



BY EMMA MAXWELL

Saskia RJ and her family give a neat historical snapshot of the development of Arabian breeding in Belgium, as well providing a common pedigree link to an impressive number of contemporary showring champions. For the size of country, Belgium has a remarkable level of success in Arabian show breeding with six wins of the Nations Cup itself in Aachen. To put the country a little more into perspective it has the sixth largest purebred registry in Europe according to purebred foals registered 2009–2013. Of course other countries have a bigger racing breeding fraternity, particularly the largest breeder France, but Belgium has without doubt punched above its weight for some years. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Belgium is a natural transit point for many international horses, whether from the Middle East or the Americas. It is also notable for its high number of imports and exports, but is overall a net exporter — and not only of horses. The country has also exported an enormous number of expats involved with Arabians around the world; from breeding managers to vets, you can pretty much find a Belgian anywhere you can find an Arabian horse! However, I do not think it unreasonable to link some of their success as breeders



Top: **SASKIA RJ** (PLAKAT X BARWNA).

Bottom: A 2006 DAUGHTER OF SASKIA RJ, **ESTA SASKIA** (ESTA ESPLANAN) AND HER PSYTADEL COLT.



to the foundations laid by the Saskia RJ family. Saskia RJ was one of twelve full siblings, something approaching a record in pre-embryo transfer days, and another trio of half siblings, one of whom also bred famous descendants, so I should perhaps be writing this piece about her dam Barwna. Barwna was bred by the Biddesdon Stud of the U.K., a stud founded in 1930 and still going today. The most famous product of this stud is the Badminton Horse Trials winning Anglo-Arabian gelding Tamarillo (now also cloned for reproductive purposes), descended from one of their original purebred mares. The sire of Barwna, Iridos, was among the most famously beautiful stallions of the 1950s and 60s in the U.K., and her grandam Biruta was a 1962 export, from Poland to Great Britain. She came from the Nowy Dwor Stud, and like Mammona and Eunice is from the Sahara dam line, one of the three oldest mare families in Poland, imported from the desert in 1845.

Barwna had three foals by the Egyptian stallion Hindi, one of which I will mention again later, but was bred for the first time in 1979 to Plakat (Aswan x Pchelka [Knippel x Panel]), one of the several legendary



Aswan sons of the era. She was never bred to another stallion again. All Russian horses of that era passed through the Kossack stud in Holland when they left Tersk and four-year-old Plakat, winner of two races from 13 starts, remained in Holland, owned by Bluebell Arabians. He made many memorable entrances to the showring partnered for his life with handler Eric Dorsers. Plakat won his last of many titles, the stallion championship at the All Nations Cup in 1992, when he was 22. Plakat was a three-quarter brother to Palas (Aswan x Panel) tracing to the strong stallion-producing family of Star Of The Hills — as did other Tersk notables around the world: Balaton and Prichal.

The first foal of this cross was chestnut Warandes Arabelle, bred in Holland by G. L. Raymakers as were the first five Barwna foals. The second was chestnut Warandes Pascha, World Championships Reserve Champion Stallion in 1989, and the third was the grey colt Warandes Plakat. This colt was World Champion Junior Male in 1984, and he repeated the title as a stallion in 1987 for Nejdi Arabians of Belgium. He was the first horse to do the Junior/Senior double. I remember him as a very animated horse (possibly too animated) with a beautiful front, lots of tail carriage, but rather roughly put together in



Left: **BARAKA** (DUSHARA X BIRUTA) A CRABBET/POLISH MARE WHOSE LINE LIVES THROUGH SASKIA RJ.

Right: **WARANDES PLAKAT** (PLAKAT X BARWNA) WAS A FULL BROTHER TO SASKIA RJ.

the midsection. He was certainly one of the most eye-catching and memorable horses of his era.

However, his stallion title was matched in 1987 by his younger sister Saskia RJ who simultaneously bagged the World Champion Filly title. Saskia RJ was born after Barwna's export to Belgium in foal to Plakat and was the third of four full siblings bred by Mrs J. Carpentier. She was sold to Robert de Mulder of Asswani Stud, who owned her for twenty years. She went back to Holland to be shown by Rene Tromp for her biggest victories and of her Rene says "She had a natural attitude and a trot like I had never seen before; she knew how to get all eyes on her!"

