

ARABIANS AT THEIR BEST

Endurance Riding



by Talitha Bakker ■ photos by Arianna Venizelou

The Arabian horse is the most versatile horse of all the breeds. Therefore it is such a shame to use it solely for shows.

Every (show) horse can and should be ridden. It benefits the well-being of the horse both mentally as physically. Studies indicate that a horse that is daily ridden is more balanced in mind and will perform better in any division. Whenever it

is riding or showing.

This year, the celebration of 14 years of Tutto Arabi Magazine, we will each edition talk about Arabian horses at their best. Covering all assets of sports.

This edition we will start with a currently hot item: endurance riding.

Endurance riding covers the best characteristics of the Ara-



Arabic Horse. But what exactly is endurance riding?

The main goal of endurance riding is to complete a certain trail, this can be 20–160 km, in the fast possible time.

Besides the best time, also the condition of the horse determines if the horse has won or not. The trail is marked with arrows, pointing out the route to take. In between the ride, there are several vet gates that are checking the condition of the horse and where they provide water and food for both horse and rider.

Endurance, cooperation, trust and care are the key to a successful combination. The endurance rides will mostly take you through some of the best nature areas in the country and is a lot of fun to ride!

Of course it is also a competition, with the biggest achievement being the World Endurance Championships.

In 2011, the world championships for junior riders and young riders till 21 yrs of age took place on December 10th in the desert of Abu Dhabi.

Already far before the event, certain endurance combination were nominated and invited to travel to Abu Dhabi to compete with the best. In this case, the organization is paying for all the expenses for the horses, as well as the accommodation costs for rider and groom! Flight tickets for rider and grooms were paid by the KNHS (Royal Dutch sport horse society). This time we followed the Dutch team of the Young Riders. Fenne, Joyce, Marijke and Yara had a fantastic endurance season this year and had the honor of being chosen as a member of the Dutch young riders endurance team.

After months of preparation, the horses entered in November the obligated one month quarantine. Finally on the 1st of December, the group departed from Amsterdam airport.

On their way to, until now, maybe the biggest adventure of their lives!

A contest ridden over 120 km of desert. Under the wings of coach Emile Docquier and his wife Kristel van den Abeele, the four riding trained very hard for this competition. The team had participated in several gallop trainings and also trained in the Belgian mountain area called 'the Ardenne'. Three purebred Arabians and one part bred from Holland to the United Arab Emirates, the land where the Arab horse has its origin.

The courageous girls and horses that came to start were Joyce van de Berg (19 yrs old) with her gelding Bas de Cordonne (by Barour de Cardonne), Yara de Boer (21 yrs old) with her mare Sumaya G (by Monitor), Fenne Koppenol (21 yrs)

with Valesco (by Vitano) and Marijke Visser (18 yrs old) with the gelding Eomer (by Werter).

As the horses arrived less than a week before the start, they had little time to get used to the warm climate. The change of temperature was big.

The goal of the team was to let everyone finish, regardless the placing.

The start was at 6:30am. The riders had their horses warmed-up and were ready to go! They went one by one, behind each other, as they agreed on, before taking off.

It was a tough competition with a lot of galloping in the first km. The horses were hot, fanatic but good to handle.

Unfortunately, a lot of other competitors saw the steadiness of the group and 'parked' their horses behind the Dutch group, saving energy.

This proved to be a big loss for the Dutch team, as the Dutch horses got injured by the horses pushing from behind. One of the Dutch horses was even forced to leave the competition, because of this!

Rider Fenne tells emotionally: "I am mostly upset that my horse Valesco didn't get the chance to show his abilities, due to the injuries he got caused by another horse. However, I kept following the contest by working as a groom for the other three team members. This was a great experience and really underlines the team spirit. You are a team and you help each other."

But Holland is still in the race with three more horses.

Marijke tells: "the horses were super, still full of energy, happy and totally blended in with their environment. The desert, beyond imagination, so much different as I thought it would be, but so beautiful!"

After the 3th vet check, the group decides to continue individually. Marijke with Eomer is the first one ready to leave, followed closely by Yara with Sumaya. Joyce with Bas is more behind.

Also after the 4th vet check, the riders continue individually. Marijke starts first, pushing her horse to a bigger speed. Yara reduces speed and Joyce continues in the same way as before. 16km before the finish, disaster strikes again for the Dutch team. The heartbeat of Yara's horse Sumaya doesn't want to go down in time and she is disqualified from the competition. After the last vet check, both Eomer and Bas are acting like they are still fresh from the stable.

Unfortunately, a few km's before the finish line, Bas gets demotivated because of the long ride without his friends. However



he still gently walks his last miles. Joyce tells "Bas was still feeling fresh, but he didn't want to make more speed than needed. When he got the finish in sight and he saw the grooms arriving with the Dutch flag, his ears went forward and he gave it all!" Joyce and Bas ended at the 27th position with an average speed of 18 km/h. Marijke and Eomer were fresh and fast and finished at the 18th position with an average speed of 19.7 km/h! Big winner of this world championships for riding of 21 yrs and younger, was coming from Uruguay. Martin Stirling and his horse Vendaval finished with an average speed of 22.58 km/h. Enough for a gold medal!

Runner up with the silver medal was Allix Jones from Australia, with his horse Castlebar Moonlight. Bronze medal was again for Uruguay, this time for Oriana Ricca with her horse Hunter Hero. Uruguay also got the golden team medal! Silver medal for the team performance was for France, with Australia earning the bronze medal. Surprisingly the Arabic countries were totally out of the top listings at this endurance competition for young riders. After this amazing experience, the four girls return home. Still at the beginning of their endurance career and full of motivation and energy to continue this excited part of sport! □