



SERA NEWSLETTER

SOUTHEAST ENDURANCE RIDERS ASSOCIATION

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Presidents Message

It has been quite a year for SERA! We have already had 39 rides at 22 ride sites and with the coming rides we have 18 more rides at 10 ride sites before the ride year is over!! I hope all of you have taken advantage of as many of these as you could. And if you couldn't ride I hope you could be there to help the ride managers and encourage the riders! Some of the coming rides are the Biltmore fundraiser in September, Skymont at the scout reservation, the Barefoot ride at Catoosa, the Bigfoot ride in MS and Sandhills all in October. November has Broxton, Blackwater and Etoniah Gallop.

We also are sanctioning the National Championship Ride at the OD ride site. That is also in October. I definitely hope that some of you will be able to participate in that event as rider or volunteer.

The other big thing is the combined 101/201 clinic hosted by Mike and Ruth Everett at South Mountain State Park in NC. The weather was great, the venue was super and we had a lot of prospective endurance riders learn about endurance riding! Saturday was spent in the classroom learning about getting ready for your first ride, camping with your horse, conditioning, feeding and electrolytes, trail etiquette and much more. There was a pre ride vet check done on the horses late in the evening on Saturday and the ride started on Sunday morning. Riders did a loop of 4 or 6 miles and then came in for a vet check and some riders went back out for a second loop before everybody finishing up in the early afternoon. This was just in time for a hamburger/hotdog cookout where more questions were answered and then we called it a weekend! This is really a great way to get new people involved and educated about endurance.

Remember to consider helping out your organization by running for a position on the board! Call me if you have questions!! Hope to see you down the trail.

Ike



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Nancy Sluys

Hi Folks,

The newsletter is coming out a little late this time but with managing the Iron Mountain Jubilee and getting the horses ready for the AHA



Distance Nationals I had my hands full for a while! But, hey, I'm a volunteer so I figure folks won't mind my tardiness as everyone's life is full of stuff that gets in the way sometimes!

My year on the trail has not quite been what I expected but then again it never is! You just have to roll with it and change course mid stream if needed. Zanie had a little set back earlier in the summer when she tweaked her fetlock (better now!) so I switched my focus over to Able who had been on the back burner. Sometimes it's just easier to ride your steady gal and I was glad for a good excuse to break the big boy out. At Big South Fork he showed what he was made of as he traveled completely alone at the front for most of the 50 miles, keeping a good pace and coming in second. When we were passed a few miles from the finish I chose not to race in as I had hatched out a bigger plan for him by then. He is now going to be my 100 mile mount for the AERC National Championship! Forgoing a win (it would have been my first chance ever at a 50 mile win in AERC) for the bigger picture worked out best for us that day as Able took the coveted best condition award instead!

Happy Trails!! Nancy

Endurance 101/201 Clinic

July 11 & 12 at South Mountains State Park, Connelly Springs, NC.

The informative and successful clinic was hosted by Mike and Ruth Anne Everett and partially funded by SERA. Of the twenty participants, 12 were from NC, 4 from Virginia, 3 from Georgia and 1 from Tennessee. The park provided their modern and comfortable auditorium and conference room for the classroom sessions. Attendees were informed about AERC and SERA and how to join. Lunches and dinners were prepared by Tom and Gale Yarbrough. South Mountains State park offers spacious stalls and outstanding camping facilities with electric hook ups for all campsites with clean and conveniently located showers and restrooms. The clinicians for the event were Ike Nelson, DVM, Claude and Marion Brewer and Stagg and Cheryl Newman. The clinic began on Saturday morning in the park auditorium with introductions and an overview of the sport of endurance riding. The classroom agenda included PPT and topics of “Where to Start?”, “What to Expect?”, “Horse Preparation and Welfare”, “Arriving at Camp”, “The Vet Check”, “The Trail”, “Crew Area”, “Post-Ride Information”, etc. Before and after the clinic sessions, there was opportunity for riding on the park trails.

On Sunday, a mock endurance ride was held. Horses were vetted in on Saturday afternoon. Crew areas, in-timers and vet checks were set up and a ride meeting was held by Mike. On Sunday morning the “ride” began and small groups set off on different trails for short distances led by Stagg, Cheryl, Ruth Anne or Audrey Salisbury. The riders returned to camp to vet through with Ike Nelson and have a 40 minute hold. There was one metabolic pull and two rider options after the

first loop. Riders went back out on a second loop, returned to camp and vetted through to finish the ride. Following the ride, clinic participants enjoyed a delicious meal and a wrap up discussion facilitated by Stagg.

