

Ride & Tie

"If you took the Kentucky Derby and the Boston Marathon to Outward Bound," said one observer, "you'd have yourself a Ride & Tie." The competition also has been called the "classic, wacky interspecies team sport, sort of a leapfrog relay for ultra-runners with the horse as the baton."

And no wonder. At the 33rd Annual Ride & Tie World Championship, three-athlete teams (one horse, two runners) took turns running and riding across 35 miles, up- and downhill, in the Sierra Nevada Mountains at elevations ranging between 6,500 and 8,400 feet. The event, sanctioned by the Ride & Tie Association, was held Sept. 6 at the Euer Ranch in Truckee, Calif., and included competitive divisions for two-men, two-women, man-and-woman and century-plus teams with their equine partners.

Overall and two-man-and-horse division champions: Jim Howard of Auburn, Calif., Dennis Rinde of Davenport, Calif., and Howard's horse Magic Sirocco completed the course in 3 hours 37 minutes. This was Howard's sixth world championship; his first was in 1981. For the second time in the past 3 years Magic Sirocco also earned the best-condition award.

Two-women-and-horse division: Laurie Wilson of Mill Valley, Calif., Alina Vale of San Diego, Calif., and Wilson's horse Clown won their division and placed fourth overall. Their completion time was 4 hours, 25 minutes. This was the first world championship event for Vale, a freshman at the University of California at Davis.

Man-woman-and-horse division: Mike Whelan of Huntington Beach, Calif., Rachel Toor of Durham, N.C., and Slick won the title and placed fifth overall, completing the

course in 4 hours, 33 minutes. Whelan, a former jockey in his home country of Ireland, gave up horseracing for marathons about 14 years ago. He and Toor were paired together for the world championships on the partner-matching page of the Ride & Tie Web site and leased Slick, using him for the first time 2 days before the race.

Century-plus competitors: Ride & Tie events also have "century-plus" divisions, for teams whose total combined ages represent more than 100 years plus 10, 20, 30 years or more. The oldest competitor at the championship event was 77-year-old Bob Edwards of Alturas, Calif., who partnered with Frank Lieberman, 63, of Cool, Calif., and Edwards' horse Pazzazz Of Pico to complete the course in 7 hours, 31 minutes.

Foreign participation: Two equine veterinarians from Barcelona, Spain, Dr. Nuria Casas and Dr. Arnau Garriga, leased a horse to compete in the event. The team placed 13th overall.

The flip-side of a "vet-check": Dr. Jamie Kerr of Napa, Calif., the attending veterinarian at the Tevis Cup the past 2 years, competed with Kristan Flinn and Corky, owned by Skip Lightfoot.

Longest completion time: Carol Ruprecht reported results from the Ride & Tie World Championship, including the longest completion time at the event: 8 hours and 1 minute. Although one team member, a veteran marathon runner, was new to riding, the team actually got lost on the 35-mile course.

The 2004 World Championship: Next year's event will be held June 26, 2004 on the Mendocino coast north of Fort Bragg, Calif., and ride-and-tie clinics will be held prior to the competition.

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