

Aja

ARABIANS

RECIPE FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN!

Interview by: Urszula Leczycka
 photos: Gregor Aymar, Emma Maxwell, Walter Downes

Tutto Arabi: *How did your passion for Arabian horses started and when? Do you remember the first horse that influenced your look on this breed?*

Malcolm Hickford: *Both Jane and I loved animals in general, our shared dream was to live in the countryside on a farm, Jane spent all her spare time from the age of twelve horse riding, she always admired an Arabian gelding stabled at the same livery yard, I suppose this is where the "arabitis" started. When we eventually did manage to buy a small farm, one of the first items on Janes ' wish list was an Arabian horse to ride. We purchased our first Arabian from a local breeder Joyce Greenwood, the breeder of World Champion Carmargue, Joyce suggested we might enjoy going to an "arab show" we were hooked and became very quickly obsessed. Initially through Joyce we were definitely Carmargue fans, after all he was a locally bred World Champion, one of our first serious purchases was the Carmargue daughter G Estarreja (Carmargue x Estasha Bint Masri) from the Paolo Gucci herd. Incidentally she went on to breed Aja Beneja the mother of Aja Justified and several other Champion offspring.*

A trip to the All Nations Cup in Aachen introduced us to another horse that greatly influenced our breeding program - FS Bengali. A combination of charismatic presence, huge eyes and an incredible top line sold FS Bengali to us. I remember not being able to take our eyes off him while he was in the ring. For us FS Bengali had superior confirmation to a lot of the other stallions, in fact he passed on this trait very consistently, it was never difficult to pick out the FS Bengali offspring.

The FS Bengali daughters are proving to be excellent broodmares being conformationally strong, they proved ideal to breed to a stallion like WH Justice, he has such an amazing "front", shoulder, neck, head, a front that we really

wanted but I think the FS Bengali daughters brought with them some conformational security.

EVALUATING A "PERFECT HORSE"

TA: *What is your priority when you look on the Arabian horse – whether to buy for yourself or while estimating your own horses?*

MH: *One word comes to mind when evaluating horses "Balance" this is the "Holy Grail" for us as breeders. When a horse is balanced everything is in the right place, the angle of the shoulder, length of back, length of neck, length of leg, length of croup, length of forearm, nice short cannons, everything must work together in harmony. Also for us movement is essential, an Arabian horse must move in that prancing style that only an Arabian can, although normally if they are balanced they are able to move. Lastly they have to have an unmistakable arabian head, this should not be too large, and should include, large eye's "essential for us probably the most important feature," reasonable width between the eyes, fine muzzle, a nice curve of the face "for us it doesn't have to be extreme", also nice tippy ears complete the picture. We also think the neck is very important, the length and more importantly the shape which is preferably hooky go a long way to create a balanced overall look.*

Basing on the bloodlines

TA: *What are your favorite bloodlines your breeding is based on nowadays?*

MH: *There are very strong influences from El Shaklan, Padron Psyche, also some influence from Bey Shah, Carmargue, Balaton. Whenever breeding is mentioned almost always we talk about stallions, a point that I wish to make here is that for us it's always about the "mares" and most importantly the tail female line.*

RECIPE FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN!

STUD



EM

AJA JUSTIFIED
(WH JUSTICE X AJA BENEJA)



AJA JUSTIFIED (WH JUSTICE X AJA BENEJA)

What is inside the barns - horses that creates Aja Arabians through the years

TA: *The most spectacular (the best in your opinion) horses that created Aja Arabians through the years by now are ...*

MH: *This is starting to become a rather long list, therefore I hope that such a long list does not appear to be a little pretentious, but we truly have a seriously deep affection for the horses listed:*

*Aja Justified (WH Justice x Aja Beneja),
Aja Aphrodite (WH Justice x Lovin Psyche SSA),
Aja Sangali (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna),
Aja Sanagor (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna),
Aja Santana (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna),
Aja Angelica (WH Justice x FS Anastasia),
Aja Rosada (Aja Justified x Psyches Sancerre),
Aja Asia (Aja Justified x Aja Aaisha) and
Aja Adonis (WH Justice x Sanadina);*

At home we have some truly exceptional young females:

*Aja First Love (FS Bengali x Lovin Psyche SSA),
Aja Justicia (WH Justice x Sanadina),
Aja Estrella (Wh Justice x G Estarejja),*

*Aja Sabiba (WH Justice x Sahiba),
Aja Annabella and full sister
Aja Antalliah (WH Justice x FS Anastasia),
Aja Carina and full sister
Aja Catarina (WH Justice x Aja Czarina),
Aja Saskia (Aja Justified x Sanadina);*

