

NEWSFLASH
2003 QUILTY WINNERS

Meg Wade & Kristie McGiffin -
1st Overall.
Jody Knowles - 1st Junior
"4 Castlebar trained and ridden
horses, first over the line".

Endurance

Meg Wade is one of the most successful international endurance riders in Australia. Already this year she has competed in the United Arab Emirates and finished second in the New Zealand National Championship and is on target to compete later this year in the Open European Championship in Ireland.

Last year rides in Europe featured strongly in her build up to the World Championship in Spain where she finished fourth on her home bred Castlebar Treaty.

Wade has been in endurance riding since 1988, although horses were very much part of her life the marathon aspect was even more so, in cross-country eking and long distance Kayak racing. So how did endurance riding take over? "A vet came to my parents farm to do the horses teeth and he started talking about endurance riding. It was not a well known sport then. He mentioned he was going to do a 160km ride at Colo west of Sydney, over a similar course to the original Quilty, would I like to go. It sounded wonderful and it was".

I thought "this is the sport for me", Wade was hooked and in 1988 she started with a 40km training ride, then tackled an 80km ride, completed the Quilty and the two day 250km Winton to Longreach ride. A pretty impressive start, but as Wade explains her other sports had many similarities. Both were distance sports, marathons on a one to one basis. In both these sports, Wade had to pace and train herself over distance exactly how you ride your horse in endurance.

"I don't think there is anything particularly clever about it, it is just planning. I also knew about heart rate monitors as we used them on ourselves, we weren't using them on horses then, but when that came in I had a head start." Although it was just a hobby in those days, Wade was always out to improve. I was successful from the very beginning. I was getting placed regularly. I was good at it, now it is not only my sport but also my business, when I go to a ride it is not only my horse, but maybe up to ten I have to monitor.

Going back to basics, what is Wade's picture of the ideal endurance horse? "First the overall impression then I break it down. A decent front, length of rein, and a well set neck on a good width of chest. I don't like too long a pastern, on the other hand I don't particularly like a too upright pastern, but I could live with that. They must have good feet and be not too long in the back. Length of hip and a good back end are important and they must make at least 15 hands. I can forgive a lot of things if they are nice to ride i.e. a good walk and a good canter. Back at the knee is another big no no, but pigeon toes, well there's an old saying that says they are very sure-footed horses."

On the competitive side the yard is in action 12 months of the year, there is rarely a time that horses are not out competing. To ensure her protégés are slowly and correctly advancing their endurance experience, Wade has a strong base of employed riders, something like professional jockeys, they help with the groundwork on the young horses. Wade does the work diary each night, allocating riders to horses and the detailed work for each horse. Before and after exercise she watches each horse being trotted up, nothing is left to chance.

With up to thirty in work, Wade finds the majority of her time tied up in the organisation and regrets she has less time to ride out. "I have good people working for me that give me excellent feedback, it's so important." Wade competes both Nationally and Internationally in the region of forty events each year. If you consider that some of these are multi day rides and add on travelling time, which is great even within Australia, it is easy to see that Wade's life is endurance. "I didn't just want to do the sport at a domestic level. I did have aspirations pretty early of doing it in a bigger way, but no one would have believed that in a few years the globalisation of endurance riding would happen on such a large scale".

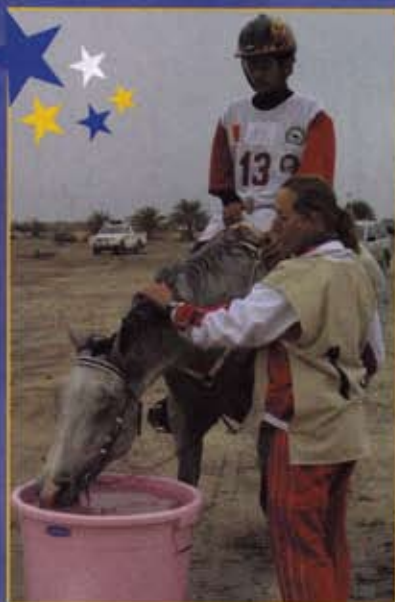
AUSTRALIAN HORSES IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The Middle East have been holding endurance rides since 1993 where the first ride was held to establish which was the superior animal, horse or camel. The 38km ride was held in Dubai, UAE (United Arab Emirates).

The horses won hands down with twelve crossing the line far ahead of the overwhelming number of camels. The following year the State of

Photo: Gary Wheeler

Riding with Meg Wade



Qatar staged their first international Desert marathon over 42.2km, the original Olympic marathon distance. The horses used for this race and other races in the early days were mainly off the track with some local Arabians and some throw outs from the show ring. It was obvious that both these desert countries had become engrossed in this sport which bonded so strongly with their heritage.

