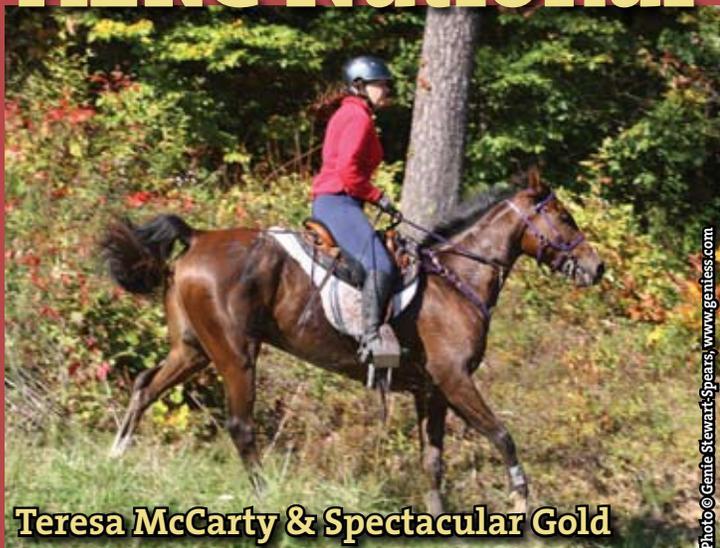
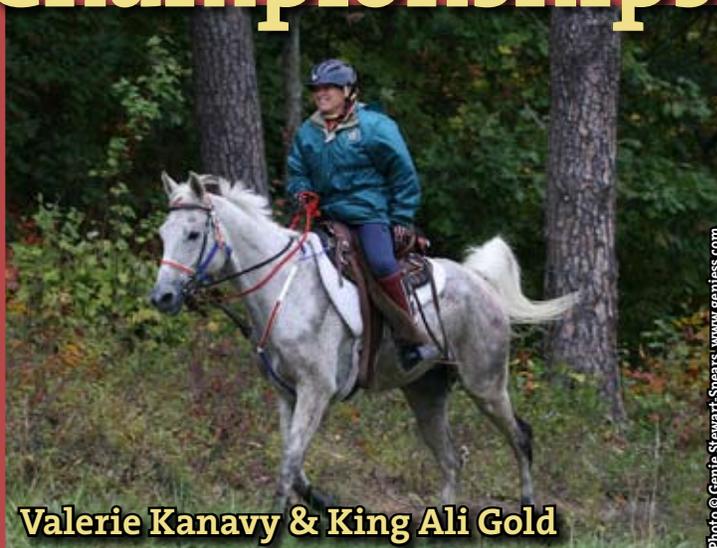


# AERC National Championships



**Teresa McCarty & Spectacular Gold**

Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, www.geniess.com



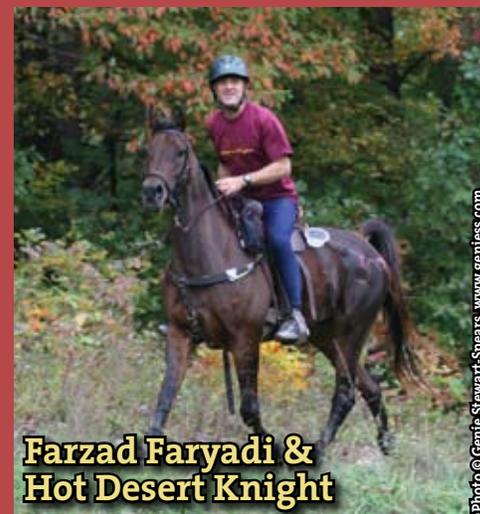
**Valerie Kanavy & King Ali Gold**

Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, www.geniess.com



**Activity at the away vet check**

Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, www.geniess.com



**Farzad Faryadi & Hot Desert Knight**

Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, www.geniess.com

BY GENIE STEWART-SPEARS

**T**he outstanding workforce of the Daniel Boone Distance Riders (DBDR) hosted the AERC 100- and 50-mile National Championships October 16 and 18 in the Clark State Forest near Henryville, Indiana.

