

World | Endurance Championships Riders



MEG WADE

Meg, how did you get started in endurance?

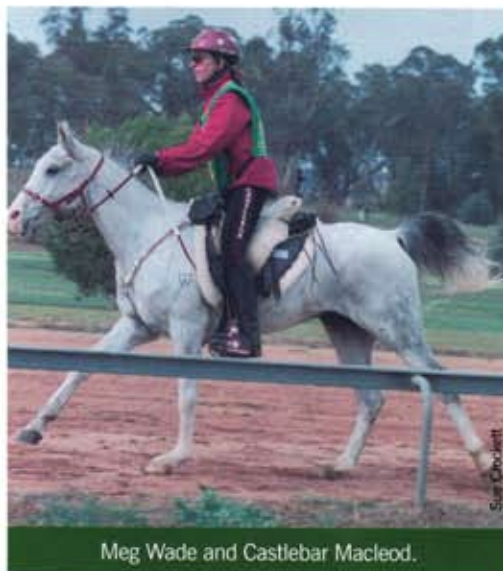
I had always been involved with horses and in 1987 one of my veterinarians at the time, Dr Tony Parker, was doing horses' teeth at my family farm at Wallacia west of Sydney. He was talking about an endurance ride of 160km that he was going to. I was very interested as I was always into long distance sports. I had competed in flat water kayaking and cross country skiing races over long distances (60km to 400km), both in Australia and overseas however horses were always a part of my life so it really captured my imagination. I ended up going to this 160km race, The Colo Challenge, as a spectator and loved it! I immediately started to train one of my horses (a thoroughbred) for endurance and competed in a 40km ride later that year. In January 1988 I competed and completed my first 80km ride, Taralga. In my first year of endurance riding I competed in and finished many 80-120km rides and also the Quilty (160km) in Queensland and the Winton to Longreach (2 day 200km - 2nd lightweight).

Please could you share with us something of your personal background?

I was born in 1961 in Sydney. I have two sisters who are both older than me. My father was in the electrical business and had developed his own multinational company manufacturing high voltage electrical equipment. As his business involved a lot of international travel, I was fortunate as a young person to accompany him and my mother on many of these. My father died 21 years ago. My mother was born in Broken Hill and trained as a nurse working in a number of outback hospitals. When I was 4 years old my family purchased a farm at Wallacia west of Sydney stocked with cows and very quickly horses, so I guess this was when it all started. My schooling initially was Wallacia primary school followed by PLC Croydon (outer Sydney) as a day pupil finishing year 12. I was involved in public speaking, debating as well as general sporting activities. Following Year 12 I attended Hawkesbury Agricultural College studying Agriculture.

I rode my horses most days and was very

greatly involved in my Pony Club activities. Cobbitty Pony Club was a progressive club holding many instructional camps that I feel were very influential to my eventual "full on" commitment to horses. One of my instructors at that time was John Fahey of showjumping fame. My sisters both rode, in fact I think they were better riders than me. One playing polocrosse and showjumping, the other competing in side saddle and stock horse classes. My father never rode, but loved horses and was the start of my stud today (Castlebar). My mother rode only occasionally. Our closest neighbours at the farm were the Bullens family (of Bullens'



Meg Wade and Castlebar Macleod.

Circus and Animal World fame), their eldest son Mark being one of my idols. He bred Arabians and Welsh ponies and is still a leading Welsh pony breeder in Australia. Mark's influence has had a great affect on my attitude and handling of horses today.

What have been some of your most memorable achievements to date in endurance competition?

My most memorable achievements to date include the following:

my 1st Quilty win in 2000 riding Crystal Flyer; my 2nd Quilty win in 2001 riding Kelkette Park Fyre; my 3rd Quilty win in 2003 riding Castlebar Macleod - this was very special as he was bred here at Castlebar - plus having three other Castlebar trained horses finishing across the line with me; winning the National Champion teams competition at the 2004 Quilty with three

Castlebar bred horses (Castlebar has also won two other National Champion team competitions); and my 4th place at the World Championships, Jerez, Spain 2002 riding Castlebar Treaty.

What are your goals and plans for yourself and your horses leading up to the World Championships?

Castlebar Macleod was 6th in the Tom Quilty 160km ride in SA at Port Elliot in October. Following this ride he was thoroughly checked over - x rays, scans, flexions, you name it - and it was done by my veterinarian Dr Bill Harbison. Macleod received a clear bill of health. He has had some time off and is now back in full work. In the mean time I have been keeping myself fit by riding and doing supplementary training which I always enjoy. Our training plans are going to schedule. Importantly we are both focused on the job ahead.

My aim at the World Championships is to be part of the team to win the team gold. I do not have ideas of placing individually, being totally realistic in my assessment of the competition. As always I will be trying to achieve a personal best for my horse.

What is your main motivation in competing in endurance at this level?

What I love about endurance is the fantastic opportunities that it has given me. I have met many wonderful people in many different countries from all walks of life who share my passion. What was originally just my sport and expensive hobby has become a business - so I love my work and that is special. As with all competitive riders I am motivated by winning. I am a high achiever and endurance enables me to satisfy my competitive nature. It is not always about being first on the day but achieving the best performance with my horse at that time. To me this is a win.

Have you encountered any significant problems in competing at this level?

The "tall poppy syndrome" is alive and well in endurance in Australia.

Do you have any advice for riders just starting out in endurance?

Be realistic about your and your horse's abilities. Have goals that are within the realms of your and most importantly your horse's capabilities.