

Breeding Arabian Racehorses

By Paul Simmons

When deciding to breed an Arab race horse you need to decide what your actual objective is. Do you want to breed a Group winner or just a decent handicapper that will go on later to be a successful endurance horse? Your mare doesn't necessarily have to have raced or be race bred. Samara Bint Samurai was a show mare and has bred 5 winners racing! Emotsia was a successful race horse and show horse, her Spanish and Russian bloodlines crossed well with the French stallion Bengali D'Albret to produce Listed Dubai Day winner Almost All.

If you look back in history Shomran didn't start racing till he was 11 and he wasn't race bred, his daughter Shunah was small but perfectly formed and she beat many French bred when she landed a Group race in the late 1990's. There is no reason why certain show horses couldn't sire decent race winners, if you look back in pedigree's of certain show sires there is plenty of strong Russian race blood e.g. Psynergy & H Tobago, whilst the Egyptian stallion Shaikh Al Kuran sired a winner racing in the USA.

Karat a successful show horse in the UK won the Russian Derby and has sired winners in his native Russia. Whilst Barnhill Warrior won the Jebel Ali Silver Final in 2005 & 2006 and doesn't have a race pedigree.

The late Marcia Manfredi was one the most successful breeders of Arabian racehorses in the UK through her Towerwood Arabian Stud, she discovered Vadeer and bred numerous top class horses including Simooma, Saalsk, Ecliptic, Bedonia, Penny Black and Mack The Knife.

Marcia believes that would be breeders should go for "quality mares with scope, strong quarters, very correct limbs". The other important factor to consider and one I personally adhere to is the all important dam line. Marcia adds "Good dam lines are essential....If you seriously want to breed with any degree of success the research of families is a must".

Val Bunting has also bred many successful Arabian racehorses through her Forgehill Arabian Stud. Val also oversaw the breeding of many top class Group 1 performers at Umm Qarn including multiple Group 1 winners Dahess & Nizam. I asked Val what she looked for in a stallion and a mare when breeding for racing:

MAIN CRITERIA FOR SELECTING AN ARAB RACING STALLION

1) Race Performance

I will only use a stallion who has proved himself on the track -must be a group winner. I always consider the calibre of the races he won with special attention to the status of the other horses in the race. I place significance on the number of years he raced and if he stayed sound.

2) Conformation

This is important to me when considering breeding to a stallion. He must be correct with good legs but most top performers who have raced for more than one season and have stayed sound are usually correct. The two go together.

3) Pedigree

An established pedigree is advantageous but not essential to me. Some great racehorses have come from mediocre lineage-(Cigar). Also many great horses with great pedigrees have produced nothing-(Secretariat). However I always look at the tail male line. Has the father produced good racehorses? A good example of this is Dormane, a leading sire for many years with his sire being the legendary stallion Manganate.

4) Progeny

If the stallion has produced runners it is useful. I check their performance records giving consideration to the dams and how high-quality they are or are not, as the case may be.

SELECTING AN ARAB RACE BROODMARE

1) Race Performance

I prefer a mare to have raced although this cannot always be realized with Arab mares. However as the sport has progressed over the years more mares are being raced before retiring to the breeding barn.

2) Pedigree

If the mare has not raced or produced winners then the importance of a proven pedigree is vital to me. In these cases I like to see a winning 2nd Dam at the very least with 'Black Type' at best. If the mare shows nothing in her ancestry then I would not choose her as a broodmare. The tail female line is the key for me when selecting a good broodmare. There are certain bloodlines that breed success time and time again. The sire of the dam I feel is always worth a look at, although many people do not put much importance on him. I am always interested to see if he has sired good producing mares. Excellent examples are the French Arab stallion Baroud III and the Polish stallion Wiking both of whom are prominent sires of highly successful broodmares.

3) Conformation

I like to see a good general conformation although I will be a little more forgiving in a mare if all the above criteria are met and if I feel that the stallion I have in mind for her has the ability to fix her weak point. Or, I know that the weak point is not hereditary. However, horrendous faults I will not accept.

4) Progeny

It is a plus if the mare has produced winners. This will be the proof that she is a first-class broodmare. But then we are probably talking about a very valuable, high priced mare. Something we all strive to own. Although genetically the sire and dam give fifty percent each to a foal, I believe that the dam has the more influential genes. The foal will inherit much more from its dam than its sire. Therefore I always put particular emphasis and effort into the selection of my broodmares.

