

Old Dominion 25/50/75/100

BY GENIE STEWART-SPEARS

The weather for the 32nd Annual Old Dominion Endurance Ride, held June 9 to 11 in Front Royal, Virginia, more than made up for last year's overwhelming heat and humidity. Riders were wearing jackets and putting rump rugs on their horses in the morning and evening. A total of 138 riders participated, some for the first time because they wanted to view the course that would be part of the AERC National 50- and 100-Mile Championships in October.

Melissa Ribley, DVM, Veterinary Committee chairperson and her husband Robert, chairperson of the National Championship Committee, flew in from California for the event. Melissa was the head veterinarian and Robert was loaned a horse to ride the 100-mile course. Robert, unfortunately, was eliminated at 79 miles, at the Pickett Springs vet check, located at the base of Sherman's Gap.

But, Robert reported, "The OD trail is very scenic—pretty vistas and the trees should be beautiful in the fall when they change color. The trail is challenging with rocky terrain and quite a number of climbs. There is plenty of water on the trail. The OD group is a very welcoming group of people and put on a well-organized, great ride."

**June 9 & 10, 2006
Front Royal, Virginia
Northeast Region**

"My best advice for the AERC National Championship riders," said Robert, "is to have a good shoe job on your horse with either pads or other means of sole protection. This is very important due to the rocky terrain of the ride. This

is a ride where your competitor will be the trail, not the other riders."

50-mile

First to finish in the 50 was



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was first as well as at Liberty Hall [fourth vet check]."

"I had no thoughts of winning," she continued. "I did ask God if I could finish top ten and Bubba earn best condition. But I am happy if we come in 20th or 30th and he is healthy."

Nearly 19 minutes later, Amie Chenault completed on Zeek. Sharon Becker completed on Twister in 7:34. Fourth to finish was Katrina Geier on Donovan, who earned best condition with a ride time of 7:49.

Team competition is offered and "3 Good Legs" took first place: Allan Noble on HC Tiger, Lisa Delp riding Eden, Catherine Peloquin on Four-miles Kuna and Brenda Senseney riding JP Jackpot. Only the top three finishers' times are counted and the three winning team riders had a combined course time of 26:58.

The "Old & New" team earned second-place with a 27:53 course time. Those team members were: Paula Brown, Electronic; Lynne Gilbert, GM Chagall; Debra Ambrose, Kaylyp-So; and Kristin Waters Wise, who was unable to complete on Karis Conquest.

Sixty-five riders started and 50 completed.

75-mile

After being a hair's breadth away from dying on the trail during competition at a Northeast Region ride in 2004, Sue Green-

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Mary Murphy, who hails from Fort Valley where a lot of the OD trail traverses the George Washington National Forest. Mary's horse, Bubba O, carried her over the 50-mile course in 6:54.

Mary has ridden the 50-mile course six times and won it in 2001 riding GM Mystical. This year, she said, "I was eighth into the first vet check, but Bubba lost a shoe and another shoe had to be reset so I went from fifth to eighth at the second vet check. Then at McCoy's Ford [third vet check] I

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Crossing the Shenandoah River are, from top to bottom, 25-mile participant Mike Condor on Amber, 75-miler Nancy Kain on Pyter Gunn, and 100-mile rider Daryl Downs on BG Aashar.

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all claimed victory on the 75-mile course. Greenall was riding OXB Tyger Dann, the same horse that flipped over on her nearly two years ago, breaking her neck and three ribs, puncturing a lung, dislocating a shoulder and fracturing three vertebrae in her neck.

"If it hadn't been for my helmet and the quick thinking of my riding partner, Kathy Brunjes, who gave me mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, I doubt I would have survived," said Greenall.

Overcoming difficulty is what endurance is all about and what helps make horses and riders tough in everyday challenges. "I was simply determined to get back on my horses," stated Greenall.

She completed the course in 12:33 and Tyger earned the best condition award.

Five minutes later, Kathy Eichelberger completed on Daretudreamm. Susan La-Brush finished three minutes later.

Twelve riders left the starting line and nine crossed the finish line. The last two riders, Kimberly Firestone and Nancy Kain, completed one second apart with ride times of 14:37.

100-mile

Veteran endurance rider and yet another local (from Star Tannery, Virginia), John Crandell III earned victory on the 100-mile course in 14:27 minutes. He was riding his dad's horse, Heraldic. Daryl Downs, last year's winner, pursued Crandell and



Old Dominion ride veterinarians (left to right) Doug Shearer, Melissa Ribley, Elaine Kellner, Kathy Broaddus and Debbie Hadlock, with guide Jean Whitman, prepare to take on Sherman's Gap.

