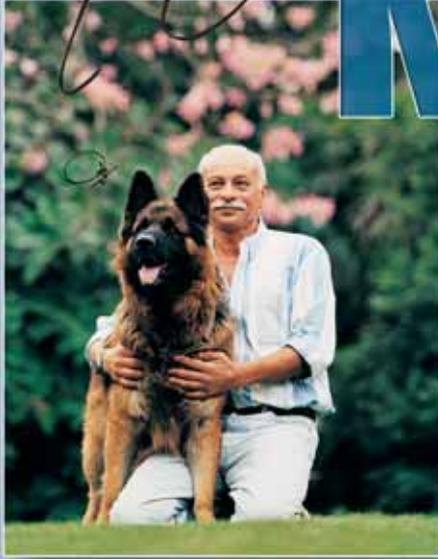


Nasr



## MAREI

by Simone Leo ■ photos by Gigi Grasso, Nasr Marei, Erwin Escher

**T**he interview given by Dr. Nasr Marei after the Menton Show, which saw him involved as a judge, gave us an opportunity to get to know better a man whose role in the world of the purebred Arabian is becoming increasingly important. Starting from his stud, Albadeia, which produced the World Champion Gelgelah Albadeia and every year manages to churn out national and international champions, and moving to his more and more demanding role as international judge.

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

Yes, I agree for the following reasons.

The quality of horses has become progressively better. The shows have developed into a more sophisticated showcase for the product. The owners, breeders and organizers have become more competitive, more aggressive and have sharpened their skills in improving the show and horse qualities.

The number of shows per season has been increasing rapidly (may be not quite so in the last 2 years!) including some serious international shows staged outside of Europe.

The pressure on active judges has been tremendous. Judging fairly and to the best of a judge's ability and proficiency has always been the guidelines and objective.

However, many owners/breeders would have no mercy

on the judges if their horses were not placed where he or she thought should have been placed.

Needless to say that most of the judges are also owners/breeders and belong to the same club of the same not-so-happy persons! And yet they will still be under suspicious of wrongdoing. This constitutes an added burden on the judges.

The current judging systems used by ECAHO are the best available. They may not be perfect, but it remains still to devise better ones or come up with modified versions for the prevailing systems.

Somehow during the last ten years the judges have confined themselves in a very narrow space in the otherwise, generous scale originally provided by the schedule of the scoring system (talking now about the 20-point system - - the most favored one). Sometimes the difference between a winner and the second in a class is a fraction of a point!!

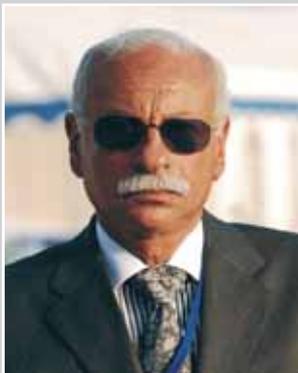
The last thing that I will add here with no desire to expand on it a bit is that a very few involved people in the Arabian horse show community are having their own personal agenda which sometime is in direct conflict with the policy of ECAHO and the majority of the community. Their act and behavior poses extra burdens on the judges and on the ECAHO officials.

All of the above mentioned factors have contributed to the fact that the pressure on the judges has mounted significantly the last few years. The judges are laboring to perform properly, avoid making mistakes and be extremely fair and just, under demanding conditions.

**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?**

The rules of the "Conflict of Interests" as defined by the ECAHO are loud and clear. The show organizers and judges have to see to their implementations. I believe that this is pretty much in effect and actually being applied.

The fact that everyone knows everyone in our community opens the door for "bad-mouthing" as you have put it. Judges are mostly breeders and naturally are friends, or at



from left: Nasr Marei during Saqqara Show, portrait of Nasr Marei, Nasr Marei during the Saudi Arabian Show

least know, the other breeders and owners. It will be easy to accuse some judges of favoring certain horses because of whatever relationship they have with their owners.

