves have produced some amazing grand get of Sharav. His qualities were maintained in the second-generation as well. Sharav's foals are not only good producers but also great show



Tarheeb Albadeia
(Laheeb x Bahga Albadeia)



Bahga Albadeia
(Nagham Albadeia x Zaghroudat Albadeia)

horses. Sharav is on his third year lease with Ariela and he has produced a great number of superb foals all over Israel. The strongest points that he has added to my herd and that I have also seen in other non –Albadeia horses to whom he was bred, is a nice small head and ears, a lot of presence, lovely disposition and the most amazing perfectly angled shoulder and upright neck. He has foals in Europe as well.

PC: *In December, you brought Al Maraam to Cairo on a lease arrangement. He has a very different look from your other stallions. What are you hoping he will bring to the program and are there specific mares that you are planning to breed to him?*

NM: *Al Maraam (Imperial Imdal x The Vision) is a wonderful bay horse . He is brother of both Laheeb (sire side) and Lahab (Dam side). What other references would a breeder need! He is a horse with a lot of substance and a very beautiful head and amazing eyes. He also has an impeccable disposition.*

What I saw in him that I want to add to my horses, is a stronger body and increased substance. I also hope that he passes on his beautiful head. In my herd of almost 70 horses, I have only few non-greys. Not that I have color preference, but having some dark pigmentation added would not be a bad idea. I will probably breed him this year to 10 mares. If he stays with me for another breeding season, I'll breed more mares to him.

PC: *Tell us some of the more important mares in your program and what do you feel are their most distinguishing contributions to your overall look?*

NM: *As I mentioned earlier, my mares share type, movement, good legs, strong balanced conformation and nice heads. As individuals, they differ in details. One has a more exotic head, another may have better eyes. The third may not be strong in the croup. Some have better movement than the others. We are talking about details that are of course very important and*

**Hekayet Albadeia
(Anaza Bey Shahh
x Simeon Safir)**



**Lahlouba Albadeia
(Laheeb x Hekayet Albadeia)**

widen the pool from which I match them with what I think is the best stallion. All of my broodmares are important to the breeding program. I do not prefer one over the other.

Some of my best producing are: Galagel (who was acquired by Dubai Stud last year, Tammimat, Asfoura, Simeon Safir, Sondos, Zaghroudat, Kamarain and Hekayet.

They have all contributed by giving strong and agile movement and still preserve the Albadeia type.

PC: *Which lines from your original foundation horses are still important in today's group?*

NM: *One of the most important mares that continued her tradition of extreme beauty and powerful movement is Kamar Albadeia (Kayed x Naeema). We can still see her quality in her third generation of offspring. Kayed (Morafic x Kaydahom) was the most influential stallion. His legacy continues strongly until now and will always remain.*

PC: *As an International Judge who has participated in every major show over the last 21 years, do you feel that the overall look of the Arabian horse has changed? If so, in what ways?*

NM: *Yes, it has. In the Straight Egyptians, the horses have become more refined with prettier heads. I believe that many intelligent breeders have succeeded in breeding an "improved Traditional" horse. Many others were not so lucky and lost their vision and the identity of a true Egyptian horse. They ended up in following the show trends by producing horses that are Arabian in fact but do not have the "Egyptian looks".*

As for the breeders of non-straight Egyptian, they have the luxury of diversifying and using a significantly larger gene pool. They crossed Spanish, Egyptian, Polish, Russian, American, and other lines. With that they can evolve faster and have a better chance to adjust to the changing trends in the show ring.



**Kamarain
(Inshallah Albadeia
x Kamar Albadeia)**



**Haneen Albadeia
(Laheeb x Kamarain Albadeia)**

We have to admit, whether we like it or not that shows do influence trends. When the Golden Cross horses (Shaklan, for example) were winning in shows everyone wanted to breed that look. Russian horses were "in vogue" at one point. The Polish horses attracted the attention of breeders by their strong bodies and powerful movement. A few years ago, it was the turn of the Egyptians. So Gelgelah, Al Adeed, Loubna and many others were winning championships and breeders "rediscovered" the value of the Egyptians.

Today it is the "Marwan" and "WH Justice" looks or type that is dominating the show ring and these two stallions are producing what some dubbed "The Universal" horse. Therefore, these two stallions and their offspring are being propagated intensively.

