

The 100 Mile Ride

by Darolyn Butler

Fun In the Sun: Florida 100 Mile FEI Endurance Ride held March 10, 2008

Florida was a most interesting race. Due to the new requirements for “double COC’s,” everyone’s riding strategy is just a bit different, it seems. What’s a COC? It stands for “Certificate of Completion,” and means that one has to finish a FEI 100 mile ride in 13:20 (13 hours, 20 minutes) or less. The new requirement is a successful COC in the last 12 months, and one in the preceding 24 months, as a horse and rider team, in order that you may be qualified to nominate for the United States Endurance Team for World Competition in Malaysia this coming Fall.

As for CeCi Butler-Stasiuk (my daughter) and me, our goals were set on the COC, as well. My horse Mercy had one from Ft. Howes, Montana in 2007 (Barefooted); however, it was the first 100 mile ride for CeCi’s horse, DJB Sombrieul (AHA 0580255), so she had an even greater goal to finish her first one in good shape. CeCi/Sombrieul had done an aggressive 75 miler in February with lots of energy left over, and I was riding the tried & true DJB Mercy Merci (AHA 0496708), so we set a 10 mph goal for ourselves, as we decided to definitely team up and ride as partners throughout the day.

Little did we know that much of the course’s trails would be covered (and sometime deeply) with black water. Luckily, our “Texas swamp” horses ate this obstacle up.... literally! Mercy just seemed to love plunging in those huge ponds of dark water, not knowing or caring how deep they might be. Whew... pretty exciting ride, and boy did we end up with some very wet (people) feet for hours at a time. Even though we had cursed the mud in Texas for the last 10 months, that mud training actually seemed to pay off on this mud, sand and water ride.

I believe the water, coupled with the deep sand on occasion, contributed to the demise of many of the 15 non-finishers of the course. We were delighted to be running barefooted, even though there were occasional gravel spots. They didn’t seem to bother our well-seasoned horses at all. Not having to worry about a pulled shoe on this wet course, or even the weight of the shoes, made for a lighter day for us all the way around. To maintain our goal of 15 km/h we had to hurry a bit on the good ground, as we had to, very often, back way off for the deep waterholes that just seemed to be everywhere. Even though it may have seemed a bit warm for Northern horses, the weather was peachy for our Southern ones, and we were grabbing sheets at the vet check for the better part of the day.



Darolyn and daughter CeCi crossing the finish in 2nd & 3rd place, Florida 100 Mile FEI Ride.

A Bit on the 50

And on Sunday, the weather could not have been better. The winds had died down from the Friday before and the temperatures were bearable, where it had been quite cold & windy on Saturday during the 50 Miler. CeCi finished 4th on DJB FC Estrella (AHA 543900) and me 5th on DJB Juniper RJW (AHA 0605687). We were quite pleased with our barefooted finish there, as both horses were low mileage, and seemed to take to the sandy and puddle course quite well. The wind and cold added an unexpected challenge to the day... It was hard to even keep the sheets from flying off the horses during the vet checks.

Now Back to the 100

Valerie Kanavy/Gold Raven took an early lead, but alas, did a loop out of order just after 50 miles and wrecked her ride. She finished, but considerably after COC time, as she had to repeat a full 15 mile loop to get her order corrected. Lisa Green and Troy Ball had been modestly trailing her most of the day, and they used this opportunity to press forward and take the lead. John Crandell/Rammit, went out lame at around 50 miles; challenger Jeremy Reynolds on Cal Flaming Emit fell back around the 60 mile mark, but had a nice finish. Steve Rojek’s horse, Seyvilla Triproof+/, took its leave at the 70 mile point... too much sand and water for him.

CeCi and Darolyn just kept trudging on at their appointed pace, with a final km/h of 14.92. A few riders were passed on trail, but they mainly picked up folks at the vet checks, where both of the mares vetted in within 3-5 minutes at each stop.

At the last vet check, CeCi/Sombrieul & Darolyn/Mercy were only a minute behind Lisa Green and several minutes in front of Troy Ball who ended up settling for 5th. The exciting race to the finish was on. It was dark, and both the Texas women were experienced night riders, and both their horses were geared to go... however,

Darolyn was extremely sick with the flu and was still battling to keep her horse in check after a long day of doing just that. Mercy had come to finish well, and wanted Darolyn to just hold on & be still up there. After changing positions twice, the Texas ladies settled back down in their chosen pace of the day, intent on keeping their goal of a good COC and a healthy finish. As far as we know, Mercy and Sombrieul were the only 100 Mile horses to race barefooted.

Shortly before 9 PM, the winner Lisa Green walked across the finish line, with Darolyn and CeCi, holding hands on very animated horses, crossing a short ten minutes behind, in 2nd & 3rd place. It would have been a perfect day if the two Texas Young Riders’ Horses had also completed. Unfortunately, a lameness at 50 miles got DJB DC Macproof (AHA 05391914) and Columbian Young Rider, Christina Mutes; and a cramp at the finish took out DJB Cytron Kon JMF (AHA 05331166) and Young Rider Alexandria Kirkland.

Guy Worthington/Fast William MBN were 4th, Troy Ball/WMA Rattler 5th, Barbara Mathews/ Indian Halo 6th, Ruth Sturley/RBF Super Sport 7th, Jeremy Reynolds/Cal Flaming Emit 8th, HRH Sheika Medea/Molly’s Valiant Heart 9th & Jan Worthington/Golden Lightening and had their typical well-paced ride and finished 10th place.

The vetting was professional, and the awards were very good and plentiful, with a great breakfast served the morning after. Larry and Valerie were wonderful hosts, with lots of roomy parking and water delivered to the camp sites, as well. Even with the torrential rain on Saturday, the parking area stayed wonderfully dry and manageable.

DJB Mercy Merci has now done near 1500 competition miles. All except one very rocky 100 Miler was done barefooted. Not even boots. She’s presently leading the 100 Mile National Award.

DJB Sombrieul is nearing 600 miles and to date has never worn shoes or boots. 🐾

About the author: Darolyn Butler is a 28,000 Mile American Endurance Ride Veteran. She and her family have had numerous National Championship Titles over the 30 years that she has participated in the sport. She discovered “barefooting” in 2000 and has since seldom shod over the past 8 years. Her competition wins have not diminished! She, and daughter CeCi, both trim, and with one other helper, keep the 65 horses on their ranch in tip top shape. Both the Houston Mounted Police Unit and the Texas A&M Cavalry (about 40 horses each) are now barefooted, due to Darolyn’s initial encouragement.

Photo courtesy Genie Stewart Spears