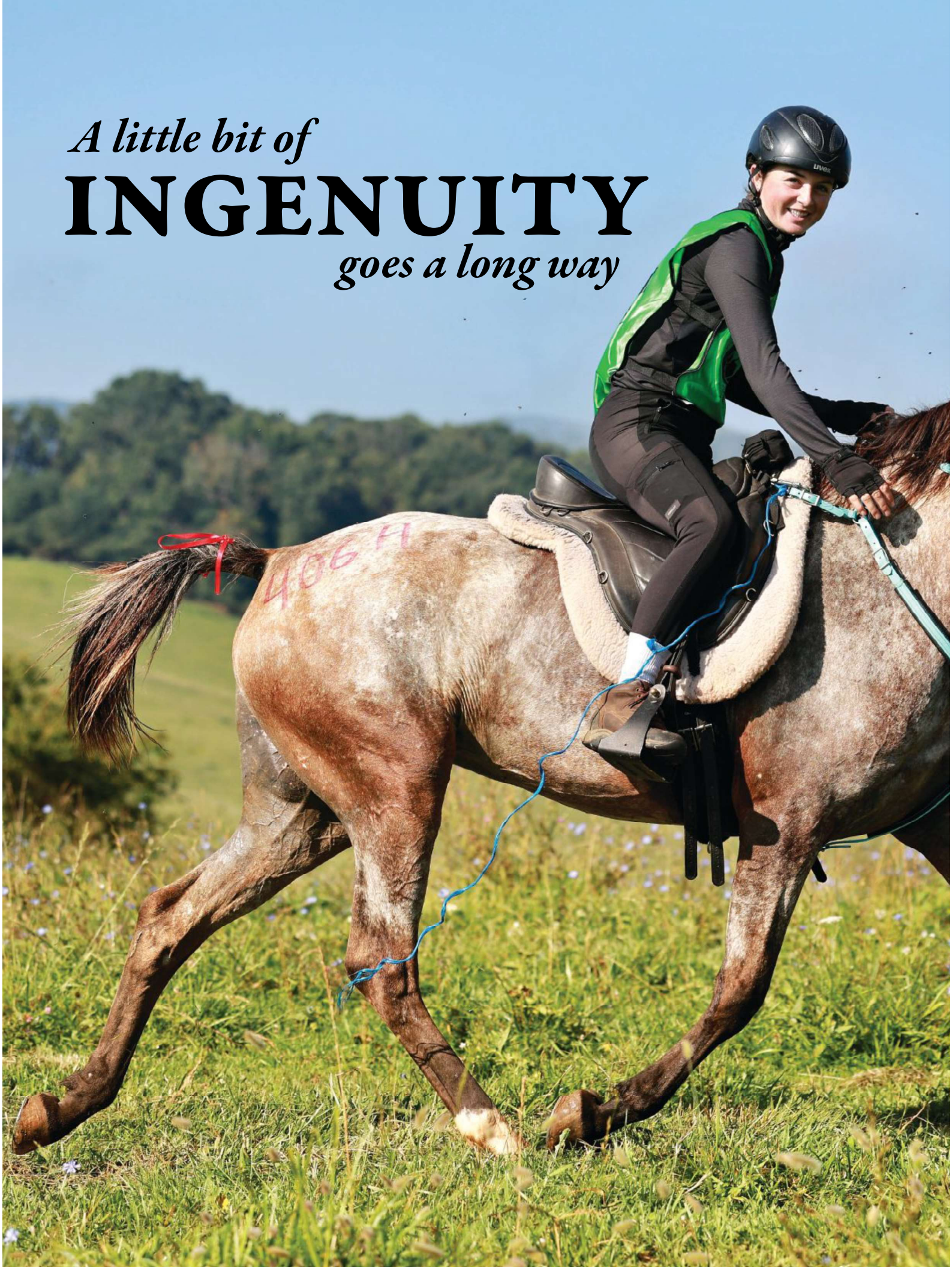


# *A little bit of* INGENUITY *goes a long way*

2024 ANCER & ANCCTR

# Appaloosa distance riders compete at the Iron Mountain Jubilee

Story by Rachel Daugherty
Photos by Becky Pearman

RSD Encore Majjic placed first in the ANCER 50-mile ride with Alicia Guilloux and was also presented with the George Hatley Award for best condition.

Appaloosa distance riders showed their pluck and ingenuity at the 2024 Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Ride (ANCER) and Appaloosa National Championship Competitive Trail Ride (ANCCTR) held in Cripple Creek, Virginia, August 23–25. Competing across Virginia's beautful but challenging mountain terrain, they problem-solved as they went along, with two coming off the trails victorious.

