

## **Raising Racing Arabians in the UAE Desert**

**A desire to breed winning Arabian race horses in his UAE desert home came with many difficulties for United Arab Emirates businessman, Khalid Al Nabooda. With persistence, the issues became challenges, not obstacles, and Al Nabooda has established a winning reputation and is happy to share the knowledge.**

**The AF horses bred at Al Aweer Farm have earned a huge respect in the Arabic racing scene over the past 10 years. In winning the racing plum, the Dubai Kahayla Classic in March 2019, Al Nabooda's international team of South African trainer Ernst Oertel and champion Irish jockey Tadhg O'Shea have proved to be increasingly unbeatable in the UAE racing scene.**

**Leading UAE Breeder for the 2018/2019 season, Al Nabooda's AF farm horses were winning regularly at the four UAE race courses until the night of 17 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi. That's the evening when AF farm-bred horses won all five Arabian races on the card, four under the Al Nabooda black and white silks, all trained by Ernst Oertel and with O'Shea guiding three with his winning expertise.**

**The next month the gun-and-run win by Tadhg O'Shea on AF Mayer in the 2019 Dubai Kahayla Classic, the equivalent of an Arabian Kentucky Derby, achieved a long-held dream for Al Nabooda.**

"It was indeed a very big high to have AF Maher win the Dubai Kahayla Classic at Dubai World Cup 2019," said Al Nabooda. "From the beginning AF Maher showed his ability to be able to participate with the best of them and we had him run with horses of high ratings in Sharjah for the Gulf Cup where he came third behind the Al Khalediah horses running over 1700 metres."

"He rang the bell showing his ability, then immediately Ernst (Oertel) entered him in the Maktoum challenge Round 3 over 2000 metres, which he won against some very high level horses. It was then that we decided to enter him in the Dubai Kahayla Classic Group I in the Dubai World Cup despite the fact there were only three weeks between the Maktoum Challenge and Dubai World Cup. Af Maher showed up and proved his ability to win with the best."

**Horsereporter: AF Maher is a fine result of the local breeding program that you have pursued since you started breeding in the UAE. His sire, AF Al Buraq, now leading sire in the UAE, and his dam AF Raad, were both bred by you. What are some of the best traits AF Buraq has passed on to his progeny and is he available for outside breeding?**

“At present AF Al Buraq is owned by Shadwell and stands in France. The most interesting trait of AF Al Buraq is that you can breed him with any bloodline, be it French, American, Russian or any other. His progeny go on to win and prove to be horses with the highest abilities.”

**Al Nabooda is modest to explain that when he began breeding horses, there was almost no information available for local breeders on how to do this in the arid desert and what they would need.**

“From the beginning I have been breeding despite the odds of no proper expertise in the region, hot weather, hot sands, poor ground, little water. These just proved to be challenges to overcome. I continued and pushed ahead and I strongly believe that if you have an aim then you continue without stopping or letting these disadvantages become a hindrance in your race to get ahead. It has not been easy to pursue my passion/aim but through all adverse circumstances I have persevered and with the Grace of Allah I believe I have made it.

“My father wanted me to pursue my education and it was when I grew up that I started riding horses. Unfortunately after a nasty accident, the doctor ruled out any more riding for me, but I continued to buy horses and finally ended up breeding race horses that have gone on to become winners.

“When I began my racing career, we did not have any societies to educate us, but with the start of the Emirates Horse Breeders Society (EHBS), which I helped form along with other interested owners of purebred Arabian horses, we managed to encourage and educate young and new owners. Attending conferences like the Dubai International Equestrian Conference as well as attending HH Sh. Mansoor bin Zayed Al Nahyan Festival races and events, have also helped greatly as the owners have been able to interact with experts from all over the world.”

**After graduation from Al Ain University in the UAE in business and accounting, Al Nabooda traveled to the United States where he perfected his English. He credits his father for supporting him in his education and passion for horses.**

**Horsereporter: Al Nabooda has made an excellent example of private ownership in Arabian racing in the UAE and freely shares information and encourages other breeders to reach out for knowledge.**

“I have always believed that free exchange of ideas and knowledge will help all of us in the private racing sector, and with the technology available now that makes communication so much easier. I encourage any owners from the area to talk to me about any problems they may face or any questions they may have with purebred Arabian horses. All this information is provided free of cost to encourage them. I also sponsor talks on a small-scale during the HH Sh. Mansoor bin Zayed Al Nahyan Festival as well as during the purebred Arab races in the UAE.

“My future goals would be to race in Europe. However when you take a horse from the UAE to Europe, then you race for your flag and not your farm or your name. I am very selective in this respect because my aim has always been to raise purebred Arabians in the UAE and to promote this and to prove to the world that it can be done despite any adverse conditions.”

**Thank you Khalid Al Nabooda for your great support and love of the Arabian race horse.**

**Arabian racing is supported by the UAE throughout the world under Shadwell Arabians, The President of the UAE Cup race series, and the HH Sheikh Mansoor Bin Zayed Global Arabian Flat Racing Festival.**

Pamela Burton

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