

UK ENDURANCE REVIEW 2008

By Caroline Sussex

The toughest ride in the calendar is undoubtedly the Golden Horseshoe on Exmoor. Many riders do not attempt this course due to the steep inclines, boggy patches, stoney sections and tough conditions. This year, however, the temperature reached 29C, very high for May so the conditions were good on the ground but the high temperatures took their toll on the horses.

The event was recorded on BBC's Countryfile Programme with TV presenter, Adam Henson volunteering to train and ride in the Exmoor Experience class. In the run up to May the programme showed Mr. Henson training under the supervision of Nicky Routledge and then the event itself was televised. Although not riding an Arabian, his presence meant that Exmoor was partying. Lucy Higginson, Editor of the weekly Horse and Hound horse publication in the UK, was present and her editorial in the 22 May issue comments "Few Endurance rides involve the rough and tumble of this one".

Achieving Gold Awards at the Horseshoe is difficult. In the 160K class, Ptolemaeus (Imad x Sunlights Song) achieved a silver award with Anthony Sargent and Ell Kaleefa Rose (Crystal Raj x Melazia) although finishing in Gold time were downgraded to silver as they picked up a penalty at the final vetting.

In the Exmoor Stag (120K) only 3 finished including Karen Jones on her high percentage Crabbet, Dancing Ruzala (Manzala x Dancing Nizzorah) attaining silver. Dancing Ruzala was bred by Kay Firth-Butterfield by the Mikeno son, Manzala out of Rudena so going back in just six generations to Nureddin, Skowronek and Risala (Rissla's dam). Rissalix, who seems to play an important part in endurance pedigrees with his sire Faris who was well known for speed, is in the 4th generation. On the dam side, Ludo is found through Ahmoun and interestingly the granddam Ahmarah is by a horse imported from America, whose pedigree brings in Royal Diamond and the famous Ferzon and Raffles. In fact there are many crosses to Skowronek in this pedigree. Dancing Ruzala is just 14hh, who said small cannot compete at the top?!

In the 80K ride the only gold was awarded to Magic Fire, the 100% Crabbet daughter of famous endurance horse Hachim out of Nishtar. Bred by Anne Brown of Gadebrook Stud Magic Fire is now owned by Joanne Wallis Baga, organiser of the New Forest Rufus Ride and ridden by Kevin Waterman. Fire also claimed the Witham Golden Colonel Trophy for best condition. After excellent progress last year Fire continued her progress achieving 2nd at the Tally Ho and a win at Berkshire Downs in the 40K.

Gold was also given to Auburn Emblem (Nimrood x Silvan Sonnet) in the Exmoor Experience 80K with GC Harris and Steeples Charm (Indargee x Crystal Charm) took silver. Auburn Emblem continued an excellent season with 3rd at the Dukeries and at Ludlow where they were 7th over the same distance.

Newcomer at this level Ali Zahi Khazan (Zahiboud x Blue Al Shakita) competed at rides of 60-80Ks this year and achieved 2nd on 4 occasions including at Wharncliffe Chase, Lindum Spirt, Glenariff Endurance Festival and Brearnish Valley.

Joanne Wallis Baga invented the Rufus Scoring System which is used at the New Forest Ride and at the Marathon for the team event Pleasure Ride. Joanne has made the New Forest event one to take part in with her Discover Endurance Class. The Rufus Formula, means that although horses get vetted and graded subject to EGB rules, the formula is then used to give points on a sliding scale for final heart rate, speed and grade up to a maximum of 100 points and in the event of a tie, the quickest presentation time to the vet is the deciding factor. Joanne believes that everyone wants to win so a competition as part of the ride helps to attract competitors. Karen Jones and Dancing Ruzala achieved the best condition award overall.

The Southern Championships took place at Berkshire Downs famous Ridgeway ride. The feature class was the 160K event with 3 international riders competing. Susan Hawes was riding Jade Rani who was in the lead right up to the final vetgate, but was overtaken in the closing stages to finish an excellent 3rd. In 2007, Susan and Jade had recorded the fastest 160K speed for the British riders. The Tyro class for horses that have never competed in a ride before, at 80K was won by Sue Loveridge with Siiberia averaging 17.5 kph.

The Dukeries Festival of Endurance holds the FEI 160K ride for the Bahrein Cup. This course although fairly flat has twisty tracks and sharp corners which demand careful riding. 3rd placed British Rider was Jill Kent and Bitterwell Spirit (El Crysto x Shadeeka) 7th overall. In the FEI 120K Young Riders class, Laura Short on Summers Place Jumanji (Ganemede x Winter Persephone), last year's EGB Champion, took 2nd place.