As a judge, I cannot pretend that I do not know a person and would not say "Hello" to simply because he/she has a horse in a show that I am about to be judging. Or, if I were not judging this show I would have otherwise socialized with.

Talking to exhibitors, breeders or trainers does not mean that the judge is actually conspiring or that there is an "arrangement" being agreed upon!. If there are agreements between the owner and the so-not-so-honest judges (if there will be any!), it will not be done right there and then. The arrangements would have taken place days earlier or through any other communication channels discretely. Accusers should stop being paranoid!!! when they see a judge talking to an owner in the lobby of the hotel, at a restaurant or even during the breaks in a show if they bump into each other.

I also can not pretend not recognizing a horse in the show ring that I have judged repeatedly six times during the last year and four times the year before!! Or have seen its images being promoted in magazines and on DVD's.

If a judge gave this particular horse highest score or made him champion and not the other one, that should be taken in good faith. The judge should not be accused of making favors or that he/she has been "convinced or influenced" to put the horse up.

The number of judges in the shows is minimum three and can be up to seven in major A- and Title-Shows. If one, or even two judge are bad! what about the others?

We also have to be reminded that the judges, specially whom are being described as "Senior or Seasoned" are very keen in keeping their image and reputation clean without any blemishes. They will never jeopardize their creditability nor their track record. If proven to be cor-

rupt in one incident, this judge's career is terminated right there and then.

Following this introduction that I felt necessary, I believe that your suggestion can solve and/or avoid post-show "bad-mouthing", to quote you again. A brief meeting organized by the show organizer for the judges and any of the owners/breeders who needs answers or explanations can be very helpful. Questions can be posed and answers should be given. This can make the exhibitors, that are genuinely sincere in getting answers or eliminating any doubts in their minds, get the sought-after explanations.

However, I know that there are others that will never accept any answers or explanations provided by the judges or officials. They will stay angry and unconvinced no matter what. Some of them will even start spreading rumors and accusations.

The problem is that every one of these people has appointed him/herself a judge and will not accept the fact that the scores (or selection) given by judges in the ring did not match their own expectations. Beside the fact that judging horses from the spectators seats is not the same as when you are 2 meters away from it.

In summery, I believe that your proposition can be of great value and effective for people that are objective and genuinely seeking knowledge and/or find explanations.

**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?**

"Emotions" are to be blamed. All breeders and owners love their own horses. This is "VERY GOOD". But to lose objectivity and do not recognize the defects and shortcomings of their horses as compared to the others competing in the same class, that is "NOT-SO-GOOD".

**"...Nasr Marei as JUDGE..."**

## Nasr MAREI



*As you mentioned in your questions, not only young breeders but also people with history of producing superb horses and winners of great shows and titles may do the same.*

*In many occasions, after judging major shows, I have been approached by well established owners whom are friends and also fellow judges of great experience and knowledge to explain why my scores for their horse was less than what they had expected. Gladly, I would respond. Shockingly, the response to what I had to say was rude, loud, and quite hostile. They have no excuse for such behaviour since they know better as breeders and as judges.*

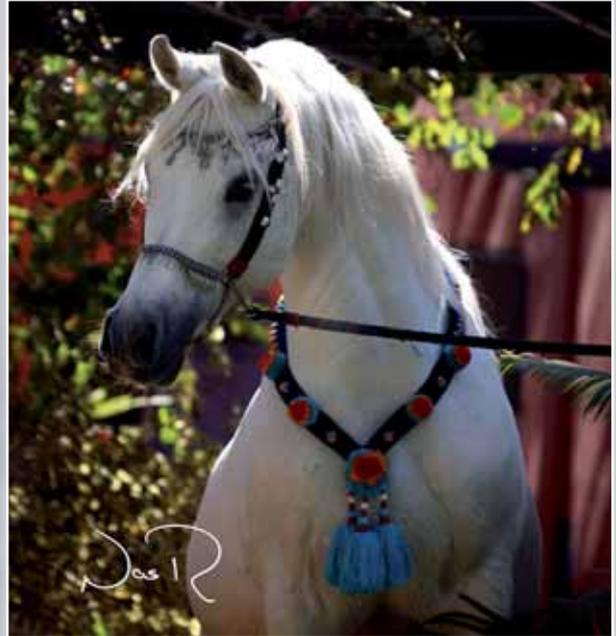
*This is a typical case where objectivity succumbs under the overwhelming power of emotions.*

