

Be a real horseman, be honest  
and  
trust your own eyes



Koenraad Detailleur and MCA Magnum Gold, picture taken at Midwest Station I

the talk with  
**Koenraad Detailleur**

Interview by Urszula Łęczycka

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Gj

Magilla Apal  
(MCA MAGnum Gold x Magnolia Apal)

# The talk with Koenraad Detailleur

PEOPLE

Interview by Urszula Łęczycka

**Tutto Arabi:** *Where did you get your most important life experience to be a breeder and a judge?*

**Koenraad Detailleur:** *In my youth I was living on the countryside, around our house I could have seen a farmer working daily with his Belgian draught horse. Many hours even day's I was watching them from behind the window, later on I accompanied him many times as much as I could. Later on when I was a little bit older, I visited every single horse in the village, all with my little bicycle, especially in the foaling time, I was looking to the new born foals. At the beginning I liked them all, but slowly I learned to see the differences between the foals when they grow up, I learned that most of them became a cloons of their mothers. During my whole youth, horses where always the most important thing of lifetime, at the age of 17 I bought my first warm blood, a colt foal, when I saw him for the first moment he touched my soul so much, that I negotiated with the owner in only a few minutes to make the deal. The horse later on was an outstanding show jumper, that I sold a couple of years later to Mr. Wauters - at that moment one of the best show jumpers in the world. Later on I met a Man who was an owner of some Arabians and he invited me once to make a ride with his horses on the beach and the dunes... I remember it so well, because before I climbed on that horse I was thinking: "here we go with those ponies", but it was the most fantastic ride I ever had done. I was so impressed that I bought my first Arabian, a horse of Crabbet/Polish blood. From that time on I*

*was contaminated with "arabitis", I think it's a very strong virus...*

**TA:** *One may have an impression that in the modern show horse breeding is mostly about the shape of the head and expressive movements as the most important, also some of the judges seem to pay the most of their attention in judging those features that in consequence pushes a lot of breeders to run for the pretty heads only. Do you think this is true and so how the show horse breeding will be developing in the future or how it should be?*

**KD:** *For me the most important thing is the overall correctness of a horse, the total picture of the horse must be in balance, harmony, of course the expression is also very important, than later on I look at the head. There are always people who look only for a pretty heads, but they mostly learn that only a beautiful head is only a head and not a horse, I don't want a horse just to look at him with his head over the stall door. It's important that you can use a horse for riding. As a judge you must always have in mind that the horse you judge, one day you must have the possibility to put a saddle on it. The best judges I know are the people who know what it is to ride a horse. Of course I like very beautiful horses with a pretty face, charisma, tail in the air, but for a maximum score I want to see a correct movement too. So for me we must give attention in the future to beware the usefulness of the Arabian horse.*



Judging the show in Sharjah 2009



Manerbio 2010

**TA:** During the past few years a lot of smaller B and C ranked shows were cancelled due to the lack of entries. On the other hand it is extremely difficult especially for young or small breeders to compete against the world leaders on the big and prestigious events. How do you think the show scene should evolve nowadays?

**KD:** To organize a show today, you need some money to start because everything is expensive, you must have a nice catalogue, a VIP area, mobile boxes, without some sponsoring it's not possible. But I think for a small C show, perhaps we must create it a little bit simpler and cheaper for the participants. And for me very important must be more respect for the show pyramid, I mean every single horse must start (required) in the C level, but after some wins it must move to the B level, the same for horses of the B level, after some wins it must move up to the A level. It would be better than as it is today that title show and a show gold medal winners are not allowed to take part in a C national show. C national shows are very important for every country, it is the base of the breed. In the past too much attention was given to the biggest shows, it's time

for every country to put more energy in the C National shows. Also I think about a task of ECAHO - they forgotten for a long time about that level of shows, how they are in fact important.

**TA:** What shows you was involved in organizing and still are? Can you tell us a bit about the show events scene in Belgium nowadays?

**KD:** I was for many years involved in the European Championships in Moorsele, I was taking the technical part and in decoration of the event for my responsibility. And I organized already from 1991 the National C shows in Belgium, shows like Westende, De Panne, Koksijde. This year I organized for the second time the West Coast Arabian Cup, an International B show and National C show on the same weekend. This year it will be on 30th April and 1st May held in Koksijde, on an old abbey. Last year we had participants from 13 different countries there. We are very lucky in Belgium to have every year a great show schedule - we have shows of every level, Nationals, Internationals and every second year the European Championship. Of course we have an advantage



Judging the show in Ajman 2009



Spanish Nationals in Segovia



Koenraad Detaillieur with family

because of our geographical location, especially for the Internationals, we are in the middle of Europe. And it is nice to see the results of the Belgian participants: they are very good winning the greatest shows everywhere, mostly of the time even small breeders with only a few horses at home, but with beautiful mares, and the right choice of stallions.

