



Qatar

■ by **Maria Bishop**

photos by Gigi Grasso, Erwin Escher

Having

spent twelve years living and breathing Arabian Horses as Manager of Al Nasser Stud, it was a strange feeling to return to Qatar as a spectator for the 2006 Qatar International Show. However, it was very interesting to see the show from a different perspective, particularly since I was less involved in the panic and mayhem associated with preparing the horses for their classes.

This was the second year that the International and National Shows have been held on the Doha Cornice. In the past of course, the Shows have been held in the Race and Equestrian Club, which is now going through a total transformation in preparation for the 2006 Asian Games. The Cornice show-ground, although temporary, was a beautiful setting and affords very good access for the public. It was therefore somewhat disappointing to

note that the attendance was sporadic.

Walking around the makeshift stables in the build up to the show always energises me in a way that nothing else can. The international visitors arrive and quickly settle their horses in, so that they can recover from their long journeys from Saudi, UAE and Oman. There is always a certain tension and excitement, camaraderie and good spirits with an underlying competitiveness that is a stimulus for anyone who understands the dynamics of the Arabian Horse world.

I must say that having been involved in Arabian Horse Shows throughout the Gulf and the World Championships in Paris, I can safely say that the quality of the horses in virtually every class was very high indeed.

The first day of the show got underway at 3.30pm as the warmth



fillies

Darine Al Rayyan

Champion

colts



Marajj

of a beautiful spring day started to dissipate. During a busy schedule which lasted until a very chilly late evening, spectators had the opportunity to witness some of the most beautiful Arabian horses on the planet. World Champions stood shoulder to shoulder with aspirant champions and newcomers in a magnificent display of classic lines, flared

nostrils and flagged tails.

On a slightly overcast and blustery second day, the events kicked off mid-morning with Stallion classes leading up to the Championships at 3.30pm. During the 7-10 Year Old Stallion Class, Glen Jacobs received a nasty blow to the face which required stitching at the hospital. Glen bravely

Mares



Jalila Al Rayyan

Champion

Stallions *Al Zeer*



returned to the show after receiving medical attention to learn that his stallion, Ansata Nile Echo had gone on to win his class.

The Championships are of course the highlight of the International Show where intense rivalry, scrutiny and pride surface amongst all the participants. Handlers and

managers can be seen in huddles strategising in quiet but emphatic tones. Assistants and grooms disperse around the area with plastic bags to add to the atmosphere in an effort to excite the horses during their moment of glory, all under the watchful eye of the DC.

In the first of the Championship classes, the exotic Ashhal

Al Rayyan daughter, Darine Al Rayyan out of Aisha, winner of the 3 Year Old Fillies, won the Junior Champion Filly class over Bess Faiza by WH Justice out of Sharon El Kendal who had won the 2 Year Old Fillies.

The Junior Champion Colt was won by Marajj by Marwan Al Shaqab out of RGA Khouress in a highly competitive and closely fought class over first timer Shagran Al Nasser. I had the pleasure and privilege of seeing the Marwan Al Shaqab colt Marajj, stabled at Al Zobair stud in Sharjah ten days before the Qatar International Show. Marajj is a stunning colt with big black eyes that literally took my breath away, with a head and neck that appeared chiselled to perfection. When he arrived in the show ring, with confidence of a veteran with his tail flagging, he received a standing ovation on the end of Scott Allmann lead. Shagran Al Nasser by Ansata Selman out of Dana Al Nasser by Mujahid Al Nasser gave an admirable presentation, snorting and blowing confidently, beautifully shown by his handler Glen Schoukens.

Jalila Al Rayyan by Ansata Hejazi out of G Shafaria won the Senior Champion Mare against former World Champions, showing her true beauty and characteristics of a straight Egyptian. ZT Sharuby was Reserve Champion, looking better than ever and still moving with elegance and grace.

Senior Champion Stallion went to Al Zeer by Gazal Al Shaqab, privately owned by Mr. Al - Misnad. Ansata Nile Echo by Ansata Hejazi out of Ansata White Nile made a remarkable comeback after a few years absence to become Reserve Champion through his strong and breathtaking movement.

With the Championships over and the non-ECAHO classes the following day, there was a



Bess Fa'izah
Fillies



Zt Sharuby
Mares

Reserve Champion



Shagran Al Nasser
Colts

hive of activity behind the scenes to transport some of the horses back to their respective farms in preparation for stud presentations. The presentations at Al Rayyan that same evening, Al Naif the next morning for breakfast and Al Nasser Stud for lunch were an interesting mix of bloodlines and breeding programmes. A walk through the barns gave an opportunity to get closer to the individual horses and to learn more about the different breeding programmes that the farms in Qatar have.

My brief visit back to Qatar was over and I left for the airport with mixed emotions. My heart has been filled with the beauty and essence that is the Arabian horse tinged with sorrow that I am no longer amongst them on a daily basis. If you are considering an Arabian adventure, book the 2007 Qatar International Show into your diary next year, you'll not regret it. □



Ansata Nile Echo Stallions