Sara M. Lareau was the competitive trail ride champion aboard Legacy Tennessee Whiskey (called "Whiskey"), and Alicia Guilloux placed first in the ANCER 50-mile endurance ride atop RSD Encore Majjic (aka "Jazirah").

Another Appaloosa endurance division entry, Jeffery Hartman and Bask In My Pizazz, started their day with the hope of completing the ANCER 100-mile ride. Unfortunately—with just 20 more miles to go—the pair got pulled from the race for mild lameness.

The annual championships, which offer 40-, 50-, and 100-mile rides, were held in conjunction with the Arabian Horse Association Distance Horse Nationals, and featured a variety of partnered breeds. In addition to Appaloosas and Arabians, the Paso Fino Horse Association and the American Saddlebred Horse and Breeders Association were also on board.

Riders representing the Appaloosa breed throughout the weekend were Sara Lareau, Sara Hall, Alicia Guilloux, Damaris Smith, Jessica Harwood, Jeffery Hartman, and Laura Marshall. Past ApHC President Eric Beene was also present with three of his own horses and a team of riders for the ANCER 50-mile race.

## ANCER & George Hatley Award

Coming from Normandy, France, Alicia Guilloux spent a year working with Eric Beene's horses in Cordova, Tennessee, while on a training visa. In her home country, Guilloux trains and rides Thoroughbred racehorses, so she was able to easily transfer her skills from the track to the trail. Her knowledge proved to be an asset to Beene's team. When her visa expired, she had to return to France but was able to make a trip back to the United States to compete in the race.

Although it was not her first 50-mile ride, it was Guilloux's first time competing in the ANCER and it was her first 50 on an

ANCCTR champion Sara Lareau found a creative way to get through gates without having to dismount Legacy Tennessee Whiskey. She carried a stick from the forest to the rangeland and used it to unlatch the gates.

Appaloosa. It was also RSD Encore Majjic's (Jazirah's) first ANCER competition. The 7-year-old mare, by Drea Thunderheadrain and out of Encore Alia (Arabian), had just under one year of experience going that distance. Jazirah had been riding 25-mile races before that and had been training well all summer. She seemed ready for her first ANCER competition.

When asked about her biggest goal for her first ANCER ride, Guilloux chuckled and replied, "My goal was to win." Guilloux credited her success not only to good conditioning, but also to believing in Jazirah. Despite the challenges they faced, Guilloux and Jazirah took on the mountainous terrain with ease and worked through a lost shoe situation smoothly.

Looking ahead, Guilloux said she would love to ride an Appaloosa again and mentioned she would want to get in even more conditioning before the event.

"I'm glad I had the opportunity to do it. I'm from France and when I came here, we were supposed to do some endurance races, but I didn't know I was going to do a championship like that. So I was very happy about it, very proud. I was very lucky," she said.

Guilloux and Jazirah were not only ANCER 50-mile champions—they also received the George Hatley Best Condition Award. The award is given to the horse in the best condition at the end of the ride, as deemed by the ride veterinarian.

"The vet said she was looking great, so we just kept going and put more distance between the Appaloosas behind me," Guilloux said.

The pair also placed ninth overall in the all-breed competition and were the reserve champion in the half-Arabian division.

The competition was not only a big win for Guilloux and Jazirah, but also for owner Eric Beene and his team. Beene is the innovator and steadfast promoter of ANCER, and he had always dreamed of bringing a top-notch team to the competition. After 20 years of hard work, trial-and-error, and lots of conditioning, his dream finally came true with Guilloux and Jazirah's first place finish and Jessica Harwood and SW Ima Real Cowboy's third place time. Unfortunately, Beene's third riding team, Laura Marshall and Marquise SE, were pulled from the race due to a minor lameness from stepping on a branch wrong.

Between getting horses and riders qualified, and training and maintaining everyone's endurance fitness, Beene and his team accomplished an impressive goal in 2024.

"While I wanted to support the event, I also wanted to be competitive," Beene confirmed. "In 2022, we started placing first and second in 25-mile races, and in 2023, we started being successful in the 50-milers.

"Alicia arrived and things started really coming together," he continued. "We had the right horses and the right people at the right time. I was proud to finally take a team to a championship that I really thought we would be competitive in and do well. It was a great feeling that all the hard work paid off—to actually win the Appaloosa championship and also be reserve champion in the half-Arabian division with the same horse."

Beene acknowledged he was especially proud and honored to have had one of his horses be recognized with the George Hatley Best Condition Award.