*One more time, I had to have the above prologue before answering your question.*

*It will not be easy to convince a person overnight to be less emotional and more pragmatic. It is a matter of learning and flexibility of the mind. In addition, it is paramount that this person will lend him/herself to the process of learning. If the mind is open to accept new input and analysis, the person in question will soon realize that although he/she has good horses but there are other breeders whom have also good horses that they do love as much as he/she does theirs.*

*There will always be a winner and a loser in the show ring. A winner today could be a loser tomorrow or vice versa. A loser in such high quality classes does not mean that the horse is bad, or that its show career is over nor that its breeding prospects are ruined.*

*Strategy, is another key issue here. Any owner who is about to enter the names of his/her horses should study each show separately. Who is competing against their horses? What are their strong and weak points? Who are the judges? What is trendy and what is not? And any other elements that can have a bearing on the chances of winning or losing. Intelligent planning increases the chances of winning.*



Magd Albadeia (Rashdan x Bint Makhsous), Stallion 1995

*If a person start doing so, then I am convinced that he/she will understand why the horse lost or won. The reaction to not winning will be more accommodating and it will be easier to accept by simple planning and then analyzing.*

*Other steps can also help. Like participating in as many shows as possible keeping in mind what I said above about studying each of them individually. Some horses are meant only for B-Shows and cannot favorably compete in higher level, so why not be satisfied with that!*

*The above was regarding the young owners.*

*However, for the not-so-young-breeder I cannot really find an excuse for them to act in this manner when their horses do not come up to their expectations. I witnessed cases when more than one title was won in a single show by same owner who still was not happy because another title was lost!*

*Another example is an owner who takes the risk in a major show and pulls his retired multi-champion from the pasture after 3 years of relaxation and breeding and throws it in the ring against a fierce competitor without putting it in the proper show condition. The horse loses and the owner is mad at the judges.*

*Or a third who has a multi champion horse as a Junior and competes in the Senior classes for the first time and do not win. Again, the judges are attacked and accused of doing favor to the owners of the eventual winners.*

*The owners in these examples are long time successful*

## “...Nasr Marei as BREEDER...”

breeders and winners of great titles. They should know better than that.

There are others whom have entered same horse many times and ended up by not winning and it was always the fault of the judges.

It is always easier to blame it on bad judging rather than being objective and confront the facts that this horse was not brilliant enough to win today or that the winner was a better horse that same day.

**TA: Study, passion, devotion, commitment... what are**

*nion has to come first and then look into the history and pedigree to make a breeding decision.*

*A drive for improvement will guarantee a dynamic breeding programs. Convincing oneself that the ultimate quality of horses was achieved will guarantee a decline or at least a static status while others are taking strides in bettering their horses. Many young breeders tend to see the positive and correct characteristics in his/her horses and avoid seeing the negative and incorrect ones.*

*The progressive breeder has to have an enormous appetite for better horses and never be satisfied with what he/she had achieved. True breeders know that there are always areas of improvements in their horses.*

*One should remember to be very patient as a breeder. What is being done today, will only be proven right or wrong at least two generations down the road. So once selecting horses for the program or making breeding decisions, the breeder should follow and study the development of these horses and their get for at least ten years to make a realistic assessment.*

*Finally, a breeder should develop a philosophy and a vision as how he/she perceives*



