



THOUGHTS GOING INTO 2021 WITH MILES BUCKLEY & GREGOR AYMAR



An Interview with Kamila Kozłowska

What was your best Christmas gift this year? To me, it was a lovely pre-Christmas visit to Miles Buckley Show Training on 23rd December. What could be better than combining work with pleasure? A few months after doing my first interview with Miles, I went to talk with him again. This time, he was accompanied by his friend and business partner, Gregor Aymar, who also happens to be a very talented and well-known photographer. I could not wait to hear all about the new exciting projects that they are currently working on. One thing led to another, and the three of us ended up having an honest conversation about some burning issues of the Arabian horse industry, including the ubiquitous topic of how the pandemic has changed the world and the business throughout 2020 and how to find new directions in the continuously changing reality.

Kamila: *We last saw each other in Menton, which was almost half a year ago. Have there been many changes in here since then?*

Miles: First of all, we have a new exciting group of horses, including the contenders for the 2020 World Championships in Paris which, as we all know, will not happen eventually. This includes the stunningly beautiful Menouah Al Rayyan (Fares Al Rayyan x Bint Mesoudah M HP) whom we are now preparing for the upcoming Katara Show. Another amazing addition to our collection is the full sister to 2017 World Champion Yearling Filly - LR Era De Excalibur, a classy chestnut

She was also meant to be one of our contenders for the Paris show, but now we have got other plans for her before the European season commences. We also look forward to presenting a very special ES Sarab colt in the following season. An exotically refined grey Cameg Ecosse (out of Cameg Parisa) is likely to join Menouah for the show in Qatar in February 2021.

Gregor: We are also very excited to show a sensational filly by Wakil Aljassimya (Al Ayal AA x WN Johara Aljassimya) that was born this year. Actually, Wakil has only bred one mare this season and the outcome is pretty spectacular.



NAIFAT AL OWAlDAH, PROUDLY BRED & OWNED BY AL OWAlDAH STUD, KSA

Kamila: *Despite a difficult situation, you seem to be fairly optimistic about the future. What was 2020 like for you?*

Miles: It has been a challenging year in many respects but I feel like we have achieved a lot regardless of the unfavourable external circumstances. These last few months put most of us into a position where more effort was required to succeed, so we were always pushing harder and trying to go beyond our own limits. Also, the working relationship between Gregor and me has grown and developed into a fruitful collaboration.



Kamila: *That surely sounds like a great achievement, but what would you consider your most spectacular success in 2020?*

Miles: For me, it was the group of horses we have put together for Paris. Even though the show is not happening, the horses that we found and prepared for it are very special and make us feel proud every time we go to the barns just to have a look at them. I am sure that our hard work and commitment will not be wasted as the horses are now ready to attend other shows planned for the following year. On top of that, we had a few very successful shows. The most recent ones include the Straight Egyptian World Championships in Milan with 1 silver and 2 bronze medals as well as the National Show in Bahrain, where we won 3 gold, 2 silver and 2 bronze awards in the championships.

MENOUAH AL RAYYAN, BRED & OWNED BY AL RAYYAN FARM OF QATAR

WAKIL ALJASSIMYA, PROUDLY OWNED BY THE WAKIL ALJASSIMYA PARTNERSHIP, UK

Gregor: I think this year redirected our focus from just showing to other areas of the industry. We still did our best to build up a strong group of horses for the shows, but we also focused on marketing and sales. And so far, it has worked well. We managed to find and sell some high-quality horses. Taking into consideration that it has been a difficult year for anyone in any business, we have grown a lot in a relatively short time. Also, being more creative and trying to find new directions to keep the business growing made us much stronger than we were at the beginning of the year.

Kamila: *With such an impressive list of achievements, I am sure you are already looking forward to the next show season. However, the situation in the world is full of unexpected twists and turns. What are your feelings regarding the shows in 2021?*

Miles: It's really difficult to say anything for sure. We hope we are back to some normality by next summer, but the situation keeps changing daily. Some days we think it is slightly getting better and then, all of a sudden, we feel like we go backwards again. The only thing that we can do from our side is to continue preparing for the shows and, at the same time, keep focusing on all the other directions, like building relationships with our clients and helping them to develop their breeding programmes. Additionally, we have been trying to market the breed as much as we can in order to open people's eyes to how amazing and unique Arabian horses truly are. Unfortunately, not everything depends on us.

