

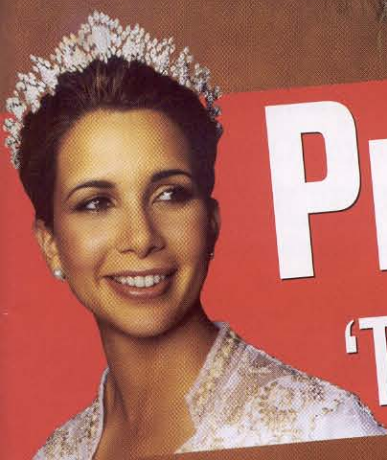
STALLIONS GALORE: new sires plus sport horse choice | Jonjo O'Neill: 'my top five'

HORSE & HOUND[®]

5 January 2006/Every Thursday/£2

A step too far?

Chris Bartle
on evolution
of dressage
style



Princess Haya

'Thank goodness I made the Olympics'

THE H&H INTERVIEW PRINCESS HAYA

'I had two interests horses and the



in life: Olympics'

The multi-tasking Princess Haya, inspiration behind the Dubai Horse Show and a candidate for the FEI presidency, talks to **KATE GREEN** about mixing royal duties with trying new sports and driving trucks

AMID the razzmatazz of the 2000 Sydney Olympics, a young show jumper joyously soaking up all the atmosphere of her first Olympic experience went unnoticed by many, her accreditation reading plain "HRH Hussein".

Now, Princess Haya, the radiant, modern, approachable and dynamic daughter of the late King Hussein of Jordan and the wife of Sheikh Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai — a giant of the bloodstock world himself — is charged with inspiring her countrymen to better her achievement.

The visionary behind next week's US\$1.25m Dubai Horse Show and one of three candidates to take over the FEI presidency in May, Princess Haya's Olympic dream took shape at age six when she heard her adored father discussing the controversial 1980 Moscow Olympics with American president Jimmy Carter.

"I used to hang on my father's every word; he believed sport was a vehicle of goodwill among nations — 'war without casualties'. I began to watch the Olympics and getting there myself became the thing I wanted more than anything," explains the Princess, who at first thought she might achieve her ambition in the gymnastic, rather than equestrian, field.

King Hussein set up Team Harmony in 1994 to support Arab riders — one, the Egyptian Abdel Said, recently won a grand prix at Unex Towerlands — and insisted that as well as participating in sport, his daughter must grasp its inner workings.

His sixth birthday present to her was an orphaned filly foal.



Princess Haya competing in the Sydney 2000 Olympics on her late father's mare, Lucilla II



At the races with husband, Sheikh Mohammed, owner of the Godolphin breeding operation

"My mother (Queen Alia, who died in a helicopter crash) had passed away and this filly's mother had passed away also, so the foal was my friend. I had to look after her and bottle-feed her.

"I had two interests in life: horses and getting to the Olympics, and, thank goodness, I got there. My father had said: 'I can only

Sheikh Mohammed loves watching me jump enormous fences, so I never feel entirely safe when he is the course-builder! "

justify you giving up a royal career if you get to an Olympics or a World Championships.'

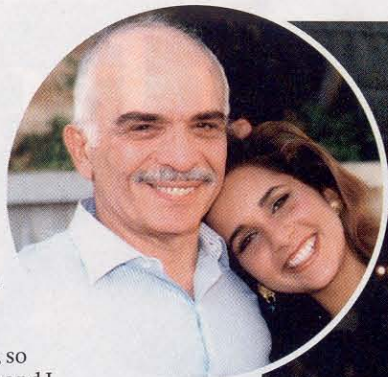
"He made me a promise that if I got to an Olympics, he would give up being king for a fortnight and stay with me in the village."

King Hussein died in 1999, the year before his daughter realised her ambition, but she

Pictures courtesy of Princess Haya

THE H&H INTERVIEW PRINCESS HAYA

King Hussein died in 1999, a year before his daughter achieved her Olympic ambition



«remembered his earlier dictat.

“I loved absolutely everything about Sydney; King Abdullah (of Jordan) had given me permission to go there without security, so no one knew who I was and I was able to run around talking to volunteers and finding out things like how the café ran.

“So many of the things I’ve done happened because of who I am, but getting to the Olympics was something only I could achieve for myself, and it took a lot of sweat and tears. It must be the same for Princess Anne and Zara Phillips: their achievements are not because of who they are but what they can do.”

Last August, Princess Haya’s brother-in-law Sheikh Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, issued a decree establishing the Dubai Equestrian Club, chaired by Princess Haya. Much of her time is spent trying to restructure the sport to raise its profile in the Middle East.

“Young Arab riders and their federations must learn first-hand what top sport is all about. Having the best in the world competing here could really kick-start the sport – the World Cup league has already brought them on in leaps and bounds.

“I hope the Dubai show will make people understand what our young riders are striving for and help improve the circuit here.”

Princess Haya’s own riding career is nothing if not eclectic. She has tried showing, dressage, flat racing, endurance riding and even vaulting. Desperate to win the fancy dress jumping class at Geneva’s World Cup show, she took advice from the trapeze artist at Sydney’s closing ceremony and subsequently pulled off a stunt involving abseiling on to the back of a horse. Her favourite jumping class is the six-bar and she cheerfully admits that she enjoys puissance “because there’s only one fence to get right!”



Abseiling on to her mount for the fancy dress jumping class at the Geneva World Cup



Pictures courtesy of Princess Haya

Princess Haya, nominated to carry the Jordanian flag at the opening of the Sydney Olympics

During her Bryanston schooldays in Dorset, Princess Haya rode show ponies with Richard and Marjorie Ramsey, where contemporaries included Jemima Goldsmith (now Khan) and Lulu McAlpine.

