

Judges & Exhibitors

BY JANET DE ACEVEDO MACDONALD



Judges go to school.
And you can too.

Not long after the green sawdust settles at U.S. Nationals and Convention delegates have returned home, the Education & Evaluation Commission (EEC) gathers in Scottsdale, Arizona, for an intense process to educate exhibitors and future judges in our industry. Headed up by Chairwoman Mary Jane Brown and Vice Chair Johnny Ryan, under the auspices of Judges & Stewards Commissioner Stan Morey, the EEC conducts the annual Judges & Exhibitors School, Arabian Horse Judges Evaluation, Seminar, and the National and Regional Interviews.

The Judges & Exhibitors School was created as a result of Resolution 5-90 specifically for prospective judges and exhibitors interested in learning how Arabian horses are viewed and evaluated by today's most respected judges. Participants are responsible for paying their own way to Scottsdale, the three-night hotel accommodations plus the \$375 Judges & Exhibitors School enrollment fee for three days of instruction. The Association provides comprehensive coursework, live judging opportunities and a notebook covering the responsibilities of a USEF/AHA Arabian Judge and in-depth reviews of disciplines like Working Cow, English and Western Trail, Mounted Native Costume, and the Arabian Halter Judging System.

"Judging is not an absolute.
It is a matter of observation and evaluation."

On Thursday, December 3, 2015, 40 attendees, only half of whom were taking the plunge for their USEF/AHA Arabian Judges Card, and 10 EEC-member instructors began the three days of instruction about evaluating the Arabian horse.

Melissa Moore, owner/manager of Sunrise Stables in Versailles, Kentucky, comes from the American Saddlebred world. Daughter of iconic Saddlebred trainers Tom and Donna Moore, Melissa is a clinician for the American Saddlebred Horse Association judges' school and holder of six large "R" cards in various divisions. Moore's of the opinion that not only is the AHA school wonderfully done, but other breed associations should look at what the Association is doing and benefit from what is being taught.

"It was hard learning an entirely new process," said Moore. "The ethics part that Stan talks about is key."

"The Arabian judge must have integrity and knowledge. Webster defines integrity as honesty, sincerity and completeness."

— AHA Code of Ethics & Sportsmanship, Chapter 3

Johnny Ryan, co-owner of Ryan Show Horses in



SCHOOL For All

THIS PAGE:
Three-time U.S. National Reserve Champion DaVinci FM is presented to Judges School attendees

OPPOSITE:
LEFT: Onsite at Gemini Acres
CENTER & RIGHT: Students spend two 12-hour days in the classroom at the Marriott

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, says of the school, “It’s not just for wanna-be judges.” Ryan, who went through the process himself 20 years ago, did it to better understand why he does what he does as a judge. “The more our exhibitors know about the judging and evaluation process, the better. [Serving on the EEC] is a big commitment that is very rewarding. As an instructor, I get to share my knowledge and passion so it’s very easy to stand up and talk about what I love. And it’s great for networking. The school has such a family atmosphere.”

“I had no idea there was so much involved in being an Arabian judge,” shared Emily Schmidt, owner of Misty Star Arabians, in Stockton, New Jersey. Her motivation to attend as an exhibitor is because she only got into owning and showing Arabians — specifically Straight Egyptian Arabians — six years ago.

“I want to sharpen my own eye for breeding purposes and to know about the marketplace globally. Is there a trend that judges look at — and how does it reflect in sales and breeding?”

Schmidt was happy to learn that the breed’s standards and ethics are being enforced. “[knowing this] underscores that owners and breeders are in charge, and that if we see something being done by a trainer to our animals that we don’t like, not only must we say that we don’t like it, we need to insist that it stop.” And rest assured the Association and USEF has our back.

She continued, “Trainers must understand they cannot afford to crush the spirit of these magnificent animals for the sole purpose of winning at all cost. To attract new people as well as to keep our current members and keep up participation, we need a sense of consistency and fairness in both judging and training.”

Admittedly, and this often happens, Schmidt has been bitten by the bug to become a judge. She adds this pursuit is not for people with short attention spans who cannot multitask. “The live judging was invaluable. I expected to be educated — and was a little overwhelmed by all the information — but I came away delighted with everything I encountered. There was not a wasted minute in three days.”

For the two 12-hour classroom days, students waded through USEF Rules, basic conformation and what to look for in Breeding In-Hand classes and use of its scorecard. Aspects of class management are addressed—how to position yourself, how to prioritize marking exhibitors and tips on how to develop your own system. The various disciplines — Country English Pleasure, Pleasure Driving, Western Pleasure, Hunter Pleasure, Equitation, Horsemanship and Showmanship, plus the specialty classes like Mounted Native Costume, Working Western, Reining, and many more are also covered.

You must not be dazzled by either the horse’s past performance, its advertising, its popularity or its reputation

— AHA Code of Ethics & Sportsmanship, Chapter 3

A quick 30-minute ride due north of the hotel and school participants arrived at Gemini Acres Equine in Cave Creek, home to Versace son, three-time Reserve U.S. National Champion DaVinci FM. Armed with book smarts, this newly added Saturday morning session proved to be a very eye-opening experience — to stand in a judge’s shoes in front of a live animal with a scorecard in hand. A lot more than one thinks goes in to determining value on an Arabian Halter score sheet.

