

“Arabians at their best” Tevis Cup

by Talitha Bakker ■ photos by Karen Chaton and others

This article is dedicated to the Tevis Cup, a part of endurance riding. The vast majority of the major cup winners have been either pure or part bred Arabians. It would be safe to say that the Arabian breed dominates the sport of endurance and trail riding in the world.

The Tevis Cup is the oldest modern day trail ride. The ride was first organized by Wendell Robie, an Auburn businessman and devoted rider of the Sierra high country. Many people in the 50s doubted that any modern-day horse could cover the rugged trail from Lake Tahoe to Auburn in a single day.

Wendell and a few of his friends proved them wrong in August of 1955. He continued to hold the ride annually thereafter and organized the Western States Trail Foundation to preserve the 100 mile (more or less 160 km) trail and the Ride.

The Tevis Cup trophy is awarded to the person who completes the 100-Mile One-Day course in the shortest amount of time and whose horse is in sound condition and “fit to continue”. The trail follows a rugged portion of the Western States Trail which stretches from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Sacramento, California.



Shannon Constanti with Tallahassies Fire during the Tevis Cup 2011



That also Arabians with a showhorse pedigree can perform, proofs this picture, showing Om el Bernini Dream (SMF Dreamcatcher x Om el Benedict by Sanadik el Shaklan) winning the Calero Classic in 2010.

Beginning at the Robie Equestrian Park (elevation 7,000 feet), south of Truckee, California, the trail descends gradually approximately nine miles to the Truckee River, then takes a route through Squaw Valley and ascends from the valley floor (elevation 6,200 feet) to Emigrant Pass near Watson's Monument (elevation 8,750 feet), a climb of 2,550 vertical feet in 46 miles. From the pass, riders will travel west, ascending another 15,540 feet and descending approximately 22,970 feet before reaching the century-old town of Auburn via the traditional route through Robinson Flat, Last Chance, Deadwood, Michigan Bluffs, Foresthill, and Francisco's. Much of this historic route passes along narrow mountain trails through remote and rugged wilderness territory.

One of the big challenges during the Tevis Cup, is the passing of the Cougar Rock. A big, steep climb on rocks. Of course we can explain the shape, height and the location of the rock, but for sure it is better to hear it from someone who actually crossed it! We asked Karen Chaton, who rode the Tevis Cup with her Arabian horse 'Bo'.

"Oh man, the anticipation and thrill of getting to go over Cougar Rock was one of the highlights of riding the Tevis for me this year. I so enjoyed getting to go up and over Cougar Rock with Bo!



Karen Chaton with Bo during the Tevis Cup 2010

I felt safe, secure and knew he was going to be sensible and that he would get us both over it in good order.

It is hard to describe the feeling of the satisfaction of getting safely over Cougar Rock. Truly a great feeling and a total rush. I think the best part was the anticipation. Knowing it was coming up and knowing how privileged I was to be "one of the lucky ones" – that is even fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to do something this incredible. I mean being able to ride the Tevis.

Having the privilege of riding over Cougar Rock. The best part though, was feeling the trust and bond that I had with Bo throughout the entire ride on Saturday. Going over Cougar Rock like we did was just icing on the cake. No, make that the whipped cream with a cherry on top of the Participants who are unfamiliar with this area should use caution when planning training rides with their mounts, especially in the high country and the route out of Foresthill to Francisco's. Due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the trail, the Tevis Cup Ride differs substantially from other organized endurance riding events. Adequate physical training and preparation for both horse and rider are of the utmost importance. The mountains, although beautiful, are relentless in their challenge and unforgiving to the ill-prepared.

Of course we also asked Karen a useful tip for the Tevis Cup!

"One of the most useful pieces of advice I was given prior to riding the Tevis this year." Karen said, "was to make sure I got in line to vet as soon as I got my horse's pulse timed in."





Jeremy Reynolds
winning the 2011 Tevis Cup



This is good advice. If you stop for even a minute after getting your pulse and in-time to let your horse eat, or for you to run to the restroom – when you come back you could have a half a dozen horses or more in front of you in the line to vet through.