Joe Edwards donated endurance tack to be sold at this event. The proceeds from Joe’s generous gift and donations from two clinic participants were given to South Mountains State Park for trail maintenance.



Harley's Story, continued.....by Jody Buttram

Heart-Throb Hotel, aka Harley is now an endurance horse !!!! After purchasing an unhealthy looking registered Walking horse mare at a flat shod sale in KY back in mid March, and putting 348 very carefully planned conditioning miles on her, she completed the Big South Fork 50 a few days shy of six months of work.

Yes, you can do this sport with your horse, if you work at it. I had originally planned to take Harley to her first competition in Oct. at the Skymont ride. It has nice even loops that come back to camp, no major hill work or deep sand. Just a great first 50 for any horse. But, plans tend to change, and mine are always in motion.

I myself needed to have some 'down time' for a shoulder surgery. I had been putting it off since April to get me through the summer adventure of doing the Big Horn 100. But the doctor didn't want me to wait any longer. So, the plan was to go in right after the AHA Nationals at Big South Fork and get the repair then. Hopefully, I'll be riding again in time to do JD's 100 on Thanksgiving weekend.

But, this messed up my plan with Harley. All summer, we have worked toward the Skymont 50, not BSF. There is a huge difference in the difficulty of the two trails. I had been working Harley at home for distance and steady gaiting, along with teaching her to canter. We had done some hill repeats as well to help build muscles where she is so lacking. But, I hadn't gotten in the longer rides that I wanted, this being because I thought I would have all of September. to get a couple in before Skymont. Because of this, I was thinking I would just do the LD ride at BSF, it's a 30 miler and she would get some good hill work and not get too tired. But, thinking "it's only one more loop" and I could do the 50 was all Joni needed to start talking me into the 50.

Harley had only had one really long training ride, and that was three weeks prior at Rock Bridge Canyon. She did a slow 25 mile ride there, but it was the toughest 25 miles the park as to offer. She had felt that, and was tired on the hills. This worried me more that she would get too tired to get through BSF. BSF is NOT an easy 50, especially when they cross the river. But, Joni assured me, that any horse that can do 25 miles at RBC, and do 50 anywhere else if paced properly. So, I entered.

Harley had never been camping. So, this was all new to her. And there is never a dull minute when you camp with Cash Pony. He managed to get lose the night before the ride and he and Harley had a kicking fight. I was just hoping she didn't get any damage that might cause a problem later. But, come morning light, only found two hoof prints on her side. ;0

She has always been such a good girl, no meanness, but she was very excited that morning with a start of 48 horses. She even tried to bow up and buck, so not like her. The first mile or so, we cantered sideways and up and down like a Pogo stick, but then she settled into a gait. After a few miles I caught up with Alan Cleek riding an Arab that belonged to the Dinkelmans, a girl named Blu on an Arab from Maryland and Alan's rider, Stush, on his Pusher bred TWH. Both Harley and Moses, the other TWH were doing their first 50. Moses had done some LD's in the past, but this was his first try at the 50. So, Harley kinda had one of her own kind then to go along with.

I was riding with a GPS, pacing was a big concern for me, as I didn't want to push her too fast and run out of gas. So, we were trying to average a 5.5-6 mph pace. There were only two vet checks, both away checks on this 50. This meant the horses would be on trail for hours at a time with no food, other than grass. We couldn't spend a lot of time grazing either, because of making sure we had time to get them through.

One of the things Joni was concerned about was whether Harley would relax and take care of herself at the vet check. Harley is a very high strung horse, more so than any of my Arabs. BUT, She was a pro !!! Came in, drank, totally chilled, didn't look for other horses, and ate like a pig. She recovered well all day, moved out great, was perfect. I guess I won't worry about that part any more. She took better care of herself than my 100 mile horse does. Maybe Storme could take lessons from Harley.

First check came and went, all A's with a B on gut. Second loop, and I was thinking her gait would start to get sloppy and she would get tired. Never happened. Alan commented several times during the day that she was gaiting just as nicely as when she started.

