

ENDURE!

KOBADA'S JACQ OF TIMES: SADDLEBREDS CAN ENDURE!

By Cynthia Hecht

After having success at the highest level with Arabians, Kevin Sayer of New South Wales, Australia, was asked why he had bought his first Saddlebred and what about Kobada's Jacq Of Times had particularly attracted him.

"It's funny, really. I was looking for something different than an Arabian, mainly to carry a heavyweight rider, as I have ridden up to 119 kg (262 pounds) with saddle. A friend of mine was getting married and moving and advertised Kobada's Jacq Of Times for sale on the Internet. I phoned her straight away and asked her what his conformation was like and his temperament. I then purchased him *unseen – unbroken*, mind you he had been handled," Sayer said.

"He was four years old. A week later I went down and picked him up and was pleasantly surprised he was standing 15.2 and had solid bone and wasn't thick set (I don't like horses for endurance to be too thick set). How many solid, thickset marathon runners do you see out there?" Sayer continued, "JT was easy to catch and lead but the first thing he did was a huge rear! I thought to myself, oh dear, here we go, this is why they really want to get rid of him! He really has the sweetest of natures!"

While it might not have been the most auspicious of meetings, Sayer found in Kobada's Jacq Of Times he had acquired just the type of horse he was looking for. Sayer is a 46-year-old chemical technician, who immigrated to Australia from England in 1986, and has been participating in endurance for about 10 years.

"I chose endurance really by chance. Here in Australia we celebrate Australia Day and there is a campdraft on Saturday (you have around 6-7 cows or

steers in a pen, have to cut one out and chase it out of the yard and around a course – done mainly at full gallop...this is a timed event), Sunday an endurance ride. At the time I was competing in the campdrafting with my daughter Kerry-Lee. We watched the endurance and got to know many people I found to be the most helpful and friendliest bunch. I did my first endurance training ride around two weeks later, a 40km (25 mile) and from then on I was *hooked*. Training myself, well, I'm not the fittest person on the planet, but mainly just saddle time and really the understanding of your horse."

Kobada's Jacq Of Times, a 15.3 bay gelding, is seven this year. In 2004 and 2005, he won three 50 mile rides, was second in three rides and third in two. He was pulled out by veterinary inspection during the Shahzada, the longest (250 miles) competitive endurance ride in the world. He had made it to 230 miles - he prefers to go at his own pace, had gone a little too fast and was leading by over two hours. His Arabian stable mate went on to win. It's safe to say Kobada's Jacq Of Times is the only purebred Saddlebred to ever compete in this ride. He has carried riders and tack weighing from 161-207 pounds in his three wins, averaging 11 and 12 mph. His second places were won carrying 242-255 pounds, averaging 9 and 10 mph. In the Shahzada, he carried 251 pounds. In one ride, he was pulled by veterinary inspection after completing the race first, carrying 260 pounds, and almost two hours ahead of the next horse.

The Shahzada, called "the ultimate test in horsemanship" on their website, takes place on the last full week of August each year. "The riders complete

two marked courses every day, returning to St. Albans at the end of each leg. The riders can leave as early as 4 a.m., but must have completed the two legs by 5 p.m. There is a compulsory one hour minimum break between legs for all riders. Each year, the number of entrants in both the main ride and the three day training ride exceeds 150. The endurance ride is strictly supervised by a team of professional vets and helpers who are known as TPR Stewards (Temperature, Pulse and Respiration). Each horse is vetted prior to the ride and twice daily (after each leg)." The first Shahzada was held in 1981.

Sayer has had substantial offers on Kobada's Jacq Of Times and for one of his purebred Arabians. "It would have made JT the most expensive Saddlebred in the Southern Hemisphere, but we decided not to sell him. I have a very strong bond with him, which I must say I have *never* had with another horse. But, I now have yet another, Canyonleigh Stargazer and another one waiting in the wings – his full brother Canyonleigh General Lee, who is an entire and I hope to keep him as such."

Canyonleigh Stargazer was written up by the National American Saddlebred Horse Society in their Holiday 2005 newsletter in regard to his first open race. There were 90 entries, 50 percent failed the course, the temperature was about 120 degrees, humidity 95 percent and he carried 151 pounds to fourth place. He was ridden by Dianne Luker (who won the 2005 Shahzada on Sayer's Arabian and also the Australian National Distance and Points Championship in the lightweight division). Canyonleigh General Lee is just beginning his years of training prior to being able to compete.

"I like to break them in as a three-

DANCE



Kevin Sayer and Kobada's Jacq Of Times descend rocky steps during the 2005 Shahzada. Horses in this event can encounter roads, forest paths and streams, plus altitude, heat, humidity, rain and snow.



Kobada's Jacq Of Times demonstrates his smooth, ground-covering Saddlebred gait on the flat, which can put him hours ahead of the next horse, averaging 11-12 miles mph for a win.



Downed trees and rocky paths are easy for Kobada's Jacq Of Times, who appears to be checking out a snakey-looking branch ahead. Australia has the most poisonous snakes and spiders in the world, but Sayer says they are rarely encountered.

year-old, then lightly work them for around two months, then rest them for two-three months, then lightly work them again until they reach the ripe old age of five, which they then commence endurance training and work. I really have high hopes for The General as I've never had such an athletic horse for his age and he has movement to die for, he just floats across the ground with barely a hoof touching the ground."

