

RISING STARS OF THE SHOW SCENE:

Koen Hennekens

BELGIUM

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Koen Hennekens in Aachen with Kabsztad (Poganin x Kwestura) bred by Michałów State Stud

Koen Hennekens is 25 years old and was born and raised in the company of the Arabian horses at Flaxmas Arabians – the farm of his parents. In our Q&A talk he will tell what made him being attracted about Arabian horses, what are his tricks to find the way to be a good handler, what are his biggest achievements so far – and, of course, the dreams to come true.

Urszula Łęczycka: Your first memory with Arabian horses is....

Koen Hennekens: My first memory with Arabian horses is going with my parents to my grandparents house and play in the farm. Cycling around and playing on my tractor with trailer. My parents also were taking me to Arabian horse shows to watch them.



With Kabsztad in Prague winning Silver Medal in the European Championships in 2020

UŁ: *What attracted you the most in Arabian horse?*

KH: *What attracted me the most in Arabian horses is their loving character. They were the best friends to go to after school!*

UŁ: *Your favourite Arabian horse is....*

KH: *At the moment it is Nabeel al Nasser. He is big, 8 years*

old, grey gelding by EKS Alihandro out of Noof al Nasser. Bred by Al Nasser Farm from Qatar and given to me as a yearling gelding. I have had such a great success with him already. When he was 3 years old I showed him to European Champion Junior Gelding title. And this year he was 2nd placed in the All Nations Cup in Aachen in the Senior Gelding class. He is also my riding horse as he stands 163 cm high, he is very tall and a good size for me to ride on. He has a very special character and is my dear friend.



UŁ: *What, in your opinion, is the most challenging in Arabian horse trainer job?*

KH: *Most challenging is to teach a young horse from zero to get them ready for a horse show. To gain their confidence and teach them how to give me their best performance in hand in stand up and in trot.*

UŁ: *Who is your biggest authority in this profession?*

KH: *The guys who taught me everything are Peter Wilms -the farm manager at Flaxman Arabians, the farm of my parents, and Fernando Poli from the USA. They both taught me everything about feeding, training and showing.*



Koen Hennekens in Aachen with Lawinia (Ekstern x Luanda)

UL: And what do you find the most difficult in that job?

KH: The hardest part of my job is to control my nerves and not let anybody down. I try to do my best everyday and every show I go to. Also a challenge is to keep myself in shape!

UL: The balance between the good horsemanship and the requirements of nowadays show stage with all the impressive stand up, clipping, show preparations seems to be difficult - how do you try to handle it?

KH: I try to give it my own style. And I try to do my best every single day to make the best out of it. I stick to old ways and try sometimes something new.

UL: What are the key features of good Arabian horse trainer and handler in your opinion?

KH: The key features of a good Arabian horse trainer is to be close to your horses. Stay very connected to them and earn their trust. Work with them every day but make the program for them various. So something different to do every day with them. But our horses also go outside in the pasture and in the paddocks with their friends.



With Kabsztad (Poganin x Kwestura)



With Esfahan (Ekstern x El Fatha) winner of Best in Show Westfalen Trophy Germany

UL: What is your biggest achievement as Arabian horse handler and how many medals have you won so far?

Because I'm showing horses from a very young age. Every medal that I have won is very special on his own. It's achievements that nobody can't take away from you.

KH: Being silver medal winner in the European Championships in Prague in 2020 with our grey stallion Kabsztad, 2006, (Poganin x Kwestura) bred by Michalow State Stud. And winning European Champion title with my gelding Nabeel al Nasser as a Junior Gelding in Lier in 2018. It's very difficult to count the amount of medals.

UL: And your biggest dream as Arabian horse handler?

KH: My biggest dream in the future would be to breed my own show horse and being able to show this horse in a big show such as the World Championships in Paris.

With Kabsztad in Prague winning Silver Medal in the European Championships in 2020