Saskia RJ's reputation was established on those first few shows and even though she did not show much as an adult mare she was immediately recognized as an icon. She was one of the first horses who showed the shape of things to come in Europe for show horses; early to go white, with a pretty face, added to lots

of animation. The style she set has never really gone out of fashion. Of her Bart Van Buggenhout, the Belgian manager of Aljassimya Farm, says, "Growing up in Belgium and starting to scan all the little and bigger shows in Belgium and beyond it didn't take long to know Saskia RJ. She was one of my childhood heroines. She was so far ahead of her time there was just nothing out there like her, with except perhaps her full brother Warandes Plakat."

The second way in which she was a product of the era was in pedigree. Before that time it was also far more common in Europe to breed "straight" bloodlines of whatever bloodline one favored, but increasing international competition in fact opened breeders' eyes to strengths and weakness inherent in straight breeding and gave them the incentive to try and "get it all" in one horse by crossing. The Aswan son on English-bred mares had already worked a treat in the case of Padron (Patron x Odessa), born in Holland in 1977, one of the first and

most enduring results of the combination. Outcrossing provided small breeders as well as large breeders with incredible chances to produce spectacular results from mares that were not really champions themselves in a way that straight breeding maybe did not. Certainly eyewitness reports do not credit Barwna



with the stellar quality of some of her offspring. With fast access to any Russian exports through neighboring Holland, Belgian breeders developed their own “melting pot” recipe based on the Plakat x Barwna cross, which has had lasting influence. Like a number of other show champions, who have also managed to become breeding notables, her pedigree has only one repeated name in the fourth and fifth generation. Although we all know such an outcrossed pedigree can produce individual excellence, whether it also results in consistency in breeding is then a matter for empirical study! The fact is that Saskia RJ does have a lot of unheard-of siblings among the eleven that were born, but those that worked have bred on well, especially when linebred back to themselves or each other. This illustrates the classic repeating cycles of breeding, outcrossing to produce vigor and then linebreeding to fix the desirable type, finally starting the cycle again.

Saskia RJ’s owner Robert de Mulder also bought Barwna for her last six foals by Plakat, of whom two were notably successful. The chestnut colt Tamerek was Nations Cup Champion, although his later career faltered, possibly because of

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his uncertain temperament. Meanwhile, the effervescent grey filly Ass Fialka was a familiar sight at the right end of the prize-giving lineup. In fact both also reappear together in the pedigree of Ajman Stud’s World Champion Mare Bess Fa’izah, a WH Justice daughter bred in Holland by Bessewacht Arabians. Tamerek and Ass Fialka are grandsire and dam respectively of her dam Sharon El Kendal. It is one of the hallmarks of the family that more

than one of the full siblings can easily turn up in the pedigree of successful horses. This linebreeding has created a specific look and yet as a family it is not yet entirely talked about with the same respect as other famous mare families. I suspect that one of the reasons for this is that the repeated theme can be hard to pick up because there are four different prefixes on the Plakat x Barwna full siblings plus one with none at all, followed by a positive explosion of different prefixes on the following generations, even when they appear to be bred by the same breeder! Unlike the elegant formula of Poland where the first letter of the name leads you inexorably back to the main matriarch, keeping track of this family requires more archaeology. However, as will be seen, the most influential of the group and the only one who is regularly linebred to herself as well as any of the siblings is Saskia RJ.

Her first foal of ten was the grey filly Ass Windi (by Gonchar by Menes) who was a familiar sight around the showrings of Europe winning for new owners Rosthwaite Arabians of Great Britain. She produced a champion mare, Az Pashon (by Om El Azadik), in the U.K. before spending a few years in Germany where she was bred by Ralf Heckenbuecker to the straight Egyptian super sire Ashhal Al Rayyan for her most successful foal Athenaa, born back in the U.K. for Delyth Gamlin Brown. Sold to Al Khalediah farms of Saudi Arabia, Athenaa was Gold Champion Mare pretty much everywhere her suitcase landed, in Las Vegas, Dubai, and Menton, and is one of best exemplars of this family. Of Ass Windi, Bart van Buggenhout says, “My all-time favorite daughter of Saskia RJ was Ass Windi. I remember the Saturday afternoon that my boss at the time — Vido Arabians’ Vick and Dorinda Keersmaeckers — allowed me to drive with their car to go and look at her with the possibility of buying her. I was so



excited, on a scale from 1 to 10 it was 11! Heartbeat pounding I arrived, and Robert de Mulder opened the door with a glass of champagne in his hand and said, ‘Oh Bart, come in, we are having a party!’ He had just sold Windi to the Needham family in the U.K.! This was the first time I really was heartbroken, close to 19 years old.”