PC: *Do you find any indication that the show ring is influenced by market forces? Some sources have said that there is a drop off in participation doing to a number*

of economic factors. Have you seen any indication of that and what is being done to encourage new breeders to participate?

NM: *The number of horses participating in shows in the last 2-3 show seasons was less than normal. One major factor was the declining economy worldwide. It is becoming quite costly to train horses at professional training centers. The transportation across Europe the Middle East and across Atlantic is also expensive. Instead of sending several horses to a show, owners would opt today to send fewer or none at all. Show organizers are doing their best to secure more participants by offering incentives. One of these methods is offering prize money.*

The show ring has become very competitive and requires extremely high qualities to win or fare well. That is not easy for new or small breeders. It is even has become so for old and experienced breeders



Isaad Albadeia
(Jafaar Albadeia x Zaghroudat Albadeia)



Zahda
(Laheeb x Isaad Albadeia)

PC: *Economic conditions are changing throughout the world. How are you tailoring your program to deal with these changes and what can you suggest for some other breeders to consider?*

NM: *Personally, I have been skipping breeding several mares each season. I aim for quality rather than numbers. Breeders need to sell horses either because they do not need them in their program or to earn some money to sustain their program. We all know that no one is making money or profits from breeding Arabians.*

Therefore, I have to improve quality of the horse I am breeding to meet today's needs and minimize chances that I produce nothing but top quality horses. Of course, this easier said than done!

PC: *You recently published a quite successful book of your photographs, **The Arabian Horse of Egypt**. When*

you did the photography, what were you trying to portray as your vision of the horse?

NM: *I was simply trying to express my emotions and passion for the Egyptian Arabians and show their true free spirit, elegance and nobility. I tried to emphasize their points of magical beauty, their history.*

PC: *What are you looking forward to in the next phase of Albadeia breeding?*

NM: *As long as I am capable, I'll continue my endeavor to breed the elusive "Perfect Horse".*

I will always be looking for areas that I can improve in my herd, finding the best elements to incorporate into it and using the knowledge I have gained to achieve my objectives. This may never happen. But if I do not have that dream then I may stop breeding right now. The drive to evolve and improve is what keeps me going.



Sondos Albadeia
(Farid Albadeia x Mahasen Albadeia)



Amnah Albadeia
(Laheeb x Sondos Albadeia)



Tamimat Albadeia
(Bar Sama Halim x Aneesat Albadeia)



Tameem Albadeia
(Laheeb x Tamimat Albadeia)



**Zaghroudat Albadeia
(Adl x Kamar Albadeia)**



**Mohab Albadeia
(Laheeb x Zaghroudat Albadeia)**



Simeon Sharav
(Asfour x Simeon Shuala)



Tanheeda Albadeia
(Haytham Albadeia x Simeon Safir)



Gamehh Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Bashoosha Albadeia)



Haytham Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Galagel Albadeia)



Ghaith Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Tamimat Albadeia)



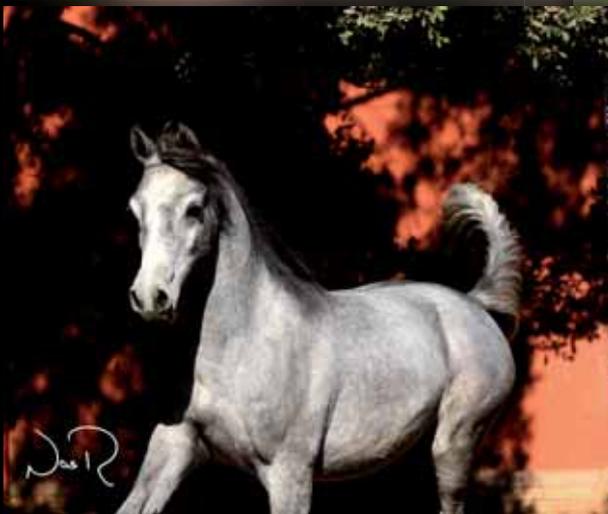
Saheel Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Sahlallah Albadeia)



Itlalah Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Sondos Albadeia)



Tammam Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Tamimat Albadeia)



Tarneemat Albadeia
(Simeon Sharav x Tamimat Albadeia)



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