“Richard and Marjorie gave up trying to teach me to be neat; all I wanted to do was put my stirrups up and jump.

“We used to see quite a bit of that great trainer Lars Sederholm and the ethic he impressed

upon me was that, in order to know your own sport, you have to know others.”

Her first jumping trainer was David Broome, to whom she refers affectionately as Uncle David. “He is the only one helping me now.”

While subsequent teachers included the

late Paul Darragh, Paul Schockemöhle, Patrick Caron, Hans Horn, Katie Monaghan-Prudent and, in dressage, Isabell Werth and the Klimke family, one experiment involved a period in Ireland with racehorse trainer Tommy Stack, formerly Red Rum’s jockey.

“I sat next to Tommy at a dinner and he

kindly invited me to ride out. It was probably a polite invitation he later regretted

— he was a bit surprised when I asked if I could come tomorrow!”

Ironically, many of Princess Haya’s rides on the flat belonged to the late Robert Sangster, whose bloodstock empire was the main rival to that of Sheikh Mohammed.

“My father said: “I can only justify you giving up a royal career if you get to an Olympics or a World Championships””



The richest show in the world

THE Al Maktoum Challenge, held at the Dubai International Horse Show, (11-13 January) carries the richest prize purse in the world — US\$1.25m — and features a \$760,000 grand prix for the best 20 riders in the world and an Arab league World Cup qualifier.

Additional attractions include Heroes of the Horse World, a production featuring leading riders in the seven FEI disciplines. (Show details: www.almaktoumchallenge.com)

aspires to join the Olympic family has many, many steps to take before meeting even one of the IOC's 33 requirements."

And has Princess Haya persuaded Sheikh Mohammed of the joys of show jumping?

"He loves watching me jump enormous fences, so I never feel entirely safe when he is the course-builder!

"We work together a lot. I would never buy a horse without him — he has an incredible eye."

Besides gaining the FEI presidency, Princess Haya has another pressing ambition: to get her flying groom's licence.

"And I will. The biggest plus or minus to how your horse will go at an international competition is in how it has travelled."

It's an impressive equestrian CV and one forgets it's been crammed in between a heavy schedule of royal duties. Princess Haya, who gained a PPE (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) at Oxford, is devoted to humanitarian causes, especially health, education, and youth initiatives in Dubai and Jordan.

She spearheaded a renovation project for 17 schools, including the construction of sports halls and canteens to ensure children receive enough exercise and appropriate nutrition — 40% of Dubai's children suffer from diabetes-related problems, and heart disease is the biggest killer due to the rapidly changing lifestyle.

She is knowledgeable about Arab history, both political and cultural, and regularly returns to monitor projects in Jordan. Horses are, therefore, an important antidote — one clue is the way TV *Vet* and *Dressage to Music* share shelf space with heavy volumes on the search for world peace and her favourite, *Jane Eyre*.

And as a distraction from the paperwork mountain, Princess Haya can peek through binoculars at what's going on in the stables from the window of her office in the World Trade Centre in Dubai.

"There are lots of reasons why I would like to be president of the FEI, but one is that it gives me the chance to talk to people I care about on a subject I also care about."

Princess Haya has many titles, but after time spent in her vivacious presence, one can't help feeling the most appropriate is that from the International Femmes Mythique Association — "A Legendary Woman". H&H

A woman of firsts

Princess Haya was the first:

- Arab and first woman to become a goodwill ambassador to the UN World Food Programme

- rider to achieve World Championship status in show jumping and endurance

- Arab woman to ride on a Jordanian team

- Arab woman to win an equestrian medal (Pan Arab bronze in 1992)

- Jordanian rider to relinquish amateur status (competing for Loro Piana)

- woman in Jordan to drive an articulated lorry — her father nicknamed her "The Trucker"

- member of the Jordanian royal family to be a union member (truck-driving)

- woman in Jordan to organise an all-female football team

- Arab woman to ride at an Olympic Games

- Princess Haya started the Jordanian equestrian federation. She is the youngest recipient of an International Golden Helm Award for tourism and a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission and Commission for Culture and Olympic Education.

Radiant, modern and dynamic, Princess Haya leads the way in many fields

"Tommy used to say to me: 'Where are we going to find you a husband? I think Sheikh Mohammed's the one for you!' And, when we did marry, Tommy said: 'You see, I told you that you should always listen to my advice!'"

Though their fathers, both Middle Eastern rulers, were close friends, Sheikh Mohammed and Princess Haya, who married in April 2004, got to know each other through horses.

"We are both very competitive and I think that was part of the attraction."

With marriage has come a taste of her husband's sport of endurance riding. Princess Haya keeps fit schooling his horses daily.

"I used to say to him: 'The best thing about your sport is the finishing line'. It took me 15 hours to get home on my first 160km ride (in Newmarket in 2004) and I wasn't amused. They all galloped off and left me. By the time I got in the officials were trying to close the whole thing down."

But it only took a week for Princess Haya to get a grip of this new discipline — "I think I'm the only person to ride 160km in a forward seat!" — and, with Sheikh Mohammed, she won the next race in Wicklow.

"All talk in the house was about who was to stay behind and go slowly with me and it was decided Bill Smith (Sheikh Mohammed's endurance manager) would be the one, so my first mission was to get rid of him!

"What I like about this sport is that you get a deeper understanding of your horse in one

long ride than over a year with another horse."

Princess Haya is firm about speculation over endurance riding becoming an Olympic sport.

"I have heard a lot of discussion, but there's a simple answer. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has a list of evaluation criteria, one of which is history. Endurance is only 20 years old. Anyone who feels it should be an Olympic discipline has a case to prove!

"The idea of getting rid of eventing or dressage to include endurance or reining is absolutely unacceptable. Any sport that