Veterinarians take to the trail in demo ride

Several days prior to the Old Dominion 100, Lani Newcomb, DVM, organized an approximately 16-mile ride for any veterinarian inclined to sample the Old Dominion trail. Led by Jean Whitman and Kathy Broaddus, DVM, four vets—Melissa Ribley, Debbie Hadlock, Eileen Kellner and Doug Shearer—saddled up to ride up and over Sherman's Gap, up Veach Gap, along Little Crease, and back down Sherman.

Although Kellner and Shearer turned back after reaching the top of Sherman's Gap, Shearer stated, "It is a tough ride and you have got to know that. It is rocky, and you are going to need shoes and pads if you want to ride competitively. The rocks shift, making it hard not just on the horse's feet, but on their ankles and everything else too. You have to know where to make time and where you can't. It is a strategic ride and you have to recognize where you can go fast and where you better not go fast.

"Except for the rocks, I didn't think Sherman's Gap was any worse than other places, such as the mountains in Vermont, that I've ridden," he added.

As an eventer as well as a veterinarian specializing in cardiology, Debbie Hadlock, of Long Island, New York, said, "The ride left me with the impression that endurance is indeed an extreme sport, full of inherent danger and one must be very prepared physically, emotionally and mentally. Plus, one must have their horse very well prepared. Since I've done a number of athletic equine endeavors, I had some concept of what endurance horses and riders were up against. But, until I actually rode on that terrain, I didn't have as great of perception and appreciation for what the horse had to do as I do now."

Melissa Ribley stated, "The horses need to have enough muscle strength to carry themselves through the rocks."
—GSS

crossed the finish line nine minutes later.

Crandell, Downs and Pam Karner rode together through the Hickory Hollow vet check. "I took the lead about five or six miles out of Hickory Lane [the 50 mile point]," explained Crandell the next day. "They tried to

catch up with me at the most difficult spots, climbing in the heat, after Edinburg. Not the biggest climb, but one that you do in the hottest part of the day. It is a difficult time to catch up with someone, even though I was only a minute or two ahead. My horse was consequently fresher-legged as we crested that peak," enthused Crandell "There are several miles of nice moving-out road. So I left them pretty easily right there. Without really even trying, I had 20 minutes on them at the next vet check."

Daryl stated, "We got to the ATV trail, which is right after Hickory, and the sun started beating down. I didn't want to waste my horse. I needed to complete the 100 miles to qualify for the National Championship ride. I wanted to ride smart and see where it got me. John is not a pushover, so I wasn't going to try to get him. He has won this six times and I've only won it once. I have a lot to catch up."

Unfortunately, Karner's horse was eliminated at 79 miles, before climbing over Sherman Gap.

Thirteen of the 25 competitors completed with Miriam Anver earning the turtle award on Tams Lil Clipper. Her ride

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time was 20:26. But she wasn't alone. She was in the company of Marie Threadgill, Jody Rogers-Buttram and Jody's 11-year-old daughter, Joni Buttram. The four riders completed just a second apart.

Threadgill, Buttram and her daughter had never ridden the OD course. They entered for fun, plus the Buttrams wanted to get a preview of the trail for the National Championship. Jody said, "We could hopefully get Old Dominion 100 completions, and see what we were jumping off into for the national championship in the fall. It was well worth the trip. The trail certainly lived up to the reputation that we had heard; we were not disappointed with the hills or rocks, especially the rocks!

"The ride for the horses was great," she said. "All three horses did one of their best rides ever. They looked great, felt great all day, and never got tired."

Pre-riding the course gave Buttram the knowledge of which of her four horses will do best on the 100- and the 50-mile championship courses. She is glad she went and plans to come back to the OD. After all, she must—she won an entry!

The "True Grits" team of Marie, Judie and Joni, along with Judie Ricci, who was unable to complete because she lost her horse during the first vet check, won the team award.

The Riccis should get an award for effort. "At McCoy's Ford vet check," explained Judie, who was riding with her husband Pete, "the horses pulsed down immediately and were vetted. I gave Pete the horses so I could use the porta-potty. When I came out, the horses were running away. Pete said he tripped over a bucket and the horses got loose and tore out of there."

With assistance from a number of people, including members of the sheriff's department, the horses were tracked and eventually found five miles away. Judie's horse was found in less than an hour but it took another two hours to locate Pete's horse. The horses were in good shape so Judie and Pete regrouped and attempted to reach the second vet check. They were 30 minutes past the cut-off time and were eliminated from the competition.

Limited distance

On Friday, 48 riders started the 25-mile limited distance course and 36 completed. Completion times ranged from 3:34 to 5:26.