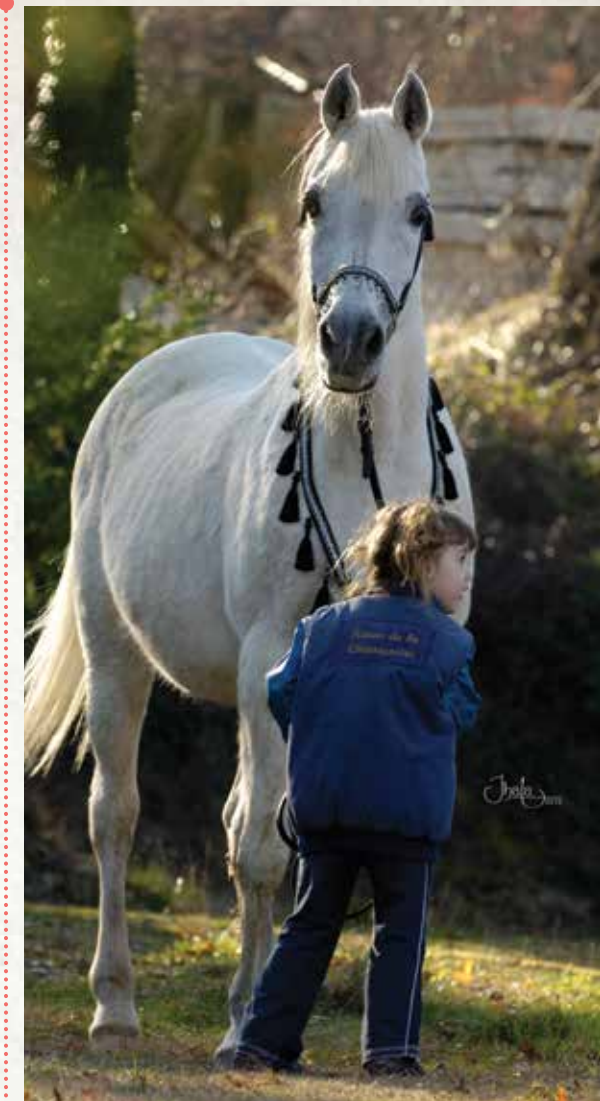
Many years later Bart was able to buy Ass Windi’s last daughter, Annaiss (by Ansata Nile Echo), for Aljassimya Farm. She now lives in the Santa Ynez Valley and her first foal was 2015 Las Vegas Arabian Breeders World Cup Bronze Supreme Champion Colt Jalal Aljassimya (by WH Justice). Her second foal Jaal Aljassimya is another amazing colt and Bart is just waiting for her to produce her own “little Saskia.”

Saskia RJ’s second filly, Ass-Edouna, was a 1990 grey by Edykt, probably the most beautiful of the Eukaliptus sons. She was sold as a foal to a young couple aspiring to become Arabian horse breeders, James Swanepoel, now of Swatam Arabians, and Cathy Tamsin, now at Schoukens Training Centre. Ass-Edouna was purchased as a weanling with Robert de Mulder after seeing Edykt in Paris. On discovering he had a foal in



Belgium already, and out of a stellar mare, they bought the filly rather than breeding a mare to him. This weanling became the foundation of Swatam Arabians. Ass-Edouna had 10 foals of which the first filly, 1995 chestnut Nyara JC by Nadir I (Neman x Neschi), was to take the ambitious breeders to their ultimate goal in 2001 with their homebred World Champion SA Misha Apal.