Second vet check went pretty much the same as the first. All A's, B on gut, and I left out with plenty of horse left. I did more cantering than I thought I would because there was quite a bit of deep sand. Harley learned to tail up two hills, the last being the climb out of the river gorge. Walking horses aren't named "walking horses" for no reason either....they can WALK. She motored up that climb and we had to wait on the others at the top. Coming into the finish, our group of four moved on out, and we did more cantering on the gravel road coming to the finish. We pretty much turtled, but that's ok. She finished her first 50 and I rode in total comfort and style!



Photo by Becky Pearman

Dr. Otis asked me a couple times during the day if I liked that Walking Horse, YES, I love my walking horse !!!!!

So, can you do this sport with another breed besides an Arab? Yes, but it may require more work than an Arab. There are no short cuts in endurance, but there are even less with a non Arab. I am looking forward to riding Harley in many, many more rides, including 100s. She is such a special gaited horse too, she never broke gait to a pace or a trot. She was willing and forward all day, enough that she made my shoulders sore from holding her back. Drank better than any horse I've ever owned, ate great and took care of herself. What more could you want from an endurance partner???

Hoping to have her on her next endurance adventure as soon as my doctor says, "GO RIDE" !!!!



Photo by Becky Pearman



Limited Distance to 100 miles. Why Not?

By Jenny Fox

I was first introduced to endurance riding by my dear friend, Katie Maddox. She had a four-year-old Arab/App cross and asked if I would ride her in her first endurance ride. We completed the limited distance ride at the Pyramid Challenge held in Lexington, Kentucky in June, 2003. Well, I was hooked! I grew up in the hunter jumper world and was a member of the equestrian team in college but became burned out from being in the show ring. Endurance riding was great! You got to ride all day and camp right next to your horse. I later acquired the Arab/App cross, Winds of Heaven (Windy), from Katie, along with Windy's half-sister, WF Felina, a Pony of the Americas. Once I finished nursing school I decided endurance riding was the sport for me.

I began with a year or so of limited distance rides. I learned more about having a vet check area, what I needed to do to have my horse pulse down, and what attire for myself and my horse worked best. I remember on my first ride someone saying, "if you're going to stick to this sport you'll be wearing something different." Well, they were right! It's comical looking back on that picture of my first endurance ride. I have gone from full chaps to half chaps, Western saddle to English saddle and bosal to halter/bridle combo.

What I enjoy most about endurance riding is that you are able to set goals for yourself and your horse. For me these goals include faster times, longer distances and multi-day rides. I finished multiple 25-mile rides and multi-day rides. We seemed to be doing pretty well so I thought a challenge was in order and entered my first 50 at Million Pines in Soperton, Georgia. I began to shave off time at the vet checks and ride a little faster, sometimes too fast, but always learning. I thought once you're doing 25's fast, it's time to move up to 50's. WRONG! From listening to other experienced distance riders I learned that it is important to pace yourself and get your horse used to being out on the trail so they learn to take care of themselves. I began to slow down and do consistent 50-mile rides. With more time on the trail, more things happen and more things are learned. I realized my saddle no longer fit correctly, I needed breathable tights and discovered skinny stirrups are painful! It was time to make some more changes. I took every opportunity to enter longer distances, multi-day rides and rides that I had not been to. With the longer distances, I improved my horsemanship and began to better understand my horse's needs.



I am continuously working on better balance, being a centered rider, tack fit and simplicity. The longer the distance, the more things can go wrong and you learn what isn't working for you or your horse. Along with goals of achieving longer distances, I learned where improvements needed to be made. For example, if my mare is not eating her hay or grain I learned to take her to a grassy area to see if she will eat. If she is not drinking well with her bit in, then remove the bit. Where I was mentally riding the entire ride before the ride began, I began to ride one loop at a time. I also realized how important it is to have good saddle fit and proper hoof care. My number one goal at every ride is to bring home a sound healthy horse at the end of a ride that looks as if she has done nothing.

I decided to begin limited distance rides on Felina, my POA with a stocky build similar to a foundation Quarter Horse. My husband says she needs a D.O.T. sign on her hind end saying "wide load". I can't count the times I've heard "she's not built for this sport, does she do okay?" Felina does great! I thought Felina would remain my LD horse and that I would try longer distances on Windy but Felina proved us all wrong. She pulses down faster, starts each ride stronger and has learned take better care of herself.