And colts:

*Aja Angelo (WH Justice x Aja Aaisha) and
Aja Justafire (WH Justice x Aja First Love).*

Aja horses around the world

It's fair to say that we have a particularly good and close relationship with the Athbah Stud HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Dr Salem Al Baraqq and stud manager Ward Bemong. 2010 was without doubt the most exciting year that Aja Arabians have ever had, culminating in a Triple Crown Championship for Aja Justified (WH Justice x Aja Beneja). We are very proud that Aja Justified was selected to represent the Athbah Stud, and without doubt this was a hugely successful venture, it truly is a privilege to work with such an open, communicative great team. Also representing Athbah stud is Aja Adonis (WH Justice x Sanadina), already a Bronze Champion at the 2011

AJA ARABIANS - RECIPE FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN!

STUD



AJA ADONIS
(VH JUSTICE X SANADINA)

Aja Rosada (Aja Justified x Psyches Sancerre)



At the Khaleidiah show, Aja Adonis is still finding his “show legs” and seems to gain more confidence at every show, hopefully there will be many more opportunities for titles in the future. A mention must go to two lovely fillies Aja Rosada (Aja Justified x Psyches Sancerre) and Aja Asia (Aja Justified x Aja Aaisha). Both recently acquired by the Athbah Stud. Aja Rosada is already with Athbah and is due to commence her show career on the Middle Eastern show circuit, a firm favorite of all the team, she will hopefully represent Athbah Stud and Aja Justified successfully.

Triple Crown Champion Aja Sangali (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna) was purchased by Al Khaleidiah Farms, he has firmly established himself as arguably their most successful sire, siring many champions.

Multi champion Aja Sanagor (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna) who is now owned by Khaled el Nughemsi, Asayel Stud. We are thrilled by the fact that Aja Sanagor was one of the first non straight Egyptian Stallions to compete at the Egyptian National show becoming Champion and winning many fans in the process, he has also been Kuwait National Champion making Khaled a very proud owner. Khaled also recently purchased Aja Hassan (WH Justice x Aja Bint Sanadina) a proven Champion who won many titles including Reserve British National Champion. He has also purchased Aja Andreas (WH Justice x Aja Anouska) a beautiful and very correct son of WH Justice. We wish him great future success

with these two super colts. Aja Santana (FS Bengali x Bey Santeyna), now owned by Arabian Stars of Italy. We had considerable success in the show ring with Aja Santana before he found a new home in Italy, we always considered him to be potentially a very interesting breeding prospect. Now it seems this potential is starting to be realized, with several Aja Santana offspring starting to make their mark in the showring in Italy, it would be no surprise at all that Aja Santana daughters become coveted broodmares for future Italian breeders. Aja Angelica (WH Justice x FS Anastasia) now owned by Sheikh Ammar Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi of Ajman Stud, she was campaigned very successfully, winning many honors, including Middle Eastern Champion Mare. She has recently had her first foal, a gorgeous grey filly by Marwan El Shaqab, this is really exciting for us, once again underlining the strength of a great damline. Aja Aphrodite (WH Justice x Lovin Psyche SSA) now owned by Robin and Jeff McGlenn of Mystica Arabians, Australia. Without doubt one of the most beautiful females we have ever bred. She proved a little nervous when first shown as a yearling, prompting Robin and Jeff to take her to Australia allowing her to live out with friends for the last two years. Her reticence in the show ring, however, didn't stop her gaining many admirers, many say she is one of the most beautiful fillies ever shown in Europe, there's definitely some unfinished business here, I'm sure Robin and Jeff will bring

AJA ARABIANS - RECIPE FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN!

STUD

AJA ADONIS
(WH JUSTICE X SANADINA)





AJA ELECTRA
(EDEN C x ELANDRA)

her back to Europe in the future, as Todd Buckley the Mystica Arabians manager always says "there is only one Aphrodite". We would also like to mention British breeder/owner Mr Alf Hallworth, Gravel Bank Arabians, over the years he has purchased several show quality Aja bred Arabians, Alf has achieved many show wins and championships over the years, in fact you could call him our biggest fan. His recent purchase Aja Starella (Aja Justified x Magic Star) will hopefully carry on the successful winning partnership.

"Aja-fashion"!

TA: Last years it seems you have no problem with finding new homes for your horses and we can see a kind of "Aja-fashion". Why, in your opinion Aja Arabians went so popular amongst the breeders? Is it a matter of single horses that made your "brand" or rather more general effect?