Nyara JC’s first foal, SA Natsarah, was by none other than the first of Saskia RJ’s four colts, AS Natsir Apal, a 1995 grey by Ibn Estasha (Malik x Estasha). Everyone at Swatam Arabians recalls, “First we bred SA Natsarah in 1999. Natsarah had good features but was not such a spectacular foal. We maybe weren’t



Top left: **ATHENAA** (ASHHAL AL RAYYAN X ASS-WINDI).

Top middle: **JALAL ALJASSIMYA** (WH JUSTICE X *ANNAISS).

Bottom middle: **ASS-EDOUNA** (EDYKT X SASKIA RJ).

Right: **SASKIA RJ.**

going to repeat the combination, but Natsarah got very sick the first days of her life and had to go to the hospital. Because of mare and foal being in the clinic, the easiest choice was to breed Nyara again to Natsir Apal, and good that we did! Misha was special from the first minute. She was all we ever dreamed of, she was a little ‘Saskia.’ It was an indescribable feeling when she won World Champion



ASS WINDI (BY GONCHAR BY MENES) WAS THE FIRST FOAL OF SISKIA RJ.



Top: SA MISHA APAL
(AS NATSIR APAL X NYARA JC).

Bottom left: GLORIA APAL
(PSYTADEL X SA MISHA APAL).

Bottom right: MEMPHIS 27
(EL AMIN X SA MISHA APAL).



BAUTISTA PHOTO

in Paris.” Shown by Erik Dorssers to that first title, she is the first example of a double-bred Saskia RJ to triumph at the highest level, also winning All Nations Cup Champion Mare in 2009.

SA Misha Apal is now owned by HE Sheikh Abdulla bin Mohammed al Thani of Al Zobair Stud and is renowned as one of the most beautiful mares in the world. While owned by Swatam Arabians she was bred mainly to their cornerstone sire Psytadel (Padrons Psyche x Bint Bey Shah) who James Swaenepoel feels added a predictable consistency to the offspring.

Her first foal was grey Gloria Apal, now owned by DST Arabians in the U.S. Herself a Senior Reserve Champion Mare in the Scottsdale International classes, she is dam of the successful stallion Apalo by Justify (Magnum Psyche x S Justadream), a winner in both Scottsdale and Vegas, and the grey full brother Glorius Apal, sire of World Reserve Champion Colt Ascott DD, owned by Athbah Stud and now standing in Poland. DST Arabians of Olympia, Washington, own a second daughter, Sienna Apal, a chestnut by Justify. Misha’s second foal, the exquisite son Memphis 27 (by El Amin by Psytadel), was European Champion in 2007 and many times champion in the Middle East for new owners Ajman Stud. The second Psytadel daughter, Marisha Apal, has produced the 2015 Ströhen Gold Champion Yearling Filly Babilonia (by Om El Shahmaan), bred by Swatam Arabians and now owned by the new Iranian stud, Ferrer Shah Arabians. SA Misha Apal has now founded her own family at Al Zobair Stud. She also has full sisters, AJ Naayer at Ajman Stud and AJ Nagasaki, at Swatam Arabians.

Nathanya JC, a bay filly and half sister to Nyara JC, was by AS Natsir Apal. She produced the big winning Psity Of Angels by Pystadel, a very popular youngster in the showing who produced another home run for the family with her daughter FM Gloriaa (by WH Justice). Bred by Mieke Sans, she was World Reserve Champion Mare in 2013 and Menton Champion Mare the same year, both for Al Zobair Arabians. Her full sister FM Victoriaa still lives in Belgium, owned by breeder Jeremy Desmedt, while half sister Euphoria by Pystadel has recently been sold to Ferrer Shah Arabians of Iran.

FM Gloriaa has two beautiful daughters and a 2105 champion, Barjass Al Zobair (by SMA Magic One), Gold Champion Yearling Colt at the Sharjah International this spring, who includes

