

al-Andalus 2009 Endurance Ride

by Kristian Fenaux ■ photos by Kristian Fenaux

The fourth edition of the KALIBER "Tieras de al-Andalus" endurance ride took place between 27th of march and 4th of april. The al-Andalus ride is the most unique endurance ride in the world, as it is an 8 days ride all over Andalusia, in the southern part of Spain. It is also the longest ride in the world, with almost 500 kilometers between start and finish, and it allows the riders to discover the wonderful andalusian countryside, to cross several reserves and national parks, and to visit some of the most interesting cities and their monuments, places normally not accessible to tourists and visitors.

Since its first edition in 2006, the al-Andalus ride has grown from a local event to an international level. Since the first french riders discovered this competition in 2007 the international participation has increased every year, so that this fourth edition there were actually more international riders than locals. Out of the 65 horses of this 2009 al-Andalus ride, 37 of them were ridden by non-spanish riders: on top of the 13 horses ridden by french riders, there were 4 riders from Germany, 2 from Belgium, and one rider each from England, Switzerland and coming from Argentina the renowned arabian horse breeder Miguel Pavlovsky. Also a two horse team ridden by portuguese Joaquim Cruz and another by italian Stefano Chidichimo.

Day 1

Binomial



Eduardo Sánchez Hidalgo on Hermes
1. PI. "JEREZ DE LA FRA.
SANLUCAR DE BDA"



Íñigo del Solar Llanso on Zafia 50%
1. PI. "JEREZ DE LA FRA. - SANLUCAR DE BDA"

Team

The al-Andalus endurance ride actually features two competitions, one for team and one for solo riders. The team competition is always with 2 horses and either 1 or 2 riders. This year there were 22 teams of 2 horses, 10 of these teams were 2 horses and 1 rider and the other 12 teams were made up by 2 horses and 2 riders. In the solo rider competition they were 21 rider and horse combinations. When a horse is pulled at a vet-gate he gets a time penalty but if he is OK he can start again the next day. Only horses who need medical treatment are not allowed to continue further. The ride is an 8 stage competition and the final results puts in the first places those teams or solo riders who finishes the most stages, and after that the classifi-

cation goes by time. This is made so to help riders understand it is most important to finish all stages and to keep their horses in good condition. There is no prize money for the daily stage victories, also to help the philosophy of "to finish is to win", but the three first ones get every day a time bonus of 10, 5 and 3 minutes respectively and a few local gifts also.

The 2009 al-Andalus ride was ridden over a total of almost 500 kilometers in 8 stages, starting in the military stallion depot in Jerez de la Frontera and finishing at the Sanctuary of the Virgen de la Cabeza, close to Andujar, following for several days the Guadalquivir river.

Team

Day 2



Santiago Perez Dorao on Marlboro YAC
1. PI. "SANLUCAR DE BDA - EL ROCIO"



Santiago Perez Dorao and Joaquim Cruz on Vai e Vem
2. PI. "SANLUCAR DE BDA - EL ROCIO"

Team



Jean Pierre Lerisset on Massar
1. Pl. "EL ROCIO SANTIPONCE"



Carlos Escavias De C.Rogel on Yaman V
1. Pl. "EL ROCIO SANTIPONCE"

