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A Legend Looks Back: Allan Ehrlick Recounts How ‘The Nomad’ Wandered All the Way to the 1968 Olympics

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A lot has happened in the 51 years since the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games, but one thing has remained constant for Canadian Eventing Team member, Allan Ehrlick of Campbellville, ON: his passion for Arabian horses.

When Ehrlick discovered his future Olympic partner, a 1962 Anglo-Arabian gelding named The Nomad (sired by Yusof), in 1965, the fact that the three-year-old was part-Arabian was incidental – Ehrlick was just looking for a capable horse as he transitioned out of the junior ranks. The budding partnership proved to be much more than capable as they swiftly worked through the ranks, winning the 1966 National Pony Club A Rally Championship and setting an FEI eventing record for lowest dressage test score that held strong for 30 years.

After topping the Canadian Olympic trials, Ehrlick and The Nomad found themselves en route to Mexico City for the 1968 Olympic Games. There, the skilled pair was one of only 38 horse-and-rider combinations to finish the challenging cross-country course out of a field of 78 entries. Their efforts earned a respectable 35th place in the individual competition, as well as a top-10 finish for the Canadian Eventing Team alongside teammates, Robin Hahn, Norman Elder, and Barry Sonshine. Having proved themselves as talented representatives of the maple leaf, Ehrlick and The Nomad remained on Team Canada as the reserve eventing combination for the 1972 and 1976 Olympics.



Allan Ehrlick of Campbellville, ON, and The Nomad fearlessly leapt into the water at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games.

Photo Credit: *Courtesy of Allan Ehrlick*

Ehrlick was greatly inspired by his strong relationship with and affection for The Nomad, whom he lovingly described as “incredibly talented and brave” with “a sense of humour,” along with a penchant for red licorice. After The Nomad passed away in 1979, Ehrlick found himself committed to the Arabian breed and began exclusively showing full- and part-bred Arabians. He is now among the winningest Arabian Horse Association (AHA) amateurs with an astounding 111 national trophies under his belt. But while Ehrlick has had many exceptional mounts during those years – for example, his 1994 Arabian gelding, Dal Apollo (S.E.A. Ben Ben Bilal x Zaghoul), was the fifth Canadian horse to ever achieve the title of World Arabian Horse Organization Horse of the Year in 2014 – none of them have come close to The Nomad.

In 2018, the Canadian Olympic Committee sent Ehrlick a 50-year anniversary gift commemorating his participation in the 1968 Olympics with his beloved horse. Mittens bearing the maple leaf were presented as a reminder of the legacy he and The Nomad represent as Canadian Olympians.



Ehrlick received a commemorative gift of mittens bearing maple leaf symbols for the 50-year anniversary of the 1968 Olympics.

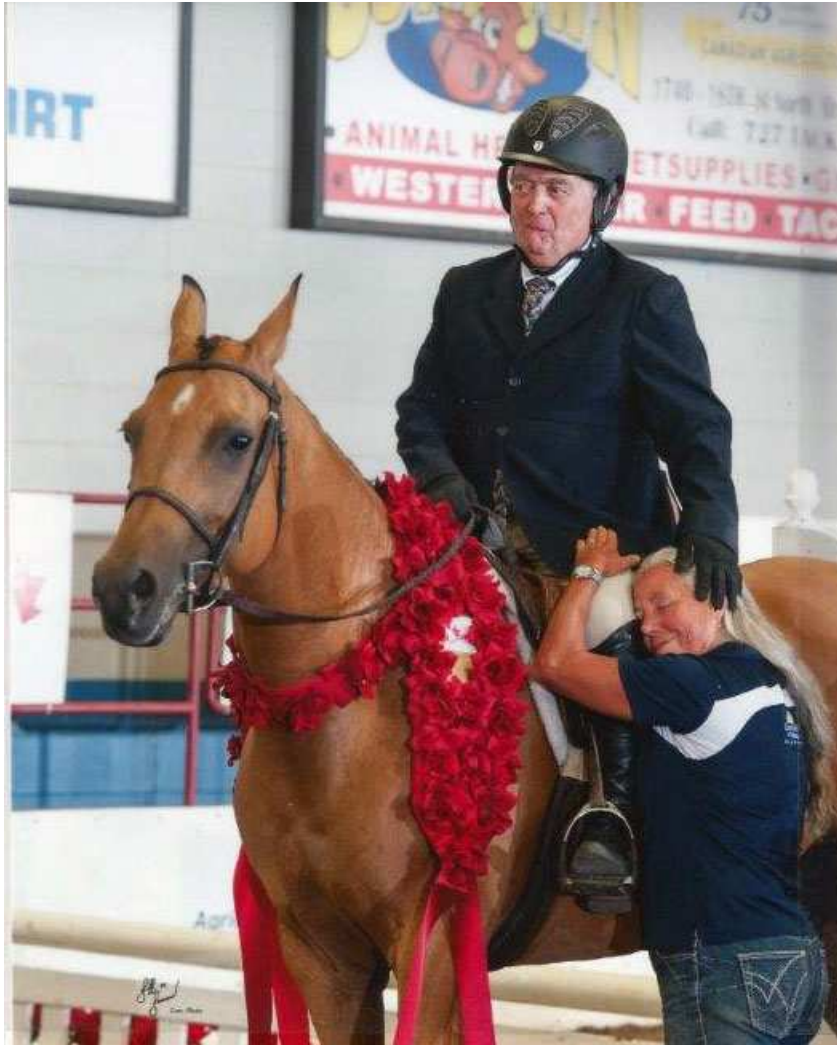
Photo Credit: *Courtesy of Allan Ehrlick*

“The Olympics are a fairy tale that you are so fortunate to participate in,” commented Ehrlick. “The pressure, the skill, the work and dedication are mind boggling. It was a privileged high that you never get over: I was on the national swim team when I was 15 and 16 and played some hockey for Team Canada later on, but it was not the same as riding for Canada at many events.”

While Ehrlick's legacy as a Canadian Olympian is everlasting, the contributions he made to horse sport in the years following 1968 created a parallel legacy that is equally strong. He has five hall of fame inductions to his name and is certified as an FEI Level 2 Jumping Steward, EC Senior Steward for all disciplines, and EC Judge for hunter, hunter hack, hunt seat equitation, and jumping. Furthermore, he has been instrumental to the development of Arabian competitions across North America for the past three decades. Ehrlick served on the AHA Board of Directors for several years, was the AHA Region 18 Director for 16 years on-and-off between 1992 and 2018, and currently serves as AHA Eastern Canada President.

Most recently, Ehrlick was recognized for his contributions to Arabian horse sport at the 2018 National Convention with the National Volunteer Service Award, which he won alongside his wife, Cheryl Smith-Ehrlick. It was Ehrlick's third time winning the award, and Smith-Ehrlick's second.

"The AHA has around 18,000 to 20,000 members, so when you single out two Canadians, it's important," said Ehrlick of receiving the award. "It is a great feeling of appreciation, but to share it with my wife gives it a whole new dimension. I am blessed to be able to pursue my passion and to be married to the divine Cheryl Smith."



Ehrlick has been supported for over 30 years of competing and volunteering by his wife and accomplished horsewoman, Cheryl Smith-Ehrlick. Together, they were awarded the AHA National Volunteer Service Award for 2018.

Photo Credit: Jeff Janson

Despite his busy volunteer and competition schedules and the fact that the 1968 Olympics are now in his rearview, through his continued involvement with Arabians, Ehrlick has kept alive the legacy of the horse that made him fall in love with the breed at the very start: his big grey gelding, The Nomad.