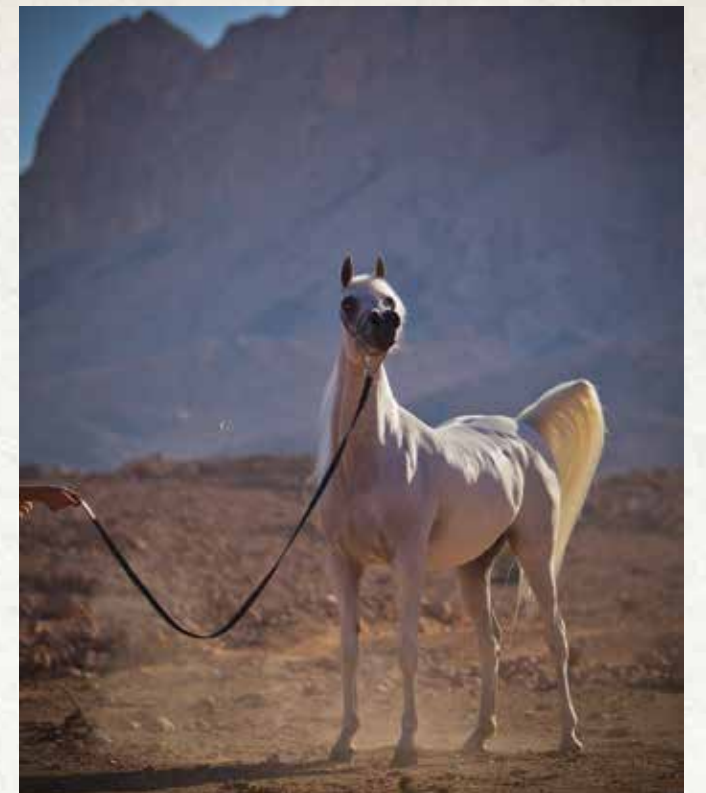


Top left: BABILONIA (OM EL SHAMAAN X MARISHA APAL).

Top right: FM GLORIAA (WH JUSTICE X PSITY OF ANGELS).

Bottom left: EUPHORIA (PSYTADEL X NATHANYA JC).

Bottom right: FINAL SHADOW (PSYTADEL X AS SHAHWAN).



two further crosses to Saskia RJ through his sire.

James and Cathy returned to the source and bought the third daughter of Saskia RJ (by Nadir I), As Shahwan, this time a feminine bay mare. She produced a pair of national champions around Europe, British National Champion Stallion Final Shadow (by Psytadel), exported to Kuwait, and Emira SVA (by Jevra SVA), Belgian National Champion

Filly for Sweet Valley Arabians, but has yet to replicate the outstanding success of her sister.

The next daughter of Saskia RJ, AS Kharima by the Aswan son Darlei, was retained by Robert de Mulder and was linebred back into the Plakat and Barwna lines to produce AS Mounah, who was further bred back into Belgian bloodlines by breeding to the Saskia son AS Sinans Pacha (by Ansata Sinan)

to produce Majidah Bint Pacha. Now owned by Marnix Criel, this broodmare was put to Psytadel to produce SMA Magic One, now also owned by Al Zobair Stud and sire of several 2015 Middle East Gold Champions including Barjass Al Zobair, already mentioned and Dubai International Gold Champion Filly Mozn Albidayer and Dubai Silver Champion Yearling Colt Raoud Albidayer, both from mares of American bloodlines, and



*Top: **SMA MAGIC ONE**
(PSYTADEL X MAJIDAH BINT PACHA).*

*Top middle: **AS NATSIR APAL**
(IBN ESTASHA X SASKIA RJ).*

*Top right: **AS SINANS PACHA**
(ANSATA SINAN X SASKIA RJ).*

*Bottom: **BILLY JEAN**
(AS SINANS PACHA X AS IMAANI).*



GRASSI PHOTO

a very impressive start to a sire career. Standing at Aljassimya Farm for some of 2014 and 2015, SMA Magic One is back in Belgium at Schoukens Training Centre.

In 1995, Saskia RJ produced her first colt, AS Natsir Apal by Ibn Estasha (Mailk x Estasha), head sire at Bessewacht Arabians and another pillar of Dutch and Belgian breeding. Ibn Estasha appears in many of the pedigrees of the successful members of the Saskia RJ family. AS Natsir Apal is now owned by Sheikh Ammar bin Humaid al Nuaimi of Ajman Stud, for whom he won many titles in the showring with Frank Spönle, being famous for his overwhelming presence and elastic slow motion bounce. He is most noted as sire of SA Misha Apal but also had many other champion offspring, including French National Champion Stallion Esta Esplanan (x Eskarta).