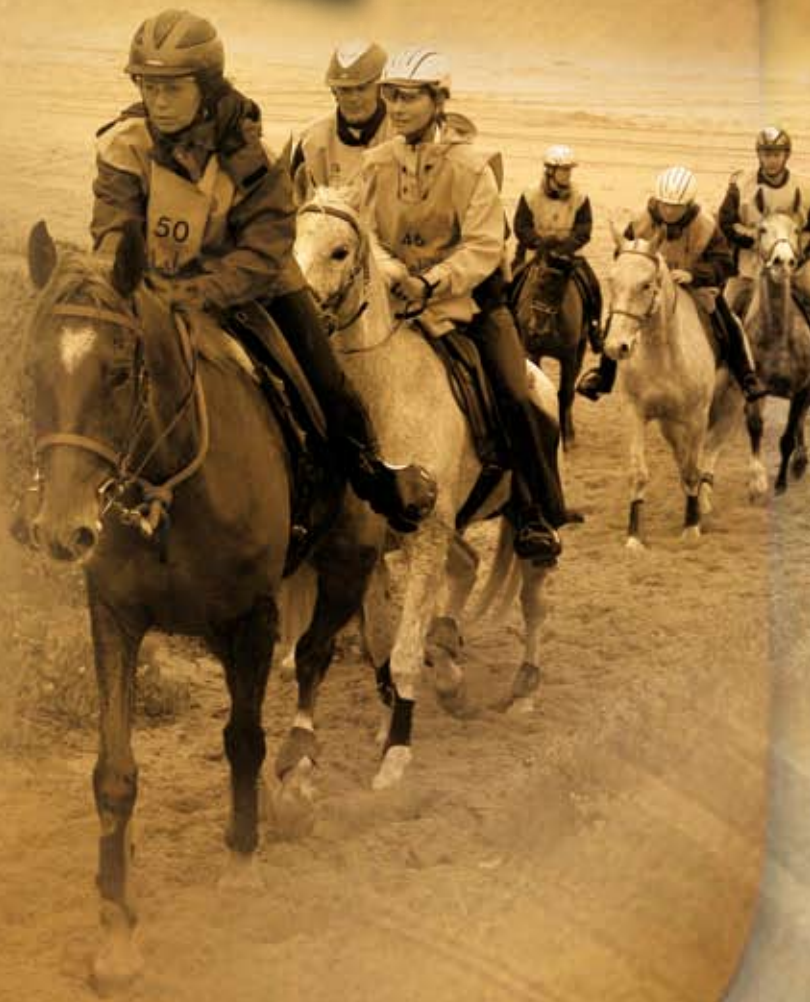
Binomial

Day 3

After the first briefing in a famous wine cellar in Jerez de la Frontera, the first stage went to Sanlúcar de Barrameda, on the estuary of the Guadalquivir river, almost 63 kilometers through the vineyards, with a vet-gate halfway in Trebujena and arrival at the Playa de la Piletas, where Íñigo del Solar was the team winner on ZAFIA-50 and local rider Eduardo Sánchez on HERMES winner for the solo riders. A local wine cellar was again the setting for the prize-giving and next day's briefing.

The second stage went through the Coto de Doñana National Park, 50 kilometers with vet-gate in Matalascañas, where portuguese Joaquim Cruz was the first to arrive. In the second loop Cruz continued in front with italian Stefano Chidichimo and spanish María Capdevila, but at the last kilometers Santiago Pérez also joined and finally he won the sprint with MARLBORO-YAC at El Rocío, with Cruz second and Chidichimo third, and where Eduardo Sánchez and HERMES won again in the solo riders class.

For the third stage, 66 kilometers, the riders went from El Rocío to the Ruínas Itálicas of Santiponce, near Seville, a special archaeological place from Roman Antiquity where the finish line was set up. Halfway the vet-gate was in Aznalcázar, past the Guadimar river crossing at the Vado de Quema ford, a place well known by pilgrims going to El Rocío as they use to baptize them here in order to get their sins forgiven. Team victory today was for the french Jean-



Day 4



Nathalie Michel on Raimon
1. Pl. "DOS HERMANAS - CARMONA"

Team

Pierre Lerisset on MASSAR, while Carlos Escavias and YAMAN-V won the solo stage.

Between Seville and Carmona the fourth stage was 54 kilometers and started at the Seville racetrack in Dos Hermanas. French Nathalie Michel on RAIMON took the lead from the very first kilometer, and she arrived at the vet-gate in Alcala de Guadaira with 3 minutes advantage and then continued to Carmona where she came in with more than 15 minutes, winning the team stage, followed by several french teams who took the two first places at the general standings after the first four stages. For the solo riders Eduardo Sánchez and HERMES won again and were now improving more their general leadership. In Carmona the prize-giving and briefing with dinner was offered in the Palacio de Briones, an interesting medieval building in the historic part of the town.

The fifth stage was 63 kilometers between Carmona and Ecija with a vet-gate halfway in Fuentes de Andalucía. Spanish Íñigo del Solar, riding ZAFIA-50, set up a fast speed from the start, trying to win back the first general position, but french Jean-Pierre Lerisset soon joined him with a few more, traveling at almost 18 km/h average. However at the vet-gate Lerisset's MASSAR was pulled for lameness and so they lost their first position. In Ecija french Lise Chambost won the team stage with DAMAS-EL-DERKOUCH while del Solar was second on ZAFIA-50 and again the general leader for teams. Salvador

Day 5

Garrido won the solo class stage with SHAKYRA while Sánchez remained leader, unchallenged.

From Ecija to Cordoba the sixth stage was 58 kilometers long and to be followed by a rest day in Cordoba. In spite of some muddy trails during the first kilometers, local Santiago Pérez, riding MARLBORO-YAC, and english Sarah Hobbs, on GAMERA, took a fast start leading the pack and arrived at the vet-gate in La Carlota with 5 minutes advantage to the first group with 8 french riders and Teresa Lozano on CARDHU, team leader with del Solar. Riding to Cordoba the leaders increased their advantage up to 10 minutes, where GAMERA and Hobbs won the stage. English Sarah Hobbs lives actually in Andalusia and she formed the team with german Maren Röhm. Solo rider Salvador Garrido won his class stage with SHAKYRA and no major changes in the general standings.

