

Giddy Up!



HOWARD, RINDE WIN RIDE & TIE CHAMPIONSHIP | BY RENEE GARDNER

THE START AREA of the 33rd annual Ride and Tie World Championships on September 6 near Truckee, California, with corrals, large meadows and thick pine and fir forests looked like a set from *Bonanza*. But the rugged 31-mile course at Euer Valley Ranch more resembles a scene from a John Wayne western.

"(It's) a very difficult course," race director Laura Christofk said before the race. "The race starts in a valley. The only way to go is up."

In ride and tie racing, two endurance athletes switch between trail running and horseback riding until all three "teammates" cross the finish line. Although the start of this three-loop race is marked by an inadvertent dismount and a runaway horse, teams may complete more than 80 planned mounts and dismounts during the race. At the end of each loop and at the finish, the horse's respiration, pulse and overall health are examined by a race veterinarian, while crews fill water buckets and prepare carrots, bits of water melon and wet hay for the horses.

On this picture-perfect day in Truckee, three-time Western States 100-mile trail run winner, 44 year-old Tom

Johnson from Loomis, and his partner, Mary Tiscornia, finish the 12.5-mile initial loop in first place with their horse, Albi. Jim Howard (inset photo), also a past Western States winner, and Dennis Rinde arrive a minute and a half later but leave the vet check with Magic Sirocco and start the second loop with a 20-second lead.

After the 10.5-mile second loop, a relatively flat runner's loop, Johnson and Tiscornia have fallen behind Howard and Rinde — the strongest running tandem in the race — by a couple of minutes.

Rinde, 44, a former Ride & Tie champion from Davenport, California, attends Cabrillo College where he is studying radiation technology. He placed second at the USA 50k Trail Running National Championships near San Francisco in August. His partner is no slouch, either. Howard, 49, an employee of the California Conservation Corps from nearby Auburn, is a five-time world champion in this sport.

As the clock nears the expected finish time for the top teams, friends and family set up lawn chairs at the finish line and crane their necks toward the end of the meadow. Rinde emerges from the forest and into the clearing first on foot, followed

shortly thereafter by Howard on horseback. All three cross the finish line together in 3 hours, 37 minutes.

"We pretty much paced it the whole way according to how we felt," Howard said. "We hung back on the first loop then picked it up a little on the second loop. No one was close to us on the third loop."

About 20 minutes after the winners arrive, Johnson appears on foot, running very slowly. Without his two teammates, the team can't claim second place. Skip Lightfoot and Mark Richtman wind up second, finishing with Zar Za Fire 40 minutes later. Johnson later learned that Tiscornia took a wrong turn, a move that dropped the duo to 22nd place.

2003 WORLD RIDE & TIE CHAMPIONSHIP, SEPTEMBER 6, TRUCKEE, CALIFORNIA

1. **JIM HOWARD/DENNIS RINDE** (HORSE: MAGIC SIROCCO) 3:37:01;
2. **SKIP LIGHTFOOT/MARK RICHTMAN** (ZAR ZA FIRE) 4:17:54;
3. **BRENT JOHNSON/PAUL JOHNSON** (FINALLY) 4:19:44;
4. **LAURIE WILSON/ALINA VALE** (COUGARS CLOWN) 4:25:05;
5. **RACHEL TOOR/MICHAEL WHELAN** (SLICK) 4:33:29;
6. **JOHN OSTERWEIS/RUSS KIERNAN** (BUDDY) 4:43:51;
7. **RUFUS SCHNEIDER/ANNE LANGSTAFF** (WILLY) 4:45:54;
8. **WARREN HELLMAN/JEFF TOWNSEND** (MAX) 4:45:56;
9. **CURT RIFFLE/DAVE RIFFLE** (MAJIK) 4:46:00;
10. **MICHAEL FRAYSSE/DOYLE EGERS** (TURTLE) 4:51:45