In 1996, she had a second colt AS Sinans Pacha by the Prince Fa Moniet son Ansata Sinan. Sold to Chantal Eric of Belgium he won Reserve World Junior Champion in 1999 and 2000 Israeli National Champion Stallion while on lease to Israel. In 2005, he was sold to Nette Bådal of Nordlys Arabians in Norway where he has since sired three Norwegian National Champions and French National Champion Valmira Al



Raix. You will be familiar with his name wherever you are based as sire of Escape Ibn Navarrone D (x Navarrone P), a Gold Champion Stallion in Paris, Aachen, Las Vegas, Dubai, and Qatar! Bred by Martine Despeghele, again of Belgium, he now graces the stables of Ajman Stud.

AS Sinans Pacha also crossed well back into the family as dam's sire of SMA Magic One. Chantal and Eric Verhaeghe also bought Saskia RJ's 1998 daughter AS Imaani by Hallim Ibn Kendal. Bred together they produced 2008 Belgian National Champion Mare Billy Jean. This mare now provides a second Saskia RJ line as a valued broodmare at Aljassimya Farm and is dam of an incredible five retained fillies and is dam of a 2015 Champion, Bahjet Aljassimya (by FA El Rasheem).

Saskia RJ herself moved to France in 2005 and lived with Michel Combette and Katell Lucas of Haras de Chataignière. Looked after by Katell Lucas for the previous ten years of her life, Saskia RJ is still going strong at 31 years old and about her Katell says, "She is a magical horse, a queen. A mare with a strong personality and with lots of energy. She knows what she wants and is very kind, but she must be respected



by people and other mares! She is very strong, both physically and mentally and is quite simply an outstanding mare."

A third son of Saskia RJ, a refined bay son of Psytadel, AS Kayro, was exported to France by the AS Kayro Syndicat, where his most successful offspring, Zawah de Lam, was a result of breeding back into the family. While in France Saskia RJ also had two fillies, Esta Saskia (by Esta Esplanan also including linebreeding to Saskia RJ), exported to Moell and Moell Arabians of Sweden where she produced only colts. She is now in the U.K., owned by Delyth Gamlin Brown. The final filly, Myss Saskia (by Mystic Image), is owned by Michel Combette in France.

As a footnote I should also record the production from the family of Barwna's daughter Warandes Nazeera (by EAO-bred Hindi). Her daughter by Plakat, Warandes Plakata, a three-quarter sister to Saskia RJ, is dam of 1989 All Nations Cup Champion Libanon Esplashal (by Ibn Estasha), bred in Holland. Libanon Esplashal's full sister Eskarta is grandam of Ghajariy (Khidar x Esta Passada) the 2003 All Nations Cup Champion Colt, who sadly died after his export to Iran.

There are more family connections through Ghajariy's sire Khidar (Ansata

Sinan x Elizja). Bred by Maghreb Arabians of Belgium, Khidar was twice World Reserve Champion Stallion and a consistent sire, recognized by his international cohort of owners, Josje Everars of Nesj Arabians in Belgium, Sax Arabians in Germany, Equus Arabians of Spain, and Al Zobair Stud of Sharjah. Elizja is a granddaughter of Warandes Hindia (Hindi x Baranta), a half sister to Barwna. Elizja is also grandam of Excalibur EA (Shanghai EA x Essence Of Marwan EA by Marwan Al Shaqab), a new twist on an old recipe produced in Spain by Albert Sorroca of Equus

*Top: **SASKIA RJ**
SHOWN HERE AT 29 YEARS OLD.
Bottom: **SASKIA RJ** (CENTER),
ALL DRESSED UP TO CELEBRATE
HER 30TH BIRTHDAY WITH FAMILY
AND FRIENDS.*

Arabians. Excalibur EA has not just those two lines to Warandes Hindia but in fact three because his sire Shanghai EA (WH Justice x Salmah EA) also traces to Warandes Hindia on his dam line.

If one lines up all the champions mentioned in this piece it is not fanciful to see a common denominator of look among all these horses. Although the Plakat/Ibn Estasha/Ansata Sinan/Psyttadel blood that appears in most of the horses is responsible for some of that distinctive type, the strength of the mare family shines through as the primary architect.

