



ABOVE: Tom Qulity Gold Cup winners Meg Wade and Crystal Flyer in 11 hours 28 minutes. *Picture: MYLES COVACEVICH*
Ben Noller on Raa, the best conditioned junior horse. *Picture: MYLES COVACEVICH*



Lightweight winner Midori Yasunaga with Kelkette Park Nadia. *Picture: MYLES COVACEVICH*

Wade wins





Meg Wade with the Tom Quilty Gold Cup and last year's winners Ron Haig and Terry Woods. Picture: MYLES COVACEVICH



Chris Mahoney with Red and Claude Filleul riding Rowallan Paint full of running on section three. Picture: JULIE WILSON

2000 Quilty Gold Cup

Story and pictures by
JULIE WILSON

THE Quilty has become famous for bringing together a unique and diverse group of people from around Australia.

However, the 2000 Quilty had a strong international representation, with riders from Canada, the US, New Zealand, Great Britain, The United Arab Emirates, South Africa and Japan.

This year the global 'Quilty family' gathered in the small Queensland country town of Boonah, 100km south east of Brisbane.

Boonah is 'the heart of the Fassifern Valley' and offers spectacular mountain views of the World Heritage listed Scenic Rim and some of Queensland's highest yielding farmland.

Some international visitors dramatically reduced the large entry of over 300 horses to 252, due in great part to a pre ride 'buying spree'.

The dominance of Australian endurance horses around the world has created a demand for our 'equine marathon runners' which is encouraging and ensures the growth of the domestic sport.

The riders come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life.

Much the same can be said of the horses, although the Arabian and Arabian bred horses dominate.

The common goal is to complete the 160km ride in 24 hours, with a horse declared 'fit to continue'.

The horse's fitness is closely monitored by an expert veterinary panel of 30, gathered from around Australia and overseas.

This year as always, high standards were expected, with only the fittest and soundest horses being allowed to continue.

These experienced endurance riders are masters of horse management.

Other equestrian disciplines could learn a lot from them.

Head of the veterinary panel, Dr Brian Sheahan congratulated the riders "on the way they managed their horses over the tough course", which resulted in a completion rate of 70 percent.

The riders rely on their dedicated strappers who sit for hours waiting and listening to the public address system as to the progress of the competitors through the check points, and like any great pit crew, leap into action to attend to their charges.

The hard volcanic soil, made even harder by the lack of rain combined with several steep climbs made the 2000 Quilty a tough ride.

Veteran Quilty rider Ron Males declared the Boonah Quilty 'the toughest he had ridden'.

Compared with the past few years, the mild weather was kind to faster competitors, however rain and chilling winds late on Saturday afternoon and during the night, made riding very unpleasant for the slower half of the field.

In this event, 'to compete is to win', however, line honours in each section are the motivation for some.

The Quilty Gold Cup was won this year by professional endurance rider Meg Wade riding for the Castlebar team.

Meg completed the course on her nine year old Pure Arabian mare, Crystal Flyer in a riding time of 11 hours and 28 minutes.

Meg emphasised the win was a team effort and not possible without her excellent strapping crew and Canadian vet Jim Bryatt, who flew to Australia just for the Quilty.

The Castlebar team nominated 10 horses, three ridden by overseas competitors, with two, Crystal Flyer in the Middleweight section and Kelkette



Wade clinches Tom Quilty ride

Park Flyer, ridden by Kristy Mc Gaffin in the Lightweight, winning Best Conditioned.

Queenslander Ben Noller riding Race the Wind won the Junior section.

For the second consecutive year, Japanese rider Midori Yasunaga took line honours in the Lightweight section riding Kelkette Park Nadia, a horse supplied by Peter and Penny Toft.

NSW representative, Roy Counsell aboard Kurrajong Srikanth was the fastest home in the Heavyweight section.

On Sunday morning, many trophies were dispensed, however the most treasured trophy of them all was the silver Quilty buckle, awarded to every rider who completed the ride in 24 hours with a horse declared 'fit to continue'.

It was a 'weary' crew who walked, marched, limped or staggered up to receive their buckle. All had achieved the goal for which they have striven for many months, for some a lifetime.

Others will again have the chance to achieve the elusive buckle when the 'Quilty family' meets again next year in Western Australia.



ABOVE: Andrew Mc Nicol and Aden from Victoria competing in the Heavyweight section.

Portrait of a champion... 2000 Tom Quilty Gold Cup winner Meg Wade.

Picture: JULIE WILSON

QUILTY TOP TEN

Middleweight: 1. Med Wade, Crystal Flyer. 2. Dale Cooper, Innesview Desert Mhasa. 3. Linda Meredith, Gidget. 4. Rachel Keys, Ramalea Passion. 5. Mark Haigh, Algona Amstahr. 6. Mark Johnson, Piabun Budjar. 7. Abdullah K Saeed, Endura Starbuck. 8. Jan Tyrrell, Eumerella Rob Roy. 9. Chris Forrester, Charabal Fabian. 10. Philip Haworth, Sawaan Rose.

Heavyweight: 1. Roy Counsell, Kurrajong Srikanth. 2. Michael Carr, Splash. 3. Peter Casey, Hillbrae Roderick. 4. Paul Fitzgerald, Castlebar Talisman. 5. Craig Renner, Lentara Park Jobe. 6. Barry Thurlow, Sharahd Mopani. 7. Tim Weismann, Kabeesa. 8. Ron Guascoine, Harb Wind-Haiya. =9. Alwyn Torenbeek, Once Only. =9. Ced Fry, Roxborough Imprint.

Lightweight: 1. Midori Yasunaga, Kelkette Park Nadia. 2. Krist McGaffin, Kelkette Park Fyre. 3. Alicia Henry, Allamir Silver Phantom. 4. Naomi McGaffin, Omani Coraz. 5. Janet Hurt, Bern. 6. Mel Longhurst, Narmond Silver Gift. =7. Sharon Mathers, Kynnum Park Winter Wind. =7. Sonya Ryan, Abrock Ned. 9. Cynthia Carr, Beckett. 10. Fiona Green, Escort Silver Chrystal.

Junior: 1. Ben Noller, Race the Wind. 2. Georgia Combe, Myahna Melodoura. 3. Tulsie Combe, Dor Eleanor Park Mardi Mo. 4. Jessica Kennedy, Birdwood Tambourine. 5. Thomas Wilde, Spook. 6. Joanne Barsby, Sumna Jai. 7. Amily Davidson, Rimsanet Park Icehouse. 8. Rach, Trevarthen Prophet. 9. Mitchell Teuwsen, Tequila Sunrise. 10. Hailey Roberts, Ishantar.