These endurance horses must come from special bloodlines, right? Wrong. After an extensive study of the breed, Mr. and Mrs. Ron Besaw arrived in the United States with the goal of purchasing a group of young Saddlebreds to export to Australia in 1969. With the assistance of the American Saddlebred Horse Association's C. J. Cronan, Jr., they selected 11 (one died en route), seven of which were from Kentucky. These first horses were: Plainview's Fascination (Plainview Stud, Louisville); Penny West (Whitney Stables, Coxs' Creek); Shamrock's Carolina (C. J. Cronan, Louisville); colt Peppermint Valley Supreme, Vanity's Compass Rose and Peppermint Valkyrie (Peppermint Valley Stables, Crabtree

Stables agent); colt Bright Guy (Falconwood, Simpsonville); colt Knolland Dark Demon (Knolland Farms, Illinois); and colt Goldmount Challenger, and Bourbon's Sensation Of Goldmount (Palominos from Goldmount Stables, Minnesota).

The mares were in foal. They were transported from Kennedy Airport in New York to London, England, for a six-month quarantine under the care of the British Horse Society. Then came a four-six weeks sea trip to New Zealand and finally to Sydney where they went by truck to their home at the Sutton Farm Stable complex in Sutton Forest. Production sales were held in 1973 and 1977, which began the spread of Saddlebred pure and partbreds throughout Australia. The oldest and largest breeder of American Saddlebreds in Australia now is Canyonleigh Stud. More Saddlebreds were imported in the 1980s and early 1990s. Frozen semen has been imported from Harlem Globetrotter, Catalyst and Kalarama's Rising Star.

So, can endurance horses be produced from show horse ancestors? Yes. The bloodlines of Kevin Sayer's horses are those top show horses carry today.

They include among them Broodmare Hall of Fame members: Diana Gay, Edith Gatley, Jean Bohemian, Flirtation Walk, Gloriann, Kate Haines, World's Grand Champion ^{CH}Meadow Vanity, Myrtle Dickey, Nancy Thurman, Peavine's Pearl, Princess Eugenia, Sally Cameron, Spelling Bee, Sweet Rhythm, Sweetheart Of Plainview, Ware's Sensation and Wild Wind.

Stallions include: World's Grand Champions Bourbon Genius, Bourbon King, Edna May's King, Rex Peavine, ^{CH}Valley View Supreme and ^{CH}Wing Commander; plus American Ace, American Born, ^{CH}Anacacho Shamrock, Independence Chief, Indian Penny, Reserve World's Grand Champion Kalarama Rex, Mountain Peavine, Reveler, San Juan, Stonewall King, Stonewall Premier, Vanity's Sensation Of Crebilly and multi-titled ^{CH}Gallant Guy O'Goshen, ^{CH}King's Genius and Kalarama Colonel.

Sayer doesn't use any "fancy methods of training. Just hard yards, plenty of slow trotting. I usually have them in slow work 4 to 5 times a week and I don't go by distance traveled – I go for time on their backs so it's 4 to 5 times a



Photos courtesy of Kevin Sayer

Riders start as early as 4 a.m. during the Shahzada, which is the longest competitive endurance ride in the world at with 250 miles covered. Kobada's Jacq Of Times is at the left, next to his Arabian stable mate, the eventual winner.



Sayer's daughter, Kerry-Lee, is shown here assisting in the conditioning routine to prepare Canyonleigh Stargazer for his first endurance ride.



Canyonleigh Stargazer in his portable yard (corral). Competitors bring their own containments. Some use electric fencing instead.

week for a minimum of 2 and a half hours, and this goes on for about 10 to 12 weeks," Sayer said. "Then they are ready for their first 80km (50 mile) ride. JT doesn't know what slow is. I just basically let him do his own thing, but sometimes I have to regulate his speed."

"None of my horses live in barns. They all live outside and all have plenty of shelter if they want it. Most of them are rugged (blanketed). Whilst in full work they receive the best of feeds – oats, lupins, stud mixes, etc. They also get mainly salts (electrolytes) and Vitamin A, dolomite, which is lime (calcium) and vitamin B. A great deal of the horse feeds today already have added vitamins in them. I also give amino acids. About four days before the ride I start giving them more white and green chaff in their feed," Sayer continued. White and green chaff are chopped up lucerne hay and oat hay. This helps with retaining the moisture inside their gut. But at rides they can eat anything. They're generally watered every 10 kms (7 miles) or usually there are plenty of rivers or streams they can drink out of. I try to keep the water up to them as much as possible for their

hydration levels."

"No particular training methods, just plenty of time on their backs and things like water crossings, vehicles, push bikes – basically get them used to anything that may be strange to them that they are more than likely to encounter. Riding in the dark, I have found, is no problem," Sayer explained. "Some horses get nervy when there are around 100 strange lights flashing around all over the place. The lights are for the riders' comfort zone, as the horses can see perfectly well in the dark – it's just that they just don't know when to turn and what arrow to follow."

Sayer said there are three main things he is looking for when testing horses – conformation-temperament, a well-minded horse, and not a lazy horse.

"There is nothing worse than having to *push* a horse around a ride. You can't really tell if a horse is sure footed or not to start with. It's something I feel is learned. A horse that rushes things isn't too sure footed, but if you have a horse with half a brain he will assess the situation along with the rider and take things slowly and *calmly* as

there are some *very* steep descents and ascents in endurance."

"JT is something special – he just *loves* work, any work, whether it is being ridden by kids or anything, he is a people's horse, just loves the human company – he would rather be with people than other horses, he just loves to please."

Sayer knows the importance of Kobada's Jacq Of Times for the American Saddlebred breed.

"Getting the American Saddlebred out there and competing against the Arabian and other breeds and sometimes beating them, we have sparked up some genuine interest in the breed."

And, as Australia's Inspiration Farm says on its website, "Our current interest lies in promoting the American Saddlebred as an endurance horse, something that they are extremely good at having been bred for that in the first place." **as**

For more information go to: National American Saddlebred Horse Society (Aust) <http://au.geocities.com/nashs01>; New South Wales Endurance Riders Association www.nswera.asn.au; Shahzada www.shahzada.org.au.