On a ride like Tevis, every minute counts. If you spend ve extra minutes at 8 of the vet checks, that is forty minutes that you could have used walking later in the ride rather than trotting if you are pushing the cut-o times.”

Arabian horses are the most seen breed at the trail rides. Ever since the Tevis Cup was rst organized in 1955, it was won by a purebred Arabian horse 49 times!

Most recent win was in 2011 by Jeremy Reynolds and his Arabian horse Riverwatch. is was not the rst win for Jeremy Reynolds as he won the Tevis Cup before in 2004 and 2007 with his horse CV Eli.

Another combination that won the Tevis Cup more than one occasion was 2010 winner John Crandell with Heraldic. A son of Statistic (Patron) out of the Tamerlan daughter Mi Hearts Desire.

The record-holder of the Tevis Cup is Boyd Zontelli with his Arabian R.C. Hans that did the 100 miles in just 10 hours and 46 minutes!

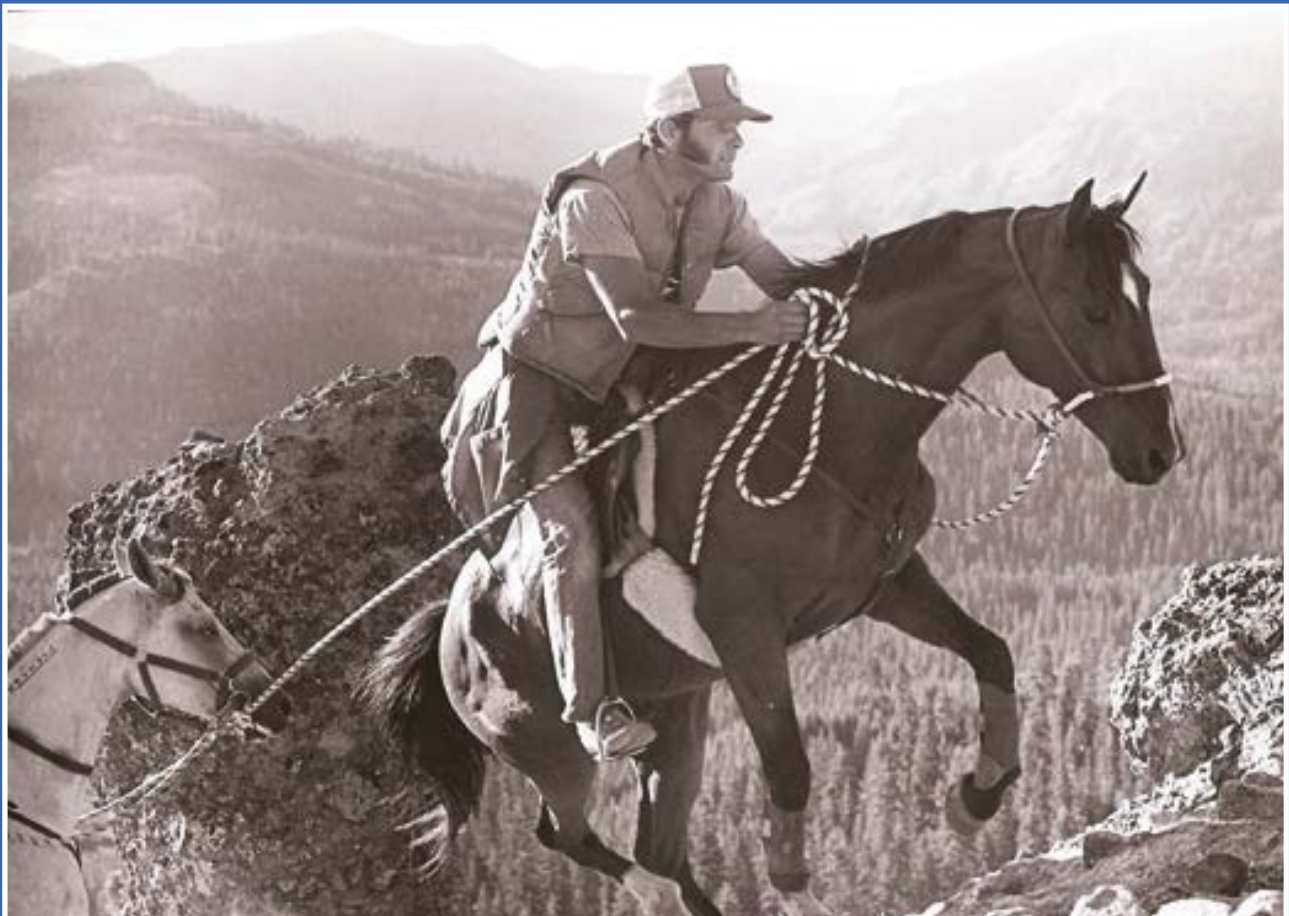
Another familiar person that ride the Tevis Cup is Jay Constanti.

