

INTERVIEW WITH

# NILS ISMER



by Talitha Bakker ■ photos by TuttoArabi Archive

**D**uring the annual International horse days in Ströben, we had the possibility to speak with Dr. Nils Ismer. Besides show organizer, also a well respected breeder, DC and judge. We asked him a few questions.

**TA:** Could you give us a small introduction on yourself, your

*lifestyle and family?*

**NI:** Born in a family business all around animals on a farm which was run for more than 700 years by our family. I Showed my first horse 1986 at the European championships at Aachen. This was Mashoura and she got class winner! I studied veterinary science in Hannover and took over the farm from



*my father in 2007. Since 2006 I am married with Julia, who is working as a lawyer and together we have two kids: Lina of 5 years old and Noah of 4 years. Today I have a quite interesting job managing this place with my family (did you ever try to control the chaos??).*

**TA:** *How did you start with Arabian horses?*

**NI:** *Well, if you are born in this place and this family, you do not start with Arabian Horses, you live it. I bought my first Ara-*

*bian mare (sponsored by dad) in 1983, after selling my cattle, which I got as a present before (my father tried to train me quite early to be a tough dealer). The love to the horses grew with my bodyweight, so now it is a really intensive relationship.*

**TA:** *What made you prefer the Arabian breed over all the other breeds?*

**NI:** *For sure the fact that I grew up with them, but also working with Arabians, discovering their kind characters, watching the*



*beautiful eyes, feeling and sensitivity. Even when working with Arabians my whole life there are moments when only just watching an Arabian horse gives me goosebumps.*

**TA: What is your ideal image of the Arabian horse?**

*NI: This would be type, expression, self-confidence, elegance, strength, intelligence, efficiency, correctness and power are the features which come to my mind.*

**TA: If you could name one Arabian that would come the closest to your ideal, which one would that be?**

*NI: I will never forget the moment, when Pilarka entered the showing in Oostende, somewhere in the 80's. She was probably a mare which was very close, as she was not only extremely typy and expressive, but also correct and an outstanding mover and she had a fantastic self-confidence!*

**TA: You are also a worldwide respected DC and judge. When**



*did you start judging? And how do you combine this with your job as a breeder?*

NI: To be honest I am not sure if you mix me up with my father or my brother, as I am only listed on the national judging list. Holger and Mark are ECAHO A-listed. But actually I really like judging for different reasons: You have the chance to look at a high number of very interesting horses during a very short time and you are forced to look at them!!! Also I believe that it makes you understand other judges decisions in a better way if you are judging yourself. But mostly I am working as a DC which can be also very interesting as you can see the horses with catalogue and at a relaxed moment in the collecting ring, which shows you quite often a more honest picture of the horse. The collecting ring is the most interesting place to pick up information also for your own breeding program.



*TA: Do you think there is a big difference in showring as it was 10 years ago?*

NI: For sure!! The whole scene has become much more professional, which is good in one way, on the other side it is really hard to compete even with very good horses at the big shows and it has become much more expensive to prepare your horses in a perfect way. This is one of the reasons, why you see less "normal" breeders at the shows every year. Everybody is aware, that the big stables from Middle East are also the main financial power in the whole industry, which is good. But it is urgently necessary that we develop new concepts to make the shows attractive also for the small breeders again. ECAHO just has taken some very important decisions in this direction.

*TA: What was the most memorable moment of your carrier as a DC?*

NI: As a DC ones my pants crushed in the ring during the championships, when I tried to pick something from the ground and some people realized at the stands. Believe me, this moment I will never forget!

*TA: Which show is definitely on your list to judge?*

NI: As I told before, as a judge there is still a lot for me to disco-

ver. As a DC I prefer new and small show with a more private atmosphere. It is more fun if not everybody takes himself too serious.

*TA: Since many years, you are also the organizer of the International horse days in Ströhen, which is a national C-show and a well known international B-show. Where did you come up with the idea to organize the show and what is the key behind the shows' success?*

NI: The show was initialized by my parents as a regional show for the breeders of our area. During the last years it has developed as one of the best known B-shows in Europe. We really try to make it better every year. The fact that it is still a very familiar atmosphere combined with professional organization and a unique location is probably the key. I believe that exhibitors, trainers and officials feel that we really try to make them feel comfortable.



*TA: What would the showscene look like, 5 years from now?*

NI: Good question!! I can only tell, what my idea would be: The big shows will become more and more professional and need absolutely professional organization from all sides. For my opinion price money should be allowed even if I believe that shows like Aachen and Paris do not need price money as it is value enough to win these prestigious titles. Officials should be paid in a moderate way depending of the budget of the potential of the show as they do a hard and mostly good job. Small shows need to find new attractive concepts for normal breeders which can be organized also with price money, if possible. It would be fantastic, if we could develop a sponsor concept, where the shows do not depend to the main exhibitors anymore. Karl Heinz Stoeckle has some interesting ideas about this, let's see. Also we need to keep an eye on the treatment of the horses, as already now horse riding is in the focus of animal protection organizations. We need to develop concepts to respond them in a professional way already now!

*TA: How/Where would you see yourself, 5 years from now?*

NI: Sitting in front of this computer and answering your next interview questions, maybe!

*TA: Is there anything specific you want to add to this interview to tell to the readers?*

NI: I really hope that everybody who has the privilege to work with these horses is aware of his commendable situation. Do not ask me if I believe that all of us have deserved it. We all should stop hunting for mistakes in people and horses, but start searching for good ideas and new perspectives. □