



Thespurofthemoment and owner Cat Carter (left) drive for the finish line to win the Indian Territory Endurance Ride and Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Ride. Photo by Susan Thomas.

A colorful finish

Cat Carter and Thespurofthemoment sweep the 2008 National Championship Endurance Ride.

A hundred yards from the finish line, five horses emerged from a scattering of Oklahoma black-jack oak trees and drove towards the finish line on a dusty, sandy, rutted two-track road. Less than two seconds separated the loud-colored Appaloosa from four Arabians.

Cat Carter and her Appaloosa gelding, Thespurofthemoment, raced 50 miles in six hours and 31 minutes to win the Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Ride held in conjunction with the Indian Territory Ride on October 4, 2008, at Lake Carl Blackwell near Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Cat and "Spur" were declared overall winners of not only the Appaloosa championship, but of the entire American Endurance Ride Conference-sanctioned event, which is open to all breeds.

Second place Appaloosa honors went to the 2002

mare Waps Blackcherry, owned by Jeff Hartman of Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, and ridden by his daughter Shilo Vanhart of Tyrone, Pennsylvania. The team finished with an official time of seven hours and twenty two minutes.

Karen Gerken of Eolia, Missouri, mounted on her 1995 gelding DKG Prince Aristo, finished third and Lucie Hess of Columbia, Missouri, on Coke Straw Lahaam, aka "Spanky," finished fourth. They posted times of 9:43 and 9:44, respectively.

Additional honors

In addition to finishing first overall, Spur was awarded the prestigious George Hatley Cup, a perpetual trophy that is presented to the Appaloosa that finished the race in the best condition. Leon Self

— { By Marsha Hayes } —

DVM, official ride veterinarian, based his determination on heart rate, metabolics and soundness, as well as demeanor indicating a willingness to continue.

"He's a very mellow horse, a very happy camper," says Cat of 13-year-old Spur. Cat, of Reisterstown, Maryland, bought the horse from her neighbor, who went to a cattle auction and bought the yearling colt "on the spur of the moment."

A natural athlete

At mile 42 during the race, Cat and Spur were first into the final vet check and mandatory 45-minute rest break.

Endurance rides are often won or lost at vet checks because the horse must pulse down to the veterinarian's set heart rate before their "hold" time can start.

The Oklahoma afternoon sun was out and fall temperatures had climbed to nearly 80 degrees. Cat chose to lead Spur into the check point where her friends and traveling companions Kim and John Lyttle were waiting to strip Spur's tack and sponge him with cool water. Within minutes his heart rate had dropped, indicating he was a natural athlete in great condition.

While Spur munched alfalfa hay and other delicacies his pit crew offered, Cat refreshed herself with a sports drink.

When asked what makes Spur, who finished second at last year's Appaloosa National Endurance Championship, such a good endurance horse, Cat explains, "He likes the trail. He likes the scenery. And he likes the company."

As their hold time ticked away, Spur methodically refueled and Cat watched her horse for any signs of stress. Asking the time, Cat tipped a can of peaches to her lips

and drank the liquid. Rising strong, she saddled Spur up for the final eight-mile loop.

Impressive Appaloosas

Endurance is not without its heartbreaks. Cat's original ride plan called for her to ride with Kim Lyttle on Khans Magic Piper. After hauling nearly 1,300 miles from her home in Berryville, Virginia, "Magic" checked in slightly lame and Lyttle's role as riding companion abruptly changed to crewing for her friend.

Jeff Hartman started the race at dawn on his 1995 mare Varre Blackcherry and rode with Shilo, but was pulled at mile 25 due to his mare's slight lameness. But Shilo's second place win on Waps Blackcherry, a daughter of Varre Blackcherry who is by his stallion Navarre Khan, left him happy.

"Jenner" Brunk of Weyers Cave, Virginia, and 16.2-hand gelding Djangos Guitar, were pulled at mile 42 when "Djangos" back was found to be sore. "I feel like I failed him," says Jenner, who felt she'd injured *her* back Friday night before the ride when she slept holding one of her two Irish Setters, comforting the dog during a short thunder and lightning episode.

"I do endurance as a sideline," notes third place finisher Karen. "My ultimate goal is to trail ride in all 50 states."

"This was my first championship ride as a competitor and I'm thrilled to have finished," adds Lucie of her fourth place completion.

Seven Appaloosas presented at check-in and six started the event. Four finished the entire 50 miles. "I'm so impressed with the Appaloosas," says ride manager Susan Young. 🐾

First-place winners Cat Carter and "Spur," left, and second-place finisher Waps Black Cherry and Shilo Vanhart (bending) share a four-minute overlap at the final crewing point. Photo by Marsha Hayes.