**TA: How would you convince the breeders, also those smaller ones to come and participate at the shows in Belgium – nowadays one of the leading countries in organizing high quality events with high quality horses?**

**KD:** Of course we have also, like everywhere, the situation more difficult than some years ago, to have 100 horses on a competition. But due to a lack of respect for the show pyramid some of the small breeders are no more motivated to participate, also some big training stables with very good horses overwhelming the show scene, and discourage the small breeder. On the other hand as show organizer you would like to have as many horses as possible. Many years ago we had the rules for the Belgian Nationals allowing the people to lease a foreign horse to participate just to win the National title, so we decided that a horse must be born in Belgium to participate at the National Championship. Afterwards it was the best thing we did, and it's a nice to see at National Championship just Belgian bred horses, it gives a good view of what the breeders at the certain country are doing.

**TA: What is the hardest point of judgment in your opinion?**

**KD:** The most important thing for a judge is to put your brains on zero, and just focusing on the horses and ONLY the horses in mind which one is the most correct, despite of his origin, owner, handler! For myself I always put myself the question: "Conrad which one would you like to take home"?

**TA: ...and what is the most satisfying?**

**KD:** The most satisfying is to see an unknown horse that blow you away, that touch your soul so much, that you have goose bumps. Once I was in Sharjah and there was a small chestnut mare, but so beautiful, so desert look, authentic, charismatic, a real beauty, I gave her maximum scores, and was wondering what my colleagues judges would do with their points, and I was very happy to see their scores on the screen, full of twenties! That is satisfying, a small mare that touched the whole judge panel.

**TA: If you could point 3 most important features describing a good judge nowadays it would be ...**

**KD:** Be a real horseman, be honest and trust your own eyes.

**TA: Was there any particular horse you have been judging that especially came to your memory?**

**KD:** Oh yes, once in Ajman, during the senior stallions, the class came for the first walk around in the show ring, I looked at all the horses and a certain moment I was eye to eye with my greatest friend - the stallion AS Natsir Apal. I was really overwhelmed by the idea that finally I must judge him. That was a magical moment for me, and with pain in my heart I could not put him first in his class, because another stallion was better that day. Natsir Apal didn't show that day as he does normally for 22, and his condition that moment wasn't optimal, so that also a reference for a judge: don't be blind, even for your best friend, be honest.

**TA: The show that you will remember until the end of your life was (so far) ...**

**KD:** Some years ago Towerlands, there was a competition between (yes, again) Natsir-Apal and Espano Estopa in the stallion class. Espano Estopa received an incredible score really hard to beat, so at that moment we thought that the victory went to Espano Estopa, until the moment that Natsir Apal came in to the arena. Unbelievably he went over with only one judge point, receiving at that time a score of 92 point and later Junior Champion Stallion. Also a victory with the same impact was Pilarka winning at the European Championships in Ostende many years ago. She received from the audience a standing ovation. It was, believe me, the nicest victory a horse could receive. At that time she received for the first time in history more than 90 points, for these times it was magical, if you realize that you could win with a score of 82 points. Even when I write it at this moment I still feel that magical floating queen she was, I never saw it again!

**TA: Your favorite shows to judge and why?**

**KD:** Well, for me the Bialka Junior Show, a lot of good quality junior horses all together, sometimes hard to judge. And the Israeli National Championships, also a nice quality of horses, especially most of them are Straight Egyptians. The Ajman show because of its special atmosphere and wonderful arena.

**TA: There were a lot of newcomers graduated at several national level judge classes throughout Europe last year, most of them will probably apply to start their career as international judges in the near future. What would be your advice to the newcomers at the judges panel in Europe?**

**KD:** My advice would be: don't think that you know already every point of judging, be careful, your first impression is sometimes the right one, and open your eyes and ears very well. You can learn a lot from your colleagues if they have a remark on a horse. And again put your brain on zero and concentrate yourself on the horses. Don't let yourself be overwhelmed by fashion, go for the most correct horse in that class on that moment!