The South Downs Festival was wet and windy. Here Cardinal Panache (Manichee x Ashmary) completed the two day 100K class just being edged out to take 2nd. Panache has amassed over 4,500 miles and achieved 11,886 points in endurance. This year he completed the Kings Forest 100K coming 5th, and wins at Firle Park and Bramshill Forest.

The FEI rides were dominated by the Middle Eastern competitors who were training for the World Championships in Malaysia. The Summer Solstice Championships at Cirencester Park were no exception with only one British member finishing in the main event. In the other rides, Christine Yeoman won the 120K with CJ's Gai Forest (Ganemede x Gold Sahri). Ganemede also contains many crosses to Ferzon. See 2007 Endurance Report.

The Middle East did not get it all their own way at Euston Park. The British had a better day with International Rider, Nicky Sherry and Shimmering Blue Jasmine, British team member in 2007, coming in 6th place the best result of the season for her after a serious fall at the Dukeries Ride.

The steep hills of Ludlow in Shropshire is another feature ride with the Eileen Hackett on Starlight of Grangeway (Romac's Son x Rozetta) taking second place in the 80K ride and finishing the season 4th at the Red Dragon. At the Cumbria Challenge,

Lutandorvici came in third with rider Gemma Parkin at a speed of 17.42 K. Lutandorvici also took 7th at Euston Park in the 120K and continued his consistent form from previous years.

Three Rivers ride over the chalk and flint of Salisbury Plain saw Nicky Sherry and Silver Zourra (Khairho x Imperial Zaree) finish 4th in the 90K Opal Dash. Silver Zourra, by the famous endurance horse Khairho out of Imperial Zaree, was bred by Major and the late Cheryl Logan and Khairho's special pedigree already written about in other Journals shows that Khairho's bloodlines will continue to influence the sport into the future.

Sue Speed on Yakamin (Yahmur x Klorinda) completed no less than 13 rides winning the veteran class in a time of 14.53 at Three Rivers and won the farriers award. At the Red Dragon, they won the 80K 2 day at an average speed of 13.1. At Three Rivers Pam Jordan finished 5th on her Appalousie Firefly a gelding by Ibn Hanif out of an unregistered mare.

The big finale of the season is undoubtedly the Red Dragon ride in Wales. The event took place in difficult conditions and the steepness of the first hill as ever took its toll. Sadly Bitterwell Spirit was vetted out lame near the end of the 160K class but Ptoleamus showing his special qualities over hills, won the 80K on Day 2 and was 2nd in the 40K on Day 3. This special horse also won at Margam Park earlier in the season.

New names are Xanthus ridden by E Partington with an excellent win at Bramshill Forest. Xanthus was bred by the Harwood Stud and is by the racing and British National Champion Saker (Ahmoun x Moulton Star) out of Caecilia (Kasadi x Freyr). Taurus of Grangeway won the Open 68K at the New Forest Rufus ride and was 5th at Braemore for B Edwards. Just into advanced is Silver Zharif bred by Hazel Crowle (Masjadi Gold Shadow x Silver Zingara) one to look out for in future as is Next in Line at Grangeway (Romac's Son x Hestar) just coming up from Novice. Rachel Claridge on HS Bezique (Gai Radiant x Gai Beisha) a horse going back to interesting crosses in America including many lines to Raffles. Aurontes, another son of Aurelian out of Roxanna (again Ahmoun in her pedigree), has started upgrading to Open rides with a good win at Lulworth Castle.

Another newcomer to Open was Audashus with a 2nd and 3rd at Cirencester and Windsor Park. Crystal Eyas (100%) by Indian Idyll x Crystal Treasure, continued his excellent progress in endurance with two wins at 40K at Major Oak and Cranwell and placings at Vale of Belvoir and Dukeries; whilst Burnished Pearl, also 100%, returned to endurance this season. Solitaire's Star (Star of the Seasons x Firefly Solitaire) had an outstanding season winning the 80K at Haywood Oaks, and the 66K at the Northern ride with Jill Martin. At Kings Forest he took 4th place in the 100K but sadly went lame at the Dukeries.

Others are Simeric Shoman (Manichee x Mouna Gold), Simeric Shaman (Manichee x Sunset Gold), Shazirre (Zircon Nazeer x Shaleah), Sealeah Myranda (Mystic Gilt x Sealeah) with good results at Ludlow and Red Dragon.

Reported last season was Ryu who continues to progress at advanced level. Ranazak for Jill Talbot by (Kazak Sunburst x Ranaka). Amazing consistency from Rachise (Cochise x Nasrah), Princess Carmara now into open competition. Another move into advanced is Nasita (Imman x Medihah) for rider S Bird.