Most of him will know him in combination with the famous Om el Arab stud and other will know him as a judge, seen everywhere in the world at the most prestigious show, like the World Championships in Paris last month.

We asked him about his opinion regarding Arabian Horses in the showing and in sports.

“It was my honor and an absolute pleasure to serve on the international judging panel for the 2011 Championnat du Monde Cheval de Arabe (World Arabian Horse Championship) in Paris this December.” Jay tells.

“The road to that center ring began on my rst trail ride on an Arabian gelding. For years I was involved in distance riding and learned to appreciate the Arabian horse’s extraordinary capacity for endurance on the long trail, along with their agility and athleticism. Training,



Jay Constanti and his Arabian geldings at Cougar Rock in 1978 taking a junior rider on lead.

conditioning and competing on the trail eventually led me to training for the show arena.” Jay explains.

“Many years spent showing helped me to appreciate the incomparable versatility of the Arabian horse, from English to Western to Reining and Driving. Years of showing eventually led to decades of breeding.”

“My years of breeding Arabian horses assisted my understanding and appreciation of Arabian bloodlines and type, quality, balance, structure, intelligence and presence. Years of breeding eventually led to the pursuit of my judges card and judging horse shows around the world.”

“I stood in center ring in Paris with the honor of judging many of the world’s most beautiful Arabian horses. As a breeder I marveled at what natural beauty came from that harsh crucible of the Arabian desert. As a trainer I marveled at their sheer presence, attitude and showability. As a trail rider I saw courage, form and function that is designed for traveling long distances.”

“It seems to many within the Arabian horse community that the worlds of show and distance riding are two distinctly different ones. It is my opinion that it takes both worlds to truly understand this noble breed. The show arena demonstrates the beauty and versatility of the Arabian horse. The long trail provides the supreme test of all that the Arabian horse is and all that nature designed them to be. And in doing that no other breed can compete with them.”

Jay Constanti participated at the Tevis Cup for the first time in 1978.

Also his daughter Shannon Constanti is an enthusiastic rider of trail- and endurance rides, who rode her first endurance ride as a 5 yrs old, on lead with her father.

“I grew up in the Arabian halter-, as well as the Arabian endurance horse world, and have the greatest appreciation for the diversity of this amazing breed. The Arabian horse truly encompasses athleticism and beauty. For the longevity of the breed, I think it’s crucial to maintain breeding for the balance of type, as well as function. Endurance riding, as a professional sport & hobby, is a discipline that has proven to steadily grow, even in times of economic recession.

From my experience, trail horses greatly enjoy their careers, and the endurance market provides yet another avenue for Arabian horse breeders to be involved and competitive in, with their show bloodlines.” Shannon Tells.



Of course trail riding is not only tough competition, it is most of all a lot of fun and a great way to spend time with your horse.

It takes you in the most beautiful areas, overcoming obstacles with your Arabian that you did not expect of doing.

Giving you and your horse the perfect opportunity to get that special connection! □