Gemini Acres Equine General Manager Taylor Mason, who welcomed the students, handles the day-to-day operations. Mason, a third-generation Arabian horse breeder, is also a co-owner along with Scott Mason, and Jim and Sally Bedeker. For the Bedekers, 2016 marks their 30 years in the Arabian horse business.

Reflecting favorably on its first year participating with the Judges & Exhibitors School, Gemini Acres Equine is already looking toward December 2016. “Maybe we’ll have a little competition — having something to win can make it more enticing. This is a low-risk environment with high benefit. There’s no ribbon disappointment. Everyone walks away with information and education — that’s all upside,” said Mason.

Students were wowed at the opportunity to evaluate horses the caliber of Da Vinci FM, with In-Hand legends Greg Gallun and Ted Carson presenting. When asked how it was to have the Gemini horses appraised in no-holds-barred fashion, Taylor replied, “It’s nice to hear an unbiased opinion on our horses. It’s not always fun to hear, but it does help us not be barn blind or over critical.”

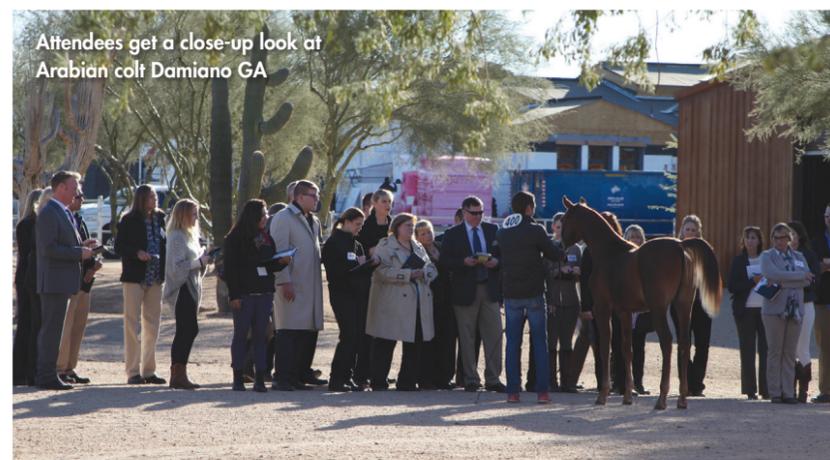
“Turn in your cards, please.”

Saturday afternoon, buoyed by EEC members, students were split in two groups with half swimming to the depths of center ring with an actual show going on, while the remainder tread water waiting their turn. Held at West-World, the Desert Classic All Arab Show — billed as the third largest show in AHA’s Region 7, and sponsored by the Valley of the Sun AHA — has a reputation as being one of the most exhibitor friendly shows in the nation.

Here is where Johnny Ryan sees the enthusiasm and excitement of the pieces coming together for the students. “This is where they’re always grateful for the time we’ve spent together in the classroom.” This is also where a



Arabian filly DeRosa GA is evaluated by participants



Attendees get a close-up look at Arabian colt Damiano GA

number convert — the ones who came only as exhibitors choose to continue on the judge track, which is more time and commitment.

A long-standing misconception is the three-day school is only for those interested in becoming a judge. Stan Morey, who has been the AHA Judges and Stewards Commissioner since 2009, says not only can exhibitors attend, they should know the school is exhibitor friendly.

Take responsibility for furthering your education in any and all matters pertaining to judging Arabian horses.

“We are going to find out about you,” says Morey.

For anyone who chooses judging and has completed the school, successfully passed more than one test, and also met the learner judging requirements, each will be interviewed by the EEC team. Only the AHA and USEF Dressage organizations require this rigorous level of testing. And, not too surprisingly, there is a washout rate. There are individuals who have tested as many as three times trying to pass and who haven’t made it.

There is a demanding standard for people with judging credentials. Every three years a judge must actively partici-

pate in continuing education related to the Arabian horse, and every six years National/Regional judges are re-interviewed. Judges are not only well-versed in a lot of disciplines, they must also be up on rule changes. Those who judge the local and regional shows need to know a lot more than their own disciplines. Trail is up in popularity, as is Showmanship. These are just some of the things that makes this endeavor both worthwhile and labor intensive.

A word to the wise and coming attractions...

“We have many archaic and unacceptable practices in our industry and we have just got to stop,” said Morey. His February 8, 2016 membership-wide email, sent just before the start of the Scottsdale Arabian Show, clarified what a Controlled Paddock is coupled with what is acceptable behavior for

handler and designated shagger for Breeding In-Hand classes. This is the first of many such clarifications to come.

“Halter seems to get the brunt of complaints,” said Morey. “But there’s plenty of re-education needed in all of our disciplines. Our mission is not about being adversarial, but rather being helpful at every opportunity.”

In addition to providing leadership for continued course correction and refinement, Morey hopes to take the Judges & Exhibitors School on the road and hold its classes more than once a year as education. To accommodate both time and money constraints, the school will become more interactive, taught online via webinars where it makes sense

To learn how you can attend the 2016 Judges and Exhibitors School or more about these important events, their dates and deadlines, visit ArabianHorses.org/additional/judges-stewards/seminar-schools/

Janet de Acevedo Macdonald is a travel writer and award-winning executive producer for America’s #1 travel radio show, “Rudy Maxa’s World.” Both Janet and her husband Ian are active amateurs who co-own Auld Macdonald Farm Arabians — home to U.S. National Champion Breeding Stallion Legacys Renoir+, and they both plan to attend the Judges and Exhibitors School in 2016.