MH: We have been breeding Arabian Horses for 17 years, we are now on our fourth generation in some cases. Breeding is a labor of love, an obsession. We started out with a pretty fixed idea of our "ideal" horse, we found this



AJA ANGELO
(WH JUSTICE X AJA AAISHA)

was not achievable in one cross, and over generations we have gradually began to achieve our goals, adding bit by bit the desirable characteristics, and trying to breed away from the less desirable, we are definitely on our way to achieving the "Aja look". This we believe makes an Aja horse unique and therefore desirable to other breeders, the upside for new owners of course is the genetic pre potency, which in turn makes them ideal future breeding stock.

Marketing horses

TA: Let's speak about marketing strategy of Aja horses – do you find it important to have the horses advertised in

different ways either in printed or on-line form? Where and when we will see the next Aja Arabians appearances and who will be the new coming starts of the 2011 and 2012 season?

MH: In marketing terms we think it's important to keep all avenues open, printed form is important because I think most enthusiasts like to spend a quiet moment reading about the Arabian horse world, which is truly international. On line is also important because of the immediacy, and also the blanket coverage, but I do think we are all over bombarded sometimes. Still one of the most important marketing tools is show ring success. It's a real shame that in some cases show entries are down, we believe that



Aja Estrella
(Wh Justice x G Estarejja)

European breeders do have competitive horses, and maybe would surprise themselves if they entered more shows, we all know the old saying “no pain, no gain”.

The future ...

We intend to enter several shows in 2011, we have several promising youngsters, the coming yearlings Aja Justafire (WH Justice x Aja first Love), Aja Catariana (WH Justice x Aja Czarina) and Aja Saskia Aja (Justified x Sanadina), all unshown. Aja Adonis (WH Justice x Sanadina), Aja Rosada (Aja Justified x Psyche Sancerre) and Aja Asia (Aja Justified x Aja Aaisha) all representing the Athbah stud. We also have Aja Angelo (WH Justice x Aja Aaisha) already successful at the A shows last year, Aja Electra (Eden C x Elandra) again successful last year, Aja Justicia (WH Justice x Sanadina) unshown, but one of our prettiest Wh Justice daughters, so all in all Aja will be well represented in 2011.

The dream ...

TA: *The horse of your dreams – did you already reach this stage of your breeding or you are still waiting for it to come?*

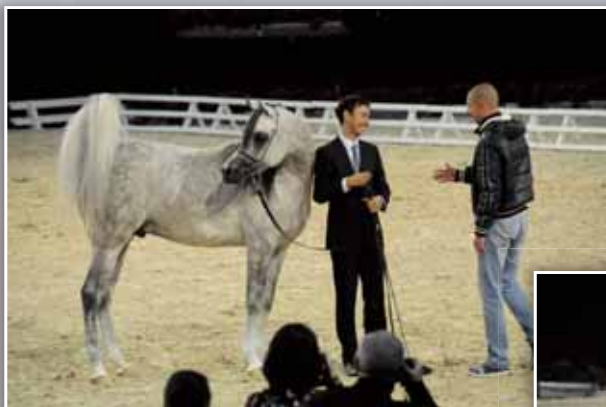
MH: *Several horses that we have bred come very close to our “ideal” the closest yet has to be Aja Justified, he captivates people like no other horse that we have ever bred. As breeders there is always something that we would change on every horse that we breed, in pursuit of perfection we may never find it, this is not a negative statement it is merely an insight into the obsessiveness that drives breeders on, but if it all had to stop tomorrow we don't think we would be unhappy with the legacy of Aja Arabians.*

Frankly speaking ...

TA: *What an Arabian horse breeding brings into your life?*

MH: *Breeding Arabian horses has greatly enriched our life, we moved to our beautiful farm in Shropshire because we wanted a perfect location, this in turn enriched our lives because Shropshire is a great place to raise a family, a win, win situation. We have also made so many friends around the world, from all walks of life, the kind of people we would have almost certainly never met, this is all a part of the rich tapestry surrounding the Arabian horse world. Arabian breeding gives us both a shared passion, a life without this passion would definitely be unimaginable.*

AJA ARABIANS - RECIPE FOR THE TRIPLE CROWN!



Enjoying Aja Justified
Triplecrowned

Paris 2010



Paris 2010

AJA ARABIANS
Malcolm & Jane Hickford

Lipley Hall, Cheswardine,
Market Drayton, Shropshire, TF9 2SG
UNITED KINGDOM

Phone: +44 1630 661209
Fax: +44 1630 661724
email: ajaarabians@aol.com
www.ajaarabians.com