

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE RIDE 2008

<http://www.goldenhorseshoe-ride.co.uk/>

Carolyn Edwards has kindly supplied us with this account of her experience at the Golden Horseshoe Ride 2008.

This ride is a popular and important event in the endurance rider's calendar and we are so pleased to follow Oakways Patchwork Girl's progress in her endurance career.

Thank you to Ian Wigley for supplying us with this photograph of Carolyn and Patches on course at Exmoor.



Patches at the Horseshoe

Having bought Patches in Spring last year, one of the first things we did with her was take her to Exford for a weeks holiday, whilst crewing for my friend competing in the Golden Horseshoe ride. The main classes at the Horseshoe are 50 miles in one day, 75 miles over two days and the ultimate for an endurance rider 100 miles over two days of challenging terrain. In 2007 a new class was introduced called the Exmoor Experience, which is 25 miles each day. This class is the only one at the Horseshoe in which horses can compete before they become advanced endurance horses and I became determined to enter Patches in 2008.

She began her endurance career in June 2007 and successfully completed 4 novice rides before foot and mouth interrupted the rest of the season. Having started 2008 as an open level horse she completed two 30 mile rides and one 25 mile ride before tackling the Golden Horseshoe Ride in May. By now she was very fit and I felt she was ready for the testing course offered at the Horseshoe including many steep climbs & descents, river crossings and varied terrain.

Patches did not disappoint me and gave me a wonderful ride over the two days of competition. We were blessed with glorious weather and she seemed completely untroubled by the heat and drank very well on both days and at night – a very important thing for an endurance horse to learn to keep hydrated. She is very surefooted and I have allowed her to learn how to pick her own way over the ground and she did not put a foot wrong over 50 miles. We rode by ourselves, which I feel is better for the horse, as you can set your own pace and concentrate on picking your own track and Patches was perfectly happy to canter alone for miles over the open moor. She finished the second day looking as fresh as a daisy and cantered over the finish line.

She made a speed of over 7.5 miles per hour on each day, which means she achieved the top award of a Gold medal for the event. Even more exciting at the awards presentation, she won the trophy for Best Condition in her class. This award is very special to endurance riders, as it is the horse considered by the veterinary panel to be most capable of continuing for another 25km at the end of the competition. For Patches to win this at the end of her first ever two day competition in a class of 52 horses was absolutely thrilling and I was so proud of her.

The BBC Countryfile program were filming the event, as their presenter Adam Henson was also competing in the Exmoor Experience, but his horse was lame at the start of day two, so he could not complete. The cameras were filming us all over the weekend, but unfortunately Patches did not appear on the program the following Sunday.

Patches next ride will hopefully be 40 miles at Cirencester Park in June and then I hope to do a 50 mile ride before the end of the season so that she will be an advanced horse and qualified to enter any endurance competition in 2009 - including the longer classes at the Golden Horseshoe Ride.

Carolyn Edwards