Mother Nature further tested the strength and teamwork of the DBDR members when less than five weeks before the event she wreaked havoc on the trails. High winds felled huge trees, taking down other trees in their path, falling like giant matchsticks across the trails planned for the national championship course. But DBDR members, the Pekin Saddle Club and Clark State Forest Head Forester Walter Zak joined forces to clear the trails in time for the national event.

Base camp was on veteran endurance rider Bill Wilson's property. There were competitors from 26 states, three Canadian provinces, Holland, Sweden, Namibia, and Columbia. It was a festival of horses and people. Everyone was treated to great food,

entertainment and completion awards.

The weather was warm and the humidity high the week of the event but it was to change. A front coming through would bring cooler temperatures and a chance of rain.

The 100-mile event started 45 competitors and completed 29. Although a light rain began at 5:30 a.m., it didn't seem to dampen the spirits of the riders when the trail opened at 7:00 a.m. on October 16.

When endurance legend Valerie Kanavy's horse, King Ali Gold, was not selected for last month's World Championship in Malaysia, she entered him in the AERC National 100-mile Championship. (Kanavy would be riding the World Championship on another horse.) And because Ali is a challenge to pace the first 25 to 30 miles of a competition, Kanavy waited 15 minutes after the start to leave the starting line.

In less than two hours, Ali covered the 19-mile first leg and was first to enter and exit the vet check. And the pair continued

to be first out of every vet check throughout the day.

But Kanavy wasn't entirely alone. In the first half, Connie Walker on VSF Otis+/, Stagg Newman on Jayel Super, Debra Ivey on Be Joyful, Farzad Faryadi on Hot Desert Knight, Christina Phillips on Elegant Pride, Darolyn Butler on Merci Merci, Cecilia Butler-Stasiuk on DJB Sombreiul and several others were within 15 minutes' striking distance. But it was Farzad Faryadi who was hot at her heels.

"I had no idea I was so close to her until I saw her about an hour into the second loop," said Faryadi. "I thought maybe her horse was getting tired. This is competition, you know, so I thought I would push her to see what happened."

Kanavy's horse vetted through the second check, at 35.5 miles, two minutes ahead of Faryadi's horse.

The next leg of the course was a 15.5-mile loop back to the same out vet check. There,

Ali vetted through seven minutes quicker than Hot Desert Knight even though they arrived together.

During the following 13.5 mile leg that took them back to base camp for the next vet check, Faryadi again caught up with and leap-frogged Kanavy.

"When I came in to the fourth vet check (64.5 miles) I paid for running hard because my horse's CRI was 56/80," explained Faryadi. "The veterinarians wanted to check him again before I left. I brought him back to the vets in 25 or 30 minutes and he was still high. Then Dr. Marcella, the head vet, checked him and he was 62 and everything else was straight As so they let me go.

"I slowed down," said Faryadi, "keeping his heart rate at or below 120 bpm."

Christina Phillips, on Lana Wright's horse Elegant Pride, and Ceci Butler-Stasiuk on DBJ Sombreiul slipped ahead of Faryadi.

On the final 10-mile leg, Faryadi left the vet check with Gail Jewell, riding NL Temptation. "I thought I was in fourth place," said Faryadi. "So I watched my heart rate monitor and would pick up the speed a little bit to stay ahead of her."

Jewell, of Kelowna, British Columbia, won the Canadian National Championship in August on the same mare she was riding.

"I had turned off my headlamp because my horse was distracted by the shadows it threw," said Jewell. "There was no way that I would have been comfortable riding at that speed without Farzad as my headlight so I just stuck to his horse's butt. Not that it mattered, but I had no idea that Reserve Championship was in the bag."

Kanavy, competing in the lightweight division, completed 45 minutes ahead of Faryadi with a course time of 9:53.

Unfortunately, Ceci Butler-Stasiuk was out of the ride at 80 miles and Christine Phillips' horse was eliminated at the finish. Phillips stated, "I rode the entire 100 miles but got pulled at the finish because of a muscle cramp in the right hind." She was quick to add, "I would do this ride again—it was the best ride—and this horse gets better and better. I am very grateful to the horse's owner, Lana Wright, for giving me the opportunity to do this sport and this ride."