## ANCCTR Champion

Two competitors, both named Sara, started the 40-mile Appaloosa competitive ride: Sara Hall was riding Firelily Moon River, an 11-year-old gelding owned by Damaris Smith, and Sara Lareau was riding her own 12-year old gelding, Legacy Tennessee Whiskey. Hall and her mount persevered through some troubles during the ride, but unfortunately, Firelily Moon River was pulled from the competition after a vet check. This left Lareau and Whiskey alone in their first ANCCTR competition.

Lareau's honest goal was to finish the ride. Yet in the back of her head, she hoped for a championship. Because it was her first ANCCTR, she had to work through some learning curves, including some unfamiliar rules and expectations that she hadn't encountered in the previous competitive rides she had attended.

"Leading up to the ride, we knew it was going to be a lot of work because I normally ride Whiskey 25 or 30 miles and we do just fine. Forty miles was going to be pushing it," she admitted.

"We were pretty strategic about our conditioning, and I felt confident that I had done everything I could to prepare for it," Lareau said. Still, she was worried about making the time cut-off and approached the ride with some apprehension.

One challenge that turned into a highlight for Lareau was the surprise vet checks that she and Whiskey ent through along the route. These vet checks are, of course, required, but they can be time-consuming if one is not prepared for them. Lareau was proud of herself and Whiskey for being able to get through the checks efficiently and soundly.

Another highlight was something that easily could have been considered a drawback had Lareau not approached it with such a creative attitude. It was the portion of the trail that passed through public rangelands. Horses and riders had to open and close the gates (likely alone), which cannot only eat up precious time, but can be difficult if your horse is impatient, as Lareau fondly mentioned is true of Whiskey.

To solve this gate challenge, Lareau snagged a branch from the forested part of the trail and carried it with her to the rangelands to use as an extension of her arm to assist with opening and closing gates. Not only did her plan work, but it brought some chuckles and smiles from those who saw her as she gamely carried her branch along the ride.

"He powered through and was 'wonder pony' as usual," Lareau recalled. "He is so fun to ride. He's a mountain hog and he loves the rocks. Anything flat and open is very boring to him, so I had a blast because the trails were totally his forte. He really buckled down and got it done, and I was really impressed with him."

Lareau and Whiskey were not only the ANCCTR champions; they also placed sixth in the open competitive trail ride, which includes all breeds. Their hard work and good spirits truly carried them through the race.

"I'm so glad I have Whiskey. He's brought me into the Appaloosa world which is really neat," Lareau said. "It's also really neat to see some of the other breeds represented at distance horse nationals.

"You don't need an Arabian to do these long-distance rides," she noted. "You can do it with your backyard horse; you just need to train it a little differently." When a competition such as ANCCTR is held in conjunction with other distance horse nationals, Lareau pointed out, "different breeds get recognition, which allows me to advertise distance sports to people who maybe think they couldn't do it otherwise."

The 2025 ANCER/ANCCTR distance championships will be held during the Old Selam Endurance Ride on the weekend of August 29–31, in New Centerville, Idaho.

## 2024 Appaloosa Distance Champions

### 50-Mile ANCER

**1. Champion/George Hatley Best Condition: RSD Encore Majjic, 07:24,** owned by Eric Beene, Cordova, TN, ridden by Alicia Guilloux, Normandy, France
**2. Jokers Wild Streak, 08:08**, owned and ridden by Damaris Smith, Niles, MI
**3. SW Ima Real Cowboy, 08:23,** owned by Eric Beene, Cordova, TN, ridden by Jessica Harwood, Tauranga, New Zealand
**4. Hawkins Bullseye, 08:29,** owned and ridden by Jeffery Hartman, Huntingdon, PA
Did not complete: Marquise SE, owned by Eric Beene, Cordova, TN, ridden by Laura Marshall, Kansas City, MO

### 100-Mile ANCER

Did not complete: Bask In My Pizazz, owned and ridden by Jeffery Hartman, Huntingdon, PA

### 40-Mile ANCCTR

**1. Champion, Legacy Tennessee Whiskey,** owned & ridden by Sara Lareau, East Dorset, VT
Did not complete: Firelily Moon River, owned by Damaris Smith, Niles, M, ridden by Sara Hall, Grand Ledge, MI

PHOTO COURTESY ARABIAN HORSE ASSOCIATION

Left to right: Appaloosa National Championship Endurance Ride competitors Damaris Smith, Eric Beene, Alicia Guillox, Jessica Harwood, Jeffery Hartman and ApHC distance program volunteer Lucie Hess celebrate their combined achievements at the 2024 Iron Mountain Jubilee in Cripple Creek, Virginia last August.