VAL BUNTING – FORGEHILL STUD, S.W.FRANCE

Georgie Moore along with her late mother Monica Calvert bred many top class Arabian racehorses at the incredibly successful Harwood Arabian Stud. These winners include Listed Newmarket winner Milicent, Listed Dubai Day placed Perle D'Azur, Premier Handicap winner Kaspia and Breeders Cup runner up Gavin. I asked Georgie what she looks for when breeding Arabian racehorses :-

1. What are your main criteria for selecting an Arab racing stallion?

Race record. Soundness and nature. Compatibility with mare. Success of offspring if there are any racing and I know the dams.

2. What do you look for when selecting a race broodmare?

Must have won or have been very well placed in her races. Retired from race track sound.

3. What advice would you give someone thinking of breeding an Arab racehorse?

If I was a beginner and had not had experience of racing and had acquired/bred a mare and was wondering if she was the right sort to breed a race horse then I would be looking for a really good mover, using her body - shoulder, hocks etc and also I would rather she went off at trot/canter when let out in her field and same when she came in. Not too much walking about!! I am looking for enthusiasm. Strangely I quite like a bit of attitude as I feel that when a horse is in full training this bit of high mindedness is what wins a race. ***Georgie Moore – Harwood Arabian Stud, UK***

Paul Simmons (Article Author) – Owner of Zayin Arabian Stud

In America they have been successfully crossing their Polish racing lined with French blood, this includes the talented Wiking offspring as well as the “Tiki” lines that dominate the sprint races on the dirt. Orgia Fatia who is by French stallion Chndaka out of a superb Polish mare HF Olympia – she won the Polish Triple Crown last year, winning the Group 1 Grand Criterium beating the colts! But let’s not forget one of the best crosses of the modern era that of a Desert bred son onto a French mare, Amer crossed with French mares has produced such superstars as Dahess, Nizam and Madj Al Arab and UK Derby winner Al Dahma. Jenny Lees Pearl Island stud bred British bred Champion and multiple winner Al Reeh Janoob (by Chatanz (Russian/Polish/Spanish lines) out of the Bahrainian bred mare Shuwaimeh Bint Warda) Whilst the incredible Madjani is by French super sire Tidjani out of the Tunisian mare Salama – he has won the Group 1 Kahayala Classic three times in a row and has now sired winners in Europe and America. Clarendon Stud used the show bred Ciarosa (half sister to World Champion Poseur) to breed many successful race horses including Group 1 Hatta Stakes heroine CS Camellia (by French Bengali D’Albret). Crusader the late Egyptian show stallion sired several good race winners including Premier handicap winner Bas Hisaan (out of the Desert bred mare Maloof Hadiya). Half the fun of breeding is experimenting.

For me the ideal is a winning race mare from that all important prolific winning dam line preferably with a Group or listed performer close up. As for the sire he has to be a Group performer from a strong sire line and dam line. The main two broodmares at Zayin are Barryh (Djelfor x Manisa by Ravlon Elijah) and CS Comete (Bengali D’Albret x Cikada by Klarnet). Barryh won twice and was placed and has produced two winners from 3 runners including triple winner and Premier Handicap winner Zayin Barakaldo (by Khoutoubia), while Comete has had juveniles placed in UK and subsequent winners in Kuwait and her racing son Zayin Zachilles (by Kaolino) has won 4 of his 11 starts from 7 furlongs to 1 Mile 6 furlongs. The stallions I have chosen to date have all been prolific Group 1 winners by sire of sires like Dahess (Amer), Kaolino (Dormane), with youngsters on the ground by Madjani (Tidjani), DA Adios (Wiking) and Mared Al Sahara (Amer).

As Marcia states “The life of the breeder of Arab racehorses is a learning curve....it is important to remember we are racing Arabs and they are not as fast as TBs. Nor are they “poor cousins”.

Breeding any animal is somewhat of a lottery, the best stallion and the best mare will not automatically produce the best foal; mother nature is a law unto herself. But there is an immense amount of satisfaction in watching a foal grow and develop and eventually step foot onto a racetrack ready to test your hard thought out mating plans. However, as Marcia said “Being a breeder really is being a dreamer....Without us dreamy breeders there wouldn’t be any (Arab) horses racing, so, enough of us need to have the odd dream come true to keep going. In the wind and the rain of the British winter it can seem a long slog to the next potential winner....but some of my dreams have come true”