One of my goals each year is to finish all three days on the same horse at the Yellowhammer ride in Alabama. To me this ride is one of the hardest rides in the Southeast. If you complete all three days there, you've done something. After a few years of doing back-to-back-to-back LDs at Yellowhammer I decided to add a 55-mile into the mix. I then decided to try 50-mile rides back to back at other rides. Felina continued to do well at the longer distances. At that point, I felt trying a 100-mile ride was in order, but wanted to see how we did at 75 miles. So I entered the 75-mile ride at Biltmore in 2014. That rascal did great! I finished with a lot of horse, or pony rather, left.

Endurance riding began because some folks decided to see if it was possible to ride 100 miles in one day. Because I love this sport I wanted to do the distance it was founded on. I figured if we were going to do it, it was time to go for! I never would have thought it would be on a 13.3hh, 950lb POA. So the journey began. We entered our first 100-mile ride at Biltmore in 2015. We started at 6:15am and to my surprise we completed our first 100 at 1:30am. At the end of my first 100, if you would have asked me if I would do it again, I would probably have said "no". It was one of the hardest things I have ever done. But now, looking back, surviving and being a stronger, better partner with my horse, you bet ya, we'll try it again!



Moving Up in the Pack- by Nancy Sluys

I am a pacer not a racer. A designation I am very proud of as this philosophy has put me in the top ten at rides numerous times and amazingly enough I rarely pass riders on the trail when accomplishing this. Where I do pass them is in the vet checks by bringing in a horse that is already recovered. By doing this I can gain time over horses that ran in ahead of me and have to be cooled. My style is to get out of camp behind the front runners but before the slower riders so I don't run into road blocks on narrow or steep trail. I find that I soon have the trail all to my self and can gauge the fitness of my horse better than if they are running with the pack. I ride the terrain, walking steep ups and downs and making the best of any flat terrain even if it is only a few strides of trot. I try not to waste any time along the way, maximizing my stops like a bathroom break paired with a water stop or a short break to graze. I also try and find the pace where the horse is most efficient. A strong working trot will get us down the trail in good shape while a big extended trot will build heat in the horse that will be hard to dispel later and cause undue stress on the legs. A canter on a safe part of the trail can go a long way to making up a little time without overtaxing the horse, in fact, when wearing a heart rate monitor, I have noticed that the pulse will actually go down when I put my horse in a relaxed canter.

If I can anticipate where the vet check is (or if it's back at camp) I will slow my pace as I am approaching and get off and walk in the last little way, loosening the girth, as soon as I see the timer. With this method my horses are usually always down to pulse criteria as soon as I pull the saddle off. Sometimes I sponge some water on but quite often they don't even need that unless it is unusually hot or humid, in fact, I have seen my horse's pulse actually go up with cold water sponging. I smile as I pass people frantically sponging or dumping water on their horses to get the heart rate down on my way to the pulse taker because I know I have just moved up in the field.

Doing well at a ride does not necessarily mean a hard fought race to the finish (although there is nothing wrong with that if that is your goal and your horse can do it). My most rewarding rides are when I have ridden the trail to the best of my and my horse's ability while still keeping them within their conditioned fitness range and finishing with a horse who is unquestionably fit to continue!



Photo by Becky Pearman

CAMP OSBORN
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WHERE? Camp Osborn Boy Scout Camp, 480 Camp Osborn Road,
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If you have any questions please feel free to contact either of us at the telephone numbers shown above and we'll be glad to answer your questions. Hope to see you there!

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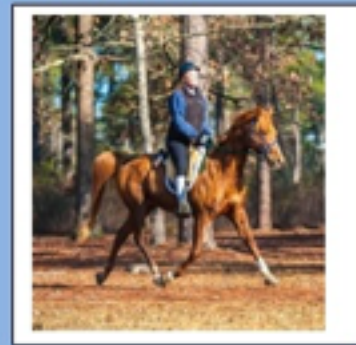


Photo by Nancy Sluys of Becky Pearman in action!

Scenes from Iron Mountain Jubilee



Photos by Nancy Sluys



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Everyone has a tip or a story.
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email- minglewood@surry.net

Deadline for the next issue
October 15
Thank You, Nancy Sluys



Happy Trails!!!