It was the show ring that led the Middle East buyers to Australia. The Arabian Horse Show in Qatar had established itself internationally, not only did it attract international breeders, but also the international media, one of whom was Australian. The late

Pat Slater was the catalyst in educating the Qatari buyers to the outstanding qualities of Australian Endurance horses. The spin off was Val Bunting the lady behind the Qatar marathon's purchasing the first Australian endurance horse for Qatar. Bunting was then the manager of Umm Qarn Farms for Qatar's Prime Minister. Here they not only trained Arab racehorses, but also bred them and had some outstanding bloodlines. It was therefore important to Bunting that any purchase would also excel in the breeding shed, her purchase from Meg Wade and Chris Gates Castlebar Stud in Burrowye was the stallion Arkab Mahran, bred by John Mathieske.

The first Australian breeder to ship horses to the UAE was Ron Males from his Ravlon Stud. This came via an introduction to HE Sheikh Rashid Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan who was a very successful racehorse owner in Australia. Although he had never been to an endurance ride Sheikh Rashid was keen to get involved and purely on recommendation purchased two horses both bred and trained by Males. At that first Desert Marathon in Qatar in 1994, they both lived up to their reputation. Roynaz ridden by his owner was second and Palexis was third, ridden by Males.

In 1995 the number of Australian horses at the start of the Qatar marathon had increased. American Daryl Duncan, the racehorse trainer to HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Khalifa Al Thani, had followed in the footsteps of Bunting and approached Wade.

At the end of 1994 she shipped two horses to his Al Shahania stable that made a promising debut in the 1995 Marathon. Third place went to Belvedere Laska ridden by Wade and second place to Jangary Ginson who went on to win the ride the following year. News spreads fast in the Middle East and HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the force behind endurance riding in the UAE, had sent his man, Bill Smith, to observe the Qatar race, hence the liaison between Wade's Castlebar Stud and HH Sheikh Mohammed was formed. In 1997, the last year the Marathon was staged in Qatar, Wade was once again in the line up this time on HH Sheikh Mohammed's Jebel Ali whom Castlebar had recently shipped

to the UAE. Wade finished second on the part bred Jebel Ali and scooped the coveted award for best condition.

The 1998 World Championships were held in Dubai and due to its benevolent sponsorship to all the participating countries, opened the door to a wider entourage of Australian endurance riders and breeders. By now the UAE was centre stage in the rapidly expanding sport of endurance with its continual promotion and participation in all corners of the world.

This had set the market for endurance horses on an ever upward spiral, prices had rocketed from a few hundred dollars to many thousands and a new breed was emerging, the professional endurance trainer. Many of the leading UAE stables were opting to leave the younger horses they had purchased in the country of origin and let them be brought on slowly, shipping them out when they were ready to hit the bit time. Three names, which have featured prominently in this scheme, are Wade, Toft and Sample. Since the infant years of endurance in the UAE, this trio has made a very worthy contribution to the shipment of top class Australian endurance horses to the UAE.

Both Peter Toft and Brook Sample have spent time there as trainers, whereas Wade has concentrated more on preparation within Australia and continues to produce top quality horses for HH Sheikh Mohammed. For the last 8 years she has carefully used HH Sheikh Mohammed breeding stock with the best Australian bloodlines. The first of these have successfully completed 120km rides, Tulgar an Anglo Arab by Tribal and Blue Diamond, a part bred filly by Kevlon Park Kentucky.

HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid has by far the largest stable of endurance horses in the world. From a stable that captures the best bloodlines in the world Australian horses have stood proud, both at National and International level. Looking at the summary of the UAE's International success in Group One events, Australian bred horses rank Supreme. The 2001 open European Championship held in Italy was won by "Provocative" an ex Wade horse and joint winner of the 2001 Gully. In the 160km President's Cup 2003, in the UAE, 11 out of the 25 who finished were Australian horses, this dominance further ensuring Australian horses as number one on the international endurance scene.

... story by Gilly Wheeler 2003.

Much of the success of Meg Wade's Castlebar Horses can be attributed to the input of her Veterinarian Dr. Bill Harrison and the formulation of a specific feed based on the Kentucky Equine Research - KER - nutrition programme and the use of KER products. Dr. Peter Huntington of KER has a great interest in Endurance and the company specifically researches and formulates products for the Endurance discipline. She is thankful for the support of KER - Dr Peter Huntington and Dr Bill Harrison of Gwaler - SA for her continued success.



