

MALAYSIA



WEC 2008 KUALA TERENGGANU

Gold for spanish Maria Alvarez and the UAE Team

Spanish Maria Alvarez, riding her french born purebred arabian Nobby, won the 2008 World Endurance Championship in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia, past 7th and 8th november, retaining the title for Spain. Argentina's Agustin Vita and UAE's Sultan bin Sulayem got individual silver and bronze.

By teams gold went to the United Arab Emirates while Qatar and Bahrain won respectively silver and bronze.

by Kristian Fenaux ■ photos by Kristian Fenaux

The 2008 World Endurance Championship was hosted at the Terengganu International Endurance Park, located at Lembah Bidong, about one hour from the resort town of Kuala Terengganu, on the shore of the East China Sea. Because of the climatic challenges of this tropical ride, the organizers and the FEI (International Equestrian Federation) decided to

have the ride by night, for the welfare of the horses in these special conditions.

The ride was a 100 Miles ride (160 kilometers) divided in seven loops respectively 29, 27, 29, 27, 23, 15 and 10 kilometers each, with very good sandy soil on most of its trail. There was one crew point on each loop except



I PL. NOBBY ALVAREZ PONTON MARIA MERCEDES OWNER: JUMA'S TEAM

for the final loop, with no crew point, and water points all over the trail, about each 5 kilometers.

From the 133 riders present at Kuala Terengganu, five withdrew their horses before the veterinarian pre-ride check, one failed this check and another was pulled before the start, so actually they were 126 who started, at half past five, on Friday afternoon November 7th, coming from 32 countries, and 20 of these competing also for the team medals. Amongst the favorites were the teams from the United Arab Emirates and France, but also Belgium, Australia and Spain, while most of the others also were preparing their strategies to finish as close as possible. Unique to this championship was the

spectators at the start, about 10.000 of them, most interested to see their King HM SPB Yg DiPertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin competing, riding Ibrahim-Pascha-Larzac.

The sky was cloudy but it was not raining, and dusk was coming very fast, as usual in these tropical latitudes. In fact halfway the first loop, when the front riders were arriving at the seashore, it was already fairly dark. Riding at an average speed close to 21 kph, the uruguayan riders set a fast pace from the very first kilometers on, only to have two of their horses eliminated at the first vet-gate and a third one in the next, shattering all their hopes for individual and team medals. Spanish

Maria Alvarez' Nobby was the first to clear vet-gate one, followed closely by Sheikh Hamdan al Maktoum's Kaysand-Farazah and Sultan bin Sulayem's Tazoul-el-Parry, both from the UAE, and Abdulla al Marri's Kirquiz, from Qatar.

It was completely dark when the riders started for the second loop, who went on somewhat slower, and at the vet-gate it was now Abdulla al Marri who took the lead, followed by Maria Alvarez, Sheikh Hamdan al Maktoum and Sultan bin Sulayem, with argentinean Agustin Vita and uruguayan Juan Cruz Caceres 6 minutes behind.

By teams the UAE was leading with an advantage of 11 minutes over Belgium, closely followed by France, Spain, Portugal and Bahrain.

In Malaysia, November is the beginning of the monsoon season, and during the third loop, the rain arrived with storm, thunder and lightnings. The speed of the front riders Maria Alvarez and Abdulla al Marri stayed between 19 and 20 kph, but at the vet-gate Alvarez' Nobby took the lead followed closely by Kirquiz. Behind them Sultan bin Sulayem and Agustin Vita were at 15 minutes, while Sheikh Hamdan al Maktoum's Kaysand-Farazah failed the trot control. UAE was still leading by teams, followed by Belgium, Spain, France, Portugal and Bahrain.

The rain continued during the fourth loop, with speed going down a few points, but almost no changes in the individual front positions. By teams Belgium lost a second team rider in the vet-gate and was out of the me-



2 PL. BARAKA
IBN AL TAMAH
VITA AGUSTIN
OWNER: CAL RAMON

dals, where the UAE continued leading followed by Spain and France.

During the fifth loop, a very technical one with some undulation and continuous direction changes, the rain stopped and the speed went up again. Maria Alvarez and Nobby arrived with a 3 minutes lead over Abdulla al Marri and Kirquiz, while Agustin Vita and Sultan bin Sulayem were about 20 minutes behind. At the re-check Kirquiz failed to pass the trot, and now Maria Alvarez and Nobby were the sole leaders. By teams the UAE continued in first position, followed by Bahrain, Qatar, Portugal, Spain and Italy, as both France and Spain had lost one of their team riders at this vet-gate.

For the sixth loop Maria Alvarez and Nobby were sole leaders, maintaining a safe pace of about 17 kph. Through the final loop Agustin Vita, riding Baraka-ibn-al-Tamah, rode at more than 28 kph, and although they got closer to Alvarez and Nobby, they never were a real treat to their gold medal. A few minutes after sunrise, spanish Maria Alvarez and Nobby arrived and won the 2008 Endurance World Championship, followed by argenti-



3 PL. TAZOUL
EL PARRY
BIN SULAYEM
SULTAN AHMED SULTAN
OWNER: AL AASFA LTD

arabian horses, a great achievement that proves the quality of the breed that is much more than a nice show horse, definitely much more. □

FULL RESULTS: WWW.EVENTU2.MY



I PL. TEAM UAE

ALMAKTUUM, H H SH MAJID BIN MOHD

ALI SUBOSE, MOHD AHMAD

BIN SHAFYA, MUBARAK KHALIFA



Individual medals: Valentin Vita, Maria Alvarez and a UAE expedition member

Team Medals: Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain

Sheikh Majid al Maktoum

Three world endurance champions: Valerie Kanavy, Maria Alvarez and Becky Hart

Opening ceremony in Kuala Terengganu



Rachel Jaumotte from Belgium

HM the King of Malaysia SPB Yg DiPertuan Agong Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin

Jaume Punti and Maria Alvarez, receiving the Best condition Award for NOBBY from HM the Queen of Malaysia

French team

Italian team

Next page:
top 2 photos, International riders
at the 2008 World Endurance Championship

Norwegian team

Belgian team

Two riders from Chile

Spanish team

Portuguese team

Two riders from the USA