Marlak Romance continues at the middle distances (Ben Marlak x Sirdar Flyer). Two good wins for Maestros Charlies Boy (Marbon Maestro x Aster Lady) at 50K and another Manichee son, MAS Khadambah ridden by M Lamin-Hourd took 5th place at the 170K Lindum Spirit 2 day ride in the horse's biggest ride to date.

Young rider, Caroline Hawes has taken her mother, Susan's, Koyote (Kamhilo x Eva) and upgraded to advanced this season with a wonderful win at Barbury Castle and 2nd and 3rd at Puddingstone and Barbury Castle. This leaves her brother David competing on the lovely Prince Kahrambeau (Prince Doro x Al Kahira) also achieving advanced level. A Shutt competes with Guisburn Szaleem (Zalim x Shimsha) at middle distance level and Eaglespring (Eaglescliffe x Joys of Spring) was placed no lower than 4th at speeds of 15.5 kph in the 64K rides. Crown Prince of Silver Blue (Silver Satyr x Coronet of Kismet) competed in 14 rides this season and was only lame once at his first 100K ride. The remaining were at advanced level around the 64K mark and included a win at Norfolk. Bint Dhahi (Abu Dhahi x Kashmiri Sapphire) undertook 13 rides this season between 34 and 65K completing and passing every single one.

Silver Linnet (Spirit of Silver x Linet) competed in an amazing 19 rides this season, and was only failed on 2 occasions. The distances covered at one time were not more than 64K's but with CA Fricker, the distances clocked up so far amount to 4920 with points of 10156. What an amazing achievement.

Joanne Wallis Baga's Zaha finished 6th at the Ridgeway Barbury Castle and also came 3rd at the Tally Ho at 60K. However, it was the Marathon that Joanne was really aiming the mare at. Another horse aiming for the Marathon was Gayhanieh's Star (Alistar x Gayhanieh) bred by R Booton and owned by Axele Waldman and Mark Wall and ridden by Axele. They competed this year at Cirencester Park over 65K coming 4th and at the College where they came 2nd over 80K. The pedigree is very interesting. Alistar is by Escapade (Nrav x Ksenia) and goes back to Naseem through Nomenklatura, classic racing lines from Russia, together with Pomeranets through Naplyv with some General Grant thrown in with Karramba who was Polish. The dam side of Alistar contains the blood of Ludo (speed again through Rissalix) and also the straight Crabbet line of Fayrelands Indian Prince by Indian Reflection with the fairly rare line of Leya of Weatheroak. Gayhanieh is by Ibn Hanif (Hanif x Sunset) out of Gayaneh (Count Roland x Folly). Here you see many familiar Crabbet lines, including Silver Vanity, Sirella, Bright Shadow, Silver Gilt, Count Dorsaz, Rithyana with more crosses to Naseem.

The Arab Horse Society Marathon was held on 12th October at the now fixed venue of Larkhill Racecourse where the vetgate, start and finish take place. It was a nightmare day for the organisers as the fog refused to clear for the compulsory 11 a.m. start. The Committee made the decision to start the Marathon at 11.30 and just as the horses were parading for the start, the fog cleared and fortunately for all concerned, Larkhill Racecourse could be seen so the Marathon got underway 33 minutes late. The horses

do one lap of the racetrack and this year took the course in reverse going out onto Salisbury Plain to the west. Bright blue skies and sunshine followed which affected the times of the horses as it was shirt sleeves in 22 degrees.

Gayhanieh's Star came in well ahead of Zaha who was slow on the first circuit. Star went back on the track and went really well until the final section and eventually finished 6th to take a Crabbet award. Zaha went off on her second circuit with a cheer from her crew and crowd and eventually came in 10th place with a completion at her first attempt and awarded a Crabbet and Premium Scheme award.

Two horses competed in the first ever Veteran Marathon. Marthe Kiley-Worthington came over from France with past Marathon winner Oberlix to take the Veteran title from Pam Jordan and Appalousie Firefly but the two put on a marvellous show and gave this special event a good start. Manalix is a Premium Scheme stallion and Appalousie Firely is by Ibn Hanif so the Arab part of her pedigree is well over over 75%.

Regrettably, it is impossible to mention all horses competing. For the purpose of this article, only horses with over 75% Crabbet blood have been mentioned and also only those at advanced level and with at least 2 good completions over 40K. There are many more out there and the most important thing is that the events are fun and people enjoy themselves riding over this beautiful country.