

ANCER 2018

(Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Ride)

Submitted by Shannon Alvey

As an avid Appaloosa trail rider, I have to admit that I get a bit starry eyed when I see scenes from Cougar Rock on the Tevis Cup Endurance Race, especially those that have Appaloosas in them. What trail rider doesn't seek an adventure and a challenge of such epic proportions and what Appaloosa rider doesn't cheer for their underdogs of the Equine World? I was casually perusing the ApHC website in search of upcoming trail rides when I discovered the Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Race on October 26 in beautiful Henryville, Indiana, and I could hardly contain my excitement until the event. Clark State Forest and Deam Lake in Indiana may not seem as challenging or as epic as the Tevis Cup, but to me, a nearby Hoosier that has logged many miles of trails on her Appaloosas in that area, I was possibly even more excited and starry eyed that I would get to witness it so close to home on familiar trails.

Thursday, October 25, dawned a beautiful sunny fall day. Unfortunately, the weather prediction was not as pleasing for Friday. I pulled into camp located at Bill Wilson's Ranch in Pekin, Indiana, a little before 6 p.m. Seeing small gatherings of "spots" made me "giddy" for what was to come on Friday despite the rainy cold weather forecast! You see, I'm usually the only person with multiple Appy's in a horse camp...or at least I'm the minority for sure but there were 9 Appaloosas gathered to compete and they stood out in the crowd. ANCER is just a small part of the Arabian Horse Association Distance Nationals, three days of endurance racing that included 25 mile, 50 mile, 100 mile and CTR rides with six different breeds competing. The Arabian / Half Arabian, Akhal Teke, Paso Fino, Shagya Arabian, Morgan, and Appaloosa all were well represented with what seemed to be a large attendance. After listening to the ride meeting, speaking with Lucie Hess at registration and investigating the trail maps, I plotted my course for some photo opportunities the next day and hit the hay.

I would like to say we got to rise and shine Friday morning, but that was hardly the case. The misty drizzling rain provided few photo opportunities as the competitors rode out of camp before dawn. I took what I could get, then jumped in the truck and headed down the road to the first spot I had picked out on an overlook between camp and the Deam Lake trail. The first loop was 15 miles and I was amazed at how quickly they made it to my location. In the deep fog, I could hear the hoofbeats coming down the trail and then the shapes would materialize in the mist and I waited to spot the Appaloosas. Spirits were high as the riders thundered past with wide smiles and ground-covering strides. I was so



Appy Trails Images

Patti Jo Duda HO's Cherokee Summer E. (Cherokee)



Appy Trails Images

Rachel Land Chips First Dance (Tawny)

impressed at the positivity despite the constant rain but it was still early with no chance of the rain letting up. Although the overlook was not very spectacular due to the thick fog and mist, I did get some good pictures and decided to head to my next spot to set up for the return on the second 15-mile loop which I knew very well.

Dry Fork Loop is a challenge on a dry day. One of the most rigorous trails in Indiana and possibly one of the top 5 challenging trails I have ever ridden, marked with a sign at the beginning warning that it is "VERY RUGGED: Experienced riders only"; this not an exaggeration. As I waited in my dry truck, I tried to imagine covering that 15-mile stretch of trail in the rain over the rocks and ledges and steep inclines at the speed they were traveling. I was a little envious as the riders came one by one down the trail and



Jeffery Hartman Bombay Ghazi Khan (Ghazi) He is holding the George Hatley Memorial Trophy for the Best Condition Horse)



Deb Searle Sultann Sundance (FL Moonlight Magi)



Patti Jo Duda HO's Cherokee Summer E. (Cherokee)

I witnessed the joy still lighting up the faces, felt the thrill of the competition and the pride in the success of just completing the strenuous loop and conquering it's obstacles. The third and final loop, 30 miles long, covering the scenic Pekin Saddle Club loop and traversing the grueling, aptly named Mountain Grove Loop, came as daylight hours were dwindling.

After a short stop in camp snapping a few pictures of vet check in and a pause at the Pekin Saddle Club, I headed to the finish line and waited in my nice dry truck for the chance to catch a few pictures of the riders crossing the finish line at 4 p.m. Some had been out for more than 10 hours in a constant downpour, yet I could feel the sheer joy and monumental pride and relief that they had as they finished the 50-mile course successfully. I was envious and wished that despite the miserable conditions, I could have been along for the ride. I can certainly see how endurance racing could be the thing that hooks your soul—the thrill of the ride which is so much more than just a speed event since the horses must pass safe and sound vet checks after every loop. A competition that is way more than just rider against rider. It's one's ability to conquer the elements and obstacles along the trail while keeping your equine

partner healthy and sound, but to do so with such zest and spirit was very inspiring to this "charmed spectator."

As others were sitting down to the meal, some were still on the trail 12 hours later in the pitch dark. I admire and respect their conviction. I unable to get pictures of their finish but I could hear them ride into camp, others cheering their success as the vets





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Belinda Cook BF Four By Four (Topa)



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Front rider Patti Jo Duda HO's Cherokee Summer E. Rider behind Belinda Cook BF Four By Four (Topa)



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Kerry Lowrey Westwind Wild Fancy (Takoda)



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Rachel Land Chips First Dance (Tawny)



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Rider on the left Julie Figg Bask In My Pizzaz (Pizzaz) Rider on the right Jeffery Hartman Bombay Ghazi Khan (Ghazi)

checked them in. Nine Appaloosas rode out; all finished with flying colors and compliments from the other breeds. Three of the Appaloosas were half-Arab and placed second, third, and fourth in the half-Arab Division. Saturday morning I got to meet & photograph Bombay Ghazi Khan and Jeffery Hartman as he was informed that he had won Best Condition and the George Hatley Award for the third time. Thank you to all who competed and finished, and thank you for the rookie inspiration that just might spark a new sport for me and my Appaloosas as we thunder into 2019.

Final Appaloosa Results:

- 1: Kerri Lowrey riding Westwind Wild Fancy (Takoda)
- 2: Jeffery Hartman riding Bombay Ghazi Khan (Ghazi)
- 3: Julie Figg riding Bask In My Pizzaz (Pizzaz)
- 4: Rachel Land riding Chips First Dance (Tawny)
- 5: Patti Jo Duda riding HO's Cherokee Summer (Cherokee)
- 6: Belinda Cook riding BF Four by Four (Topa)
- 7: Deb Wisniewski Searle riding Sultann Sundance (FL Moonlight Magi)
- 8: Trish Harrop riding LT Bright Patch Joker (Joker)
- 9: Cat Carter riding AS Cookies N Cream (Cookie)

Best Condition — George Hatley Memorial Trophy
Bombay Ghazi Khan, rider Jeffery Hartman

NOTE: The 2019 Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Ride will be Friday, October 25, near Vinita, Oklahoma. Visit www.appaloosa.com for full details. 🐾