

RISING STARS OF THE SHOW SCENE:

Mateusz Tokarski

JANÓW PODLASKI STATE STUD, POLAND

Interview by Urszula Łęczycka

photos by Sylwia Itenda



With Babetta (Emerald J x Belinda/Kahil Al Shaqab) sold at 2023 Pride of Poland auction for 112 000 Euro to Flaxman Arabians

Mateusz Tokarski - is 26 years old and a graduate of the Horse Breeding Technical School in Janów Podlaski. He has been involved with Janów Podlaski Horse Stud for 8 years and has been its employee for 6 years. Since 2019 he has been the main trainer of show horses at this stud - in the same year Janów Podlaski Stud won 2 medals at the European Championships thanks to, among others, Mateusz. So far he has a total of 36 medals won with Janów horses at shows in Poland and abroad on his account. He won the first one while he was still an apprentice at the stud. In an interview with Urszula

Łęczycka he talks about the beginnings of his way to this challenging profession, the reasons why he chose Arabian horses and his dreams to be fulfilled...

Urszula Łęczycka: How did you get to Janów Podlaski Stud and how did it happen that you started training Arabian horses?

Mateusz Tokarski: Horses have always been in my life. I came to the stud when I was a student at the Horse Breeding Technical School in Janów Podlaski. In 2015 I went to my



With Barok (Om El Belissimo x Baida/Balon) after winning European Gold Champion Stallion title

first Arabian horse show in Bialka as a volunteer, then I started working at the stud during every holiday until 2017. As an employee I was hired there right after finishing school. I worked in the training stable under the supervision of Andrzej Sieklucki and Kamil Biernat. By then I was already a full-time employee of the stud and I was given a few horses to start training with. Working with young horses was taught by Mr Andrzej, he devoted a lot of time to me at work and after work, he showed me step by step how to gain the trust of these phenomenal animals and how to work with them.

UŁ: What is your first memory associated with Arabian horses?

MT: My first memory is related with the Janów-bred mare AL JAZEERA and the impression she made on me. It was

indescribable! The mare was in show training at the time. She captivated me with her uncommon character, charisma and above all - movement.

UŁ: Did you have the opportunity to work with her as a trainer and was she the reason why you decided to seriously dedicate yourself to this profession?

MT: At that time I didn't know that I wanted to devote myself to Arabian horses. But this mare enchanted me so much that I started to think differently about these animals. I didn't get the honour of training AL JAZEERA, but in 2015 at the Al Khalediach European Festival show in Nowe Wrońska where AL JAZEERA won the gold medal, I was given the opportunity to show another mare from Janów - PATRIA - in the championship. I was very stressed but we won the bronze medal - it was my first medal won at an Arabian horse show

Gold, Silver and Bronze Champion Yearling Fillies at Białka Junior Spring Show 2023 - all bred and owned by Janów Podlaski Stud



when I was not yet an employee of Janów Podlaski Stud. That's when I decided to seriously dedicate myself to the profession.

UŁ: What attracts you the most in Arabian horses?

MT: Arabians are considered to be a model of beauty and perfection, temperamental and gentle at the same time. What attracts me most about Arabian horses is that each of my charges is an individual. Thanks to them I learn something new every day and never fall into a routine.

UŁ: Your favourite Arabian horse - in Janów, and in general....

MT: This is a very difficult question to answer. I have many favourite horses. Mostly it's the ones I've worked with, but if I have to choose it would be PASCUALA. She was one of my first charges. Always energetic, although a bit moody. At our first show together we won a medal and the highest score of the show.

UŁ: What do you find most challenging and interesting about being an Arabian horse trainer and handler?

MT: It's a lot of responsibility. The most difficult thing is gaining the horse's trust and the very beginning of the work, when I start to demand something from the horse. It's also challenging how much of my private time I spend on activities related to preparing horses for shows and auctions. This work never becomes monotonous, because horses have different characters and each one has to be approached individually. The most satisfying thing for me is when, after a few weeks of working together, the horses make progress, they start to read my mind so to speak - they know what I expect from them and they see that together we can achieve success.

UŁ: And what do you think is the most challenging part of your job?

MT: In my opinion, the most challenging part of my job is that every time I have to determine the optimal training plan depending on the horse's age group, conformation, condition or character.



Mateusz Tokarski with Paweł Sylwiński

UŁ: *Is there anything you would like to learn better, something you want to do better in your work?*

MT: *All shows are important, going in front of the judges is a big responsibility. I'm still learning to have a clear mind before a show and try not to think about what others are saying or writing. To focus on the horse I am presenting. I try not to stop but to continue to grow in what I do, to improve my style of showing and training horses.*

UŁ: *Let's state it honestly - the balance between good horsemanship and the demands of today's show scene, with the expectations of so-called 'hard stand up', shaving and conditioning preparations for shows, seems difficult - how do you try to manage this?*

MT: *Balance is the right word with which to describe the preparation of horses for shows. We put the horses first - it is through our experience that we decide what methods we can use in their training to achieve the desired goal.*

UŁ: *Who is your biggest authority when it comes to training and showing horses and why?*

MT: *I have always looked up to the work of two trainers: Andrzej Sieklucki and Paweł Syliwoniuk. Andrzej is a retired stud worker and we worked together in the training stable. I don't remember a show where a horse wouldn't move for 20 points with him. During the stand up evaluation the horses were staring at him like a picture and Andrzej always had the same look on his face - a priceless impression. Paweł is*

a person who will help and, if necessary, criticise or praise. We haven't had the opportunity to work together, but anything can still happen. We help each other a lot at shows. All his horses are perfected 100 per cent. They trust him unreservedly, and he shows this very well in the show ring.

UŁ: *What do you think are the key points of being good Arabian horse trainer and handler?*

MT: *Definitely commitment and passion for these animals. Patience, because not everything always goes our way. You have to be creative, create your own style and methods of showing and training horses.*

UŁ: *What is your biggest achievement so far as an Arabian horse trainer?*

MT: *Gold medal win with the stallion Barok at the European Championships.*

UŁ: *And what is your biggest dream as an Arabian horse trainer?*

MT: *To win a World Championship.*

In the autumn-winter season Mateusz Tokarski, with funding from the Polish Jockey Club, was sent by Janów Podlaski Stud to one of the largest training centres for Arabian horses in Europe - Schoukens Training Center in Belgium to further improve his skills in preparing Arabian horses for showing.

With Brodnica (Pogrom x Bambina/Kahil Al Shaqab)

