



Luiz con/with
Ermyne Nyhl
(Nyhl El Jamaal x Eloise
El Jamaal)

Luiz ROCCO

by Simone Leo ■ photos by Lenita Perroy

Brazilian Arabian horse breeder and judge Luiz Rocco comes from a family with a long history in agricultural business which includes the production of coffee, oranges and corn. In his early years, Luiz spent school vacations with his three brothers at the family farm where their favorite recreation was horseback riding. Many years later, in the beginning of the 1980's, while working in advertising, Arabian horses entered into his life when Luiz was asked to prepare materials for an equine magazine. Luiz became infatuated with the beautiful creatures and in 1983, in partnership with his brother Vico, they established Haras Clio. This farm is located at Limeira, just a one hour drive from Brazil's largest city, São Paulo. Together, Luiz and Vico have developed a breeding program based on horses of classic Arabian type, with no restriction to a specific bloodline.

Luiz began his judging career in 1989. Since then he has officiated at National and International shows in Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Jordan, Paraguay, United States and Uruguay. Luiz has experience in many levels of the Arabian competition, for 12 years (1991-2002), he also collaborated with the Brazilian Arabian Horse Breeders Association working as Show Director.

Luiz brings a wealth of knowledge to the Arabian horse industry, particularly in the area of judging. He understands and has utilized both the comparative method as it is used in American and in Brazil, as well as the European method of points. In addition he brings the vision, commitment and dedication of a breeder dedicated to the preservation of the classic Arabian horse.

Recent Shows Judged:

2001 Brazilian Nationals – Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
 2002 Austrian Nationals – Wels, Austria
 2003 Wels International Show – Wels, Austria
 2003 All Nations Cup – Aachen, Germany
 2003 Spring Show – Argentina
 2004 Middle East Championships – Amman, Jordan
 2004 Breeder's Show – Argentina
 2004 Chilean Nationals – Santiago, Chile
 2005 Wels International Show – Wels, Austria
 2005 Brazilian Breeder's Cup – Brazil
 2005 Avaré International Show – Avaré, Brazil
 2005 All Nations Cup – Aachen, Germany
 2006 Autumn Show – Uruguay
 2006 Londrina Show – Londrina, Brazil
 2006 Austrian Nationals – Wels, Austria
 2006 Colombian Nationals – Bogota, Colombia
 2006 Winter Festival – Brazil
 2007 Arabian Breeders World Cup – Las Vegas, USA
 2007 Wels International Show – Wels, Austria
 2007 Breeders' Show – Argentina

Interview

TA: Dear Rocco, judging has become more and more difficult. Do you not think so?

I prefer to say that the work of judging demands a high degree of capacity and requests a lot of responsibility. When a judge is inside the arena with a horse in front of him, there should not have outside things to disturb his analysis. If you look by the growing general quality of the horses nowadays as a difficulty, I think this is something that came to make the judgement easy. It is better and easy to judge good individuals than bad ones.

TA: Let's talk about the conflict of interest about which so much has been said. In your opinion, would it not be fair to reduce the opportunities for "bad-mouthing" and try to be as transparent as possible, maybe talking to some owners at the end of the competitions to make them understand the scores awarded?

My perception is that the 'European' system of judging is totally transparent, much more than the comparative system – that can occult a bad intention. The owners should try to understand why their horses did not had good points in a particular item and not searching for an excuse for it, like presuming the judges were not fair. Sometimes, if there is a chance to talk with the judge or the judges, something good can be understood but the owner also takes the risk to hear something that he totally disagrees...

TA: How can one help young and not-so-young breeders accept a defeat even though they have one or more Champions in the ring? When an exhibitor enrol his horse on a show he should know that the results will reflect the opinion of that group of judges. If the

owners really know the quality of their horses, there is no reason to lost the control or the direction of their showing or breeding plans.

TA: Study, passion, devotion, commitment... what are the qualities and the skills that a breeder should pursue more aggressively?

TA: What qualities do you think are necessary in order to become good breeders?

All of them are required but first of all he has to know what is important for him when he decided to bred Arabians. Fun, pleasure, business? After, he should study the bloodlines and the different types of strains and decide which horse will fit on his plans. Next step should be the acquisition of the best possible individuals and to go one's own way. Experience will be a sure guide for it and, very important, there is no shortcut to achieve it.

TA: How much does your specific knowledge set you apart from the other judges who have different professional and breeding skills?

My experience judging in different countries taught me that when you are judging along with other experienced and good judges, no matter their backgrounds are, the final results are always very close. A very good horse will be clearly noticed by them, the same way a bad mover, or a horse with poor body or legs will receive inevitable low and similar scores.

TA: How important is your knowledge when formulating your judgment? What influences your judgment?

Knowledge came with the prior experience as a breeder and as a devoted observer of the Arabian breeding. Many years following the shows personally also helps to acquire a large range of knowledge, agreeing or not with the results.

TA: In your opinion, should a breeder have some scientific knowledge such as anatomy, biology or genetics, in order to pursue good results? Or you just need to be a good observer, equipped with critical reasoning, curiosity, willingness and intuition?

In my opinion, some anatomy familiarity is necessary. Biology and genetics are unessential. The most important issue in judging is to comprehend the ideal Arabian type and recognize it in all the details that an excellent Arabian should possess.

TA: Your experience at international level is unique and, like many other good judges, you are a guarantee. Do you not think that there are too few judges given the high number of shows held?

Of course there are good judges that still not had the chance or the opportunity to show their competence. The same also happens when a not well prepared judge assumes to judges a show and make mistakes, he certainly will not be called again for it.

TA: Finally, what advice would you give to someone who intends to start this adventure?

If there is something more pleasant to do, this person should go for it! Judging is not an amusing occupation. It requires time, dedication and a great amount of responsibility. A candidate should be prepared with all the knowledge possible and many years among the Arabians before thinking seriously about judging.