Gregor: In my opinion, the fact that the Arabian horse industry becomes more than just shows is a positive outcome of the whole situation. From a trainer's perspective, winning championships is important, but a substantial reduction in the number of shows allowed the time to develop other parts of the business, like breeding, selling horses or consultancy. What is more, all the excitement related to the shows was gone at some point, as there were far too many of them. Inevitably, people got bored and lost all their drive and motivation to participate. At the moment, with fewer possibilities to attend a show, the excitement is back, which also helps the market. Even though it seems it is not the right time to make substantial investments, people are still buying horses. In the long run, the fact that the show world has slowed down a bit may be beneficial for the business. For some, it is the time to find new directions for their projects, while for others, it is an opportunity to re-evaluate the reasons behind organizing or attending shows. Are show organizers truly interested in the promotion of the breed or in a financial gain? Has winning yet another championship become the main motivation for some breeders and trainers? When I think back of my first steps in this industry, winning and earning money were never my main goals. Once it becomes your full-time job and the only source of income, you cannot help but think about money, but it should never become the main motivation behind anything that you do.



STRAIGHT EGYPTIAN STALLION AZIIM AL AMAAR. OWNED BY AL WAKEEL STUD OF IRAQ
PICTURED WITH CONNOR BUCKLEY

Kamila: Do you think that, besides the pandemics, Brexit will also influence the industry one way or another?

Miles: Brexit has been a concern of mine for a good few years already, as our business is to a large extent international. We have well-established relationships within the UK, but still, majority of our clients come from mainland Europe or the Middle East. No wonder we have been keeping our eye on it. From my latest conversation with DEFRA, the rules and regulations regarding horses should stay the same after we leave the EU. There is still a bit of uncertainty but so far, our operations have not been affected too much. If there are any significant changes, we will deal with them accordingly when they come.

CAMEG ECOSSE (ES SARAB X CAMEG PARISA), PROUDLY BRED BY CAMEG ARABIANS OF SCOTLAND
AND NOW PROUDLY OWNED BY AL DEEM ARABIANS OF KUWAIT

Kamila: It is definitely a big relief that transporting horses across the UK borders has not been affected so far. Speaking of which, what are your most interesting arrivals for the 2021 season?

Miles: Personally, I am super excited about showing Menouah Al Rayyan. I absolutely adore this mare and I am enormously grateful to Sheikh Hamad Ali Al Thani for his trust and for letting us have her here. To me, being able to admire her every day is more than I could ever wish for. I am also extremely grateful to Sheikh Naif Al Owaidah and Dr. Ayman Taher for letting us train and show the captivating chestnut Naifat Al Owaidah.



NAIFAT AL OWAIDAH - FULLSISTER TO WORLD CHAMPION LR ERA DE EXCALIBUR

Gregor: To me, Naifat is actually the most exciting arrival of 2020. It is quite an interesting story that started back in 2018, when I went to do some work at Las Rosas Arabians in Uruguay. While talking to Olivia Strauch, the current manager of Las Rosas, about the new babies, I found out that LR Expected Beauty was back in foal to Excalibur EA. Being aware that two years before this match resulted in an amazing World Champion Yearling Filly, I offered to sell the embryo at the auction in Aachen. Funnily enough, Miles and I did not really work together at that time, but he came to the auction with Sheikh Naif Al Owaidah and persuaded him to buy the embryo. A few months later, the baby was born but we had no clue what it was like. In July, I spoke to Olivia about some other projects and I asked her about the foal. She then sent me a photo of a very impressive yearling filly. After our conversation, I decided to get in touch with Dr. Ayman Taher, the manager of Al Owaidah, hoping that he would let us train and show the filly. And this is how she joined the group of our World Championships contenders. I strongly believe that she has the potential to become World Champion. We will not be able to prove it this year, as the Paris show was ultimately cancelled, but we are already working on the new plan of showing her in 2021. The story of Naifat demonstrates how a long-term project can be much more satisfying than any short-term achievement. Building a good working relationship which is about give and take and guiding people in the right direction so that they develop their breeding programmes is far more important to me than winning a show or making big money.

Kamila: Speaking of economy, how do you think the market is going to develop in the future?

Miles: I think it all depends on how we act now. We cannot deny that the global economic system is in some sort of a crisis, but the way we approach the situation will surely have an impact on the future. For that reason, we have established long-term goals and we have built strong relationships with our clients, which we are now trying to maintain and expand. No doubt we care about our own growth but we are also well aware that it would not be possible if our clients did not grow and develop too. Therefore, we are doing our best to help them take a step in the right direction. To me, it is much more than just work. It is how our attitude and actions will have a long-term impact on the future of the breed.