After a rest day in Cordoba, and a briefing with dinner at the Caballerizas Reales, a royal medieval castle with roman mosaics, the ride continued to Montoro, 64 kilometers crossing some of the most beautiful mountain trails of this part of Andalusia, most of them unaccessible in normal conditions. The first loop went uphill to the lake of San Rafael Naval-lana and then downwards to the vet-gate in Villafranca de Cordoba. In front a group of almost 20 riders went at a fast pace, and in the vet-gate several of them were pulled. In Montoro, a white town hanging on a little mountain and crossed by the Guadalquivir river, french Paulette Malde-



Lise Chambost on Damas El Derkouch
1. Pl. "CARMONA - ÉCIJA"



Íñigo del Solar Llanso on Zafía 50%
2. Pl. "CARMONA - ÉCIJA"

Team

Day 6

Team



ra, riding LOUNA-DE-RIVOIRON, won the team stage, while Carlos Escavias and YAMAN-V won the solo class.

The last stage, 80 kilometers uphill, was definitely also the most demanding one. Crossing the Natural Parks of Montoro, Cardena and Sierra de Andujar, this stage was set up in three loops and two vet-gates, the first one in Cardena after 28 kilometers, then 44 kilometers through the fabulous surroundings of the Sierra de Andujar to El Lugar Nuevo and then the final 8 kilometers to the Sanctuary of the Virgen de la Cabeza. After almost 420 kilometers, to win the last stage was a great appeal to many, specially this demanding mountain stage. For the solo riders the final standing were almost final, and as the firsts Eduardo Sánchez and Otto Vélez rode the last stage together, no major changes were really expected. For the teams the difference between the first team, del Solar & Lozano, and the second team, Rosell & Capdevila, was one hour and a few minutes, and del Solar had to ride ZAFIA-50 again today, as he did yesterday, because Lozano's CARDHU went lame after the sixth stage, while Rosell's AL-JATIB had a two days rest, first in Cordoba and then also yesterday when her teammate Capdevila rode PINYO.

Rosell and AL-JATIB really tried to make a difference, accompanied by french Aurélie Le Gall riding LAZOU, but



Sara Hobbs on Gamera
1. Pl. "ÉCJA - CORDOBA"

after 72 kilometers del Solar and ZAFIA-50 were only 10 minutes behind, not enough to risk anything during the final 8 kilometers. This is where Le Gall and LAZOU went full speed to win the team stage, while Rosell came in second and del Solar third followed by french Pierre Chambost and Daniel Maldera. The solo riders competition for the stage victory was between spanish Florencio Agustin riding ARTESANA and french Christine Hubin on LEO-DE-LA-GRILLETIERE. At the last vet-gate, where they arrived almost together, ARTESANA won 1 minute and then Agustin ran uphill as fast as possible to secure the stage victory. Here, with only 8 kilometers left, italian Stefano Chidichimo was pulled for lameness, after eight days of true efforts, and so very close to the final finish line.

The real final standing showed three teams who completed all of the 8 stages, with del Solar & Lozano overall winners followed by Rosell-Capdevila and third place for Santiago Pérez riding two horses. The solo riders did even better as five of them managed to finish all the stages: Eduardo Sánchez on HERMES was the final winner followed by Otto Vélez on his homebred arabian PALPARTENON, who got the Best Condition award. Then belgian Joëlle Sauvage was third on MANDCHOURDU-BARTHAS, french Christine Hubin fourth on LEO-DE-LA-GRILLETIERE and finally spanish Miguel Conradi, who could not finish the years before, came in fifth on HALAMIN.



Paulette Maldera on Louna De Rivoiron
1. Pl. "CORDOBA - MONTORO"

Team



Carlos Escavias De C. Rogel on Yaman V
1. Pl. "CORDOBA - MONTORO"

Binomial

German Heike Blümel finished in 16th position on LENS-AMSTRONG-KL in the solo riders class, while Italian Stefano Chidichimo, riding two horses, finished 11th in the final team standings, where german Maren Röhm and english Sarah Hobbs made 16th.

Next year's al-Andalus will certainly attract even more international participation, specially since most of the

ones who made it this year have announced their intention to repeat this wonderful experience, and bring their friends also, to enjoy the extraordinary andalusian country, all the monuments and historic buildings and the very special andalusian hospitality. An truly unique experience in a unique environment and a friendly and very spontaneous organization: the very best endurance ride in the world. □

Day 8



Aurelie Le Gall on Lazou
1. Pl. "MONTORO - ANDUJAR"

Team



Florencio J. Agustin Pedrueza on Artesana
1. Pl. "MONTORO - ANDUJAR"

Binomial