**Simeon Sharav (Asfour x Simeon Shuala)**  
Stallion 1999

***the qualities and the skills that a breeder should pursue more aggressively?***

*Passion, devotion and commitment I believe are synonymous explaining the same thing.*

*Having the above-mentioned trades is the essential prerequisite to be a good breeder. Without all of the above, the person should find another interest to pursue. It is an "interest" and never was a "business".*

*"Study" comes next. A breeder can never stop learning and enriching his/her knowledge by the day. A good breeder should study the past and present and then analyze, theorize, visualize and implement for the future. A good breeder should have a perceiving mind and pursue his love with open and keen eyes. They should use their brain while guided by their heart.*

*Knowing bloodlines and pedigrees are paramount but as important is recognizing the quality of each of the individual horse.*

*Some breeders base all or their major breeding decisions only on pedigrees. I think that this not quite right. Being convinced with the quality of the horse itself, in my opi-*



**Tammam Albadeia (Simeon Sharav x Tamimat Albadeia)**  
Colt 2005

*the Arabian quality. The taste!! Could vary from one breeder to the other but the type, correctness, substance, elegance and athletic ability are principals not be compromised.*

**TA: How much does your specific knowledge set you**



*apart from the other judges who have different professional and breeding skills?*

*Many other judges are also breeders. I believe that being a breeder helps to be a good judge. Having said that, I also should say that many others are not intense breeders or had stopped breeding for a long time and still are superb judges!*

*I will never claim that I am in a different category that separate me from other judges with different skills, background or knowledge simply because I am a long time breeder.*

*I think that you will have to agree with me though, as well as our readers, that having an intensive breeding experience will surely help being a good judge.*

*Acquiring and accumulating knowledge and experience over the years and employing it when judging does help in making the right decisions.*

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

*As mentioned above the knowledge assembled through the years of breeding and actual judging in over a hundred of National and International shows serves as the data base to back up my decisions and choices whether in breeding or as a judge.*

*Without this foundation I will be lacking wisdom and short of making right decision in many cases.*

*By tuning up my vision as to what constitutes the perfect horse in my mind after judging and seeing thousands of the best horses in the Middle East, Europe, Australia, the USA and Canada, South America and South Africa, I believe that I am a better equipped judge. In the ring I compare the horse against that image and against its peer in the class. The CLEARER the image is, the more accurate your judging will be.*

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

*As you mentioned above, it is love and commitment, study, the desire to develop, continuous learning, open*



**Tamimat Albadeia (Bar Sama Halim x Aneesat Albadeia)  
Mare 1998**

*mind, self-developing, leaning from the past, plan for the future and having a drive. In addition, I will add what I had just said above regarding the desire to self-develop and improve the qualities as a must.*

**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?**

*Scientific knowledge especially genetics and anatomy will definitely help.*

*In my case for example, I studied Agricultural Sciences and learned a great deal about genetics and biology. In my Doctorate degree at the University of California I further gained up-to-date knowledge on biochemistry, physiology, physics and molecular biology. These disciplines, although has no direct relation to horse breeding as such (except for genetics), they helped by programing my mind to be more systematic and organized. Having a scientific, technical, methodical and analytical way of thinking had helped me a lot, not only in breeding but also in other aspects of pursued activities.*

*Being "good observer, equipped with critical reasoning, curiosity, willingness and intuition" are extremely important ingredients for a good breeder.*