DUCHESS AMAIYAA DMC & DUKE MAXIIM IBN MASSAI - BOTH BRED BY ARABIANS IMPERIAL UK

Gregor: We also need to remember that there are different markets. In my opinion, the European market is generally getting worse because nobody is really trying to bring it back to life. There has been a lot of talking and no action as most European breeders, trainers and show organizers focus on the Middle East, which is where the big money is. However, the Middle East breeders and owners do not really need our help anymore. They breed excellent horses themselves and they organize their own auctions, where the price for a good-quality horse can be significantly lower than in Europe. That is why, we should focus on developing a market within Europe by making people feel excited about shows, so that they find a reason to buy horses or to breed them.: It's really difficult to say anything for sure. We hope we are back to some normality by next summer, but the situation keeps changing daily. There are days we think it is slightly getting better and then, all of a sudden, we feel like we go backwards again. The only thing that we can do from our side is to continue preparing for the shows and, at the same time, keep focusing on all the other directions, like building relationships with our clients and helping them to develop their breeding programmes. Additionally, we have been trying to market the breed as much as we can in order to open people's eyes to how amazing and unique Arabian horses truly are. Unfortunately, not everything depends on us.



PANDOREZ O - OWNED BY JALYLA ARABIANS - UK

Kamila: While on the subject of breeding, what are the most interesting stallions in your collection for the 2021 season?

Miles: From a stallion perspective, we have quite a few new additions to the group for the coming season. I must admit that the one I am really excited about is the strikingly handsome bay eight-year-old Cadance PA (Cavalli x Donatella). At the moment, he is doing an amazing job in America and we are really looking forward to representing him in Europe. Another interesting stallion with great potential to become an outstanding producer is Battal Al Zobair (Marwan Al Shaqab x Donna Molta Bella SRA). Genetically, Battal is the produce of two remarkably refined World Champions. You cannot really ask for more in a pedigree than that.



BATTAL AL ZOB AIR



CADANCE PA

Gregor: There is also a new exciting Straight Egyptian stallion, the gorgeous grey seven-year-old Nader Al Jamal son - Kayed Al Hayal (out of Rehan Al Jabal). Phenotypically different from other stallions in the collection, the masculine and elegant Kayed is likely to excel at both breeding and showing. Personally, I am also a great believer in the strong genetic prepotency of Wakil Aljassimya, but only if he gets the opportunity to breed some mares. The problem is that, for many people, a valuable breeding stallion needs to be a successful show horse, which is not always the case. Not once, very impressive international champions turn out to be mediocre breeding stallions, unable to pass their own excellent quality onto their progeny. At the same time, there are stallions that have never won a major show, but have the potential to become excellent producers. Again, it brings us back to the problem of money versus business ethics. No doubt it is easier to advertise and sell a breeding to a World Champion Stallion. However, the main thing that should be considered here is whether the use of this stallion really helps breeders to achieve their long-term goals and enhance their breeding programmes. Luckily, the situation has changed in the past few years and it is no longer true that a poor-quality foal by a famous stallion will always find a buyer. Obviously, it is easier to sell a high-quality baby by a show champion than by an unknown stallion, but the market is full of horses by famous stallions, so the quality has become more important than who the sire is. Actually, by producing high-quality get an unknown sire is able to make its name.

Another burning issue related to the choice of a sire comes down to how the show score does not necessarily reflect the quality of a horse, which further leads to lack of understanding and knowledge about what the correct conformation really means. It is particularly important for all the new people that join the industry. How are they supposed to differentiate between what is correct and what is not, if a horse that can barely stand on its legs receives the score of 16 points for this particular trait, when the reality is that he barely deserves a 10? We need to remember that very often people perceive the qualities of the breed through the eyes of the judges and make their breeding decisions on the basis of the title or score. Unfortunately, it is not always the case that a World Champion with the maximum score for type is the epitome of an Arabian horse. It may be an excellent show horse that fully deserves the title, but does it really need to get the score of 95 points if it is not a true reflection of its quality? It creates a false impression that this is the best breeding stallion for any mare, regardless of her pedigree or particular traits that need improvement. Sadly, the judges seem to underestimate their influence on developing the breed and forget that their judgement will often serve as an ultimate guidance for many breeders.

