

**NEWSFLASH**  
**2003 QUILTY WINNERS**

Meg Wade & Kristie McGaffin -  
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