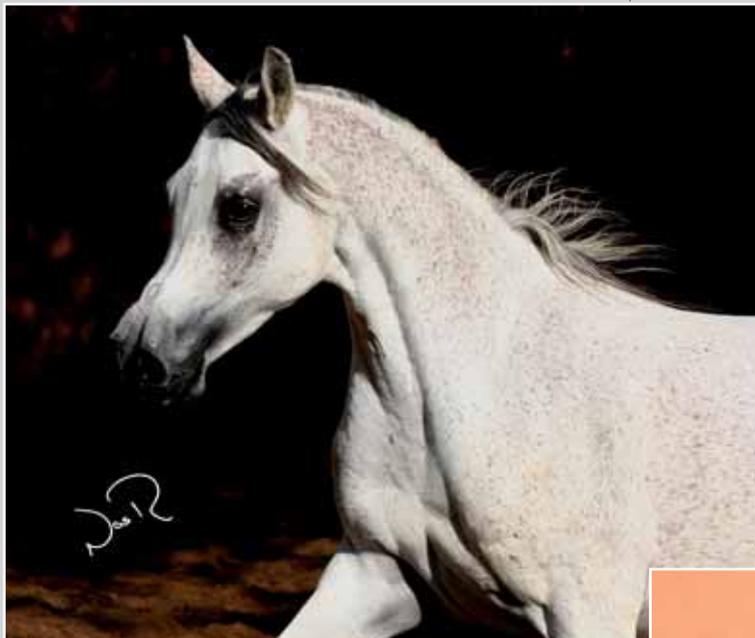
*This what I may assemble under one word and that is "TALENT".*

*Knowledge and talent makes a good breeder.*

**"...Nasr Marei as BREEDER..."**

**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?*

*I am honored to be described as “good” and “a guarantee”. It is true in the major shows a very short list of judges are being invited to judge. The organizers want to “guarantee” the success of the show. A not-so-homogeneous or imbalanced panel of judges can confuse owners and organizers with erratic and inconsistent judging. Lack of consistency in the score of a judge is not good. The show*



**Galagel Albadeia (Imperial Madori x Anhar Albadeia)**  
Mare 1996

*can be dubbed “failure or a flop” because the judging was not good. The show loses reputation, no sponsors come for the year after and the chance of canceling becomes eminent.*

*Yes, the organizers do desire to provide all the factors that guarantee the success of their show. Their first objective is to enroll the service of a good judging panel.*

*As I said, the list of the favored judges is short. In the ECAHO Blue Book there is less than 60 A-List and 60 B-List judges. If you look in the major shows during the last few years you may find about a dozen judges that are rotating in A-, B- and Title Show.*

*I am sure that there are more good judges around and all they need is the opportunity to show their talents and their ability to qualify to join the short list.*

*The organizers have to take a little risk and enroll a potentially good new judge in their shows. One judge that is still “not-so-proven” can be afforded in a panel that has five or six or even four judges.*

**TA:** *Finally, what advice would you give to someone*

*who intends to start this adventure?*

*Judging is an in adventure as you have described it like many other endeavors.*

*I would advise the newcomer to be knowledgeable and to gain more of it regarding horse quality, harmony, balance, type, the mechanics of movement and horsemanship. He/she should appreciate art and train the eye for beauty and properness.*

*He/she should be alert, honest, keen, watchful and above all self-confident.*

*Accepting the facts that mistakes can be done and avoid them in the future as well as accepting criticism and advice are important.*

*To be prepared for situations in the ring and be careful and giving marks. Scores have to be distributed fairly and enough room has to be initiated to separate and rank the participating horses in the ring.*

*A good judge should never lose concentration while working. Not being focused or to get distracted will result in an erratic and inconsistent scoring pattern.*

*The judge should be free from all obligations toward friends, specific horses, handlers, owners or history of any of them. The scores have to be given as the judge feels without being influenced by any of the factors mentioned.*

*Without extreme and legitimate self-trust,*



**Sondos Albadeia (Farid Albadeia x Mahasen Albadeia)**  
Mare 1996

*the judge will never be “a guarantee”.*

*The judge has to accept the fact that he will never please every body and there will always be people that are unhappy with him/her and will have to deal with “bad-mouthing” in a pragmatic manner. □*

*To contact Nasr Marei: [albadeia1@yahoo.com](mailto:albadeia1@yahoo.com) - [www.albadeia.com](http://www.albadeia.com)*