JOLAN AF - PROUDLY BRED & OWNED BY AFIFI ARABIANS OF ISRAEL





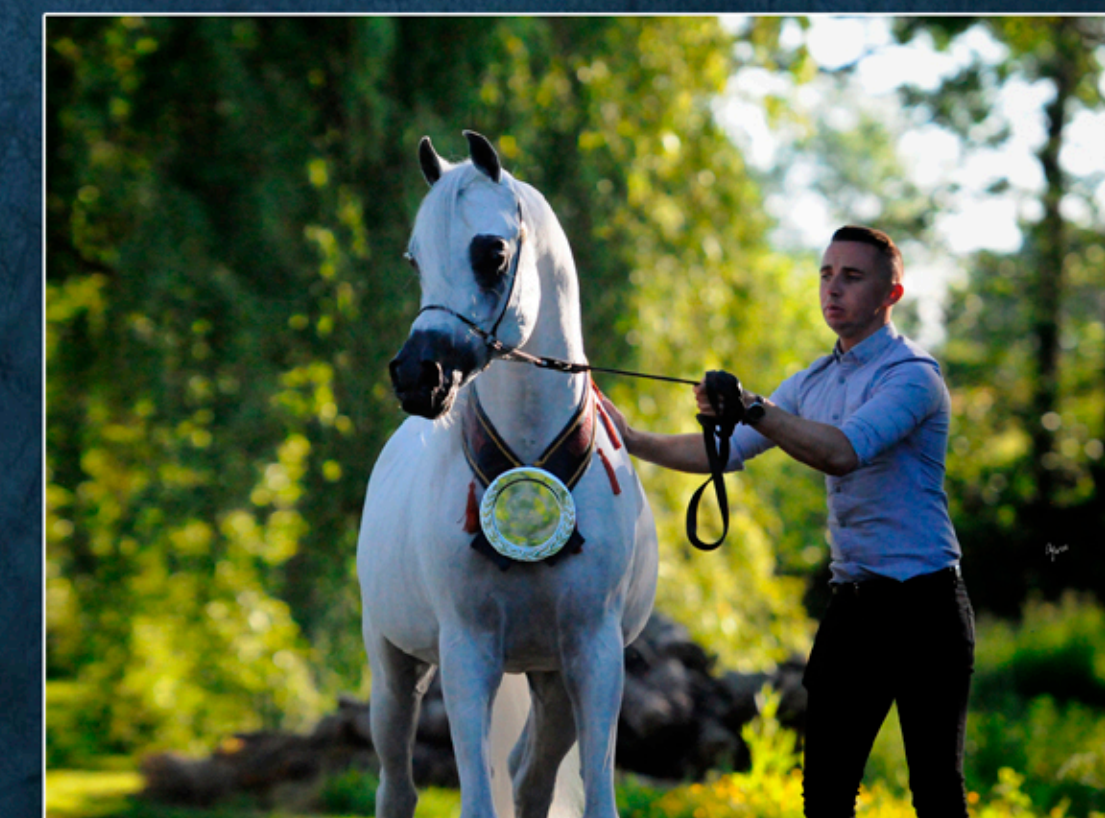
THE BREATHTAKING MENOUAH AL RAYYAN

It has become a tradition that after the interview I am taken for a tour around the stables. I could not wait to meet all the new arrivals at the farm after hearing so much about them. It does not come as a surprise that the living piece of art, the magnificent Menouah Al Rayyan, managed to win my heart in the blink of an eye. No doubt she is breathtakingly beautiful, but she also carries herself with such grace and dignity that she could easily be nicknamed Menouah the Magnificent!

Later on, I was introduced to the classy Naifat Al Owaidah and I could not take my eyes off her! I was captivated by her commanding charisma and amazing attitude. She was on fire - her tail flagged and her nostrils flaring, snorting and blowing. Just one look at Naifat is enough to know that she is sure to become the shining star of the 2021 show season.

Although the world has changed rather dramatically since my previous visit to MBST, Miles and Gregor seem to be full of positive thoughts and new ideas. Their clearly established long-term goals ensure the continuous growth of the business, but their engagement in the wellbeing of the breed goes far beyond their own personal interests. They deeply care about the future of the Arabian horse and do their best to open people's eyes to the beauty of the breed.

A loud harmonious neighing that kept coming from all corners of the farm reassured me that one thing has not changed for sure - the horses are still happy and relaxed, making the most of their lives at the farm and waiting for all the wonderful moments when they will shine in the show rings, once again bewitching the world with their breath-taking beauty.



SOMETHING EXCITING IS ON THE HORIZON...