Faryadi, a middleweight, completed in 10:38 and Jewell, a lightweight rider, completed one minute later.

Middleweight Alison Bailey, riding K-Zar Emmanuel, finished fourth overall in 11:05. The first junior to complete, in 11:05.02,

was Joni Buttram on Cash Bonus. One second later, in sixth place, was middleweight Libby Llop on Fly So Free. In seventh place was Stagg Newman on Jayel Super, with a ride time of 11:05.04.

Hernan Barbosa on Winn Starr and Steve Rojek on Julio completed eighth and ninth, respectively, in 11:09. Teresa Johnston on Dozer had the final top ten completion with a ride time of 11:11.

Seven horses were shown for the best condition judging the next morning and Faryadi's Hot Desert Knight was the recipient. King Ali Gold was reserve best condition with only an eight point score difference.

With excitement and jubilation still running through the event, 114 riders prepared for the 50-mile championship the next day, October 18. After another great meal on Friday night, camp became quiet very early in preparation for the 7:30 a.m. start.

The sky was clear and the temperature was much cooler for the 50-mile event mass start. Cody Boysen on Sweet Legacy set the pace with Pam Weidel on AF Big Bucks and Bob Steller on Majestic Star+ on the chase.

However, Teresa McCarty, riding Valerie Kanavy's horse, Spectacular Gold (Spec for short), came to the event with the will and athleticism to win. "I believed that Spec could win. But, when I got there and saw how many great horses and riders were in the competition, I changed my goal to top ten!" said McCarty.

"The first loop," she said, "was fast and fun! Spec was really on his game."

McCarty, a middleweight, said due to the mass of riders, she had no idea of her position until she got into the first vet check. "I found out from Dr. Otis Schmitt, with his little video camera, that I was the second horse in the vet check! I was amazed," said McCarty. "I was only five minutes behind Pam Weidel, and I know she is one tough cookie! I knew I had to keep my wits about me and ride smart."

On the second loop, McCarty caught Weidel at the bottom of a steep hill, close to a road crossing. McCarty said, "We crossed the road, and I said to Pam, 'Hey, let's just ride together. No sense in beating our horses up in the second loop.' We still made good time, but then Samantha Sandler on Elliptic caught us at the second vet check. Out of that check, we rode together the entire loop. Pam was leading, I was second and Samantha was right behind me. We mostly cantered and trotted that whole loop. It was so much fun!"

Lightweight Pam Weidel, however, side-swiped with another 50-miler who was going out on the same single-track trail as she and McCarty and Sandler were on their way back. "My stirrup came off and I thought it broke," she said. "I should have gotten off and got that stirrup. But I didn't. I put the sponge strap around my foot so I would have some leverage to ride in the last mile and a half. I had hills to climb and only one stirrup!"

Even though Weidel arrived five minutes after McCarty and Sandler, AF Big Bucks pulsed down immediately and had the same out time as McCarty's horse. In the meantime, Pam's crew person, Jerry Kubis, drove back to base camp to get another set of stirrups.

"On that final loop," McCarty said, "I knew I had a good chance at winning. But, I had to ride smart. I knew Pam would race me and so would Samantha, and then there was Karen Cummings, an awesome rider, only 10 minutes behind me. I knew I had to fly and to be smart.

"I galloped off with Pam right behind me keeping pace, and then she passed me on the first nasty hill," explained McCarty. "I got off and walked the hill and then remounted and caught and passed Pam again. She kept pace with me until the water stop and that's where I left her. I trotted down that big hill and hit the bottom and galloped away. I got off and walked Spec up the last big hill where I knew I was home free.

"Spec took a big drink at the water trough and I said, 'Spec, we have a mile and half to go—let's get 'er done!'" said McCarty. "I looked back a few times just to be sure, but Spec galloped across the finish line with no one in sight!"

The course time for McCarty and Spec was 3:58, 20 minutes faster than the second-place competitor.

"I sure learned that 'to finish is to win,'" stated the humbled Pam Weidel, who eventually completed in 15th place overall with a ride time of 4:44. "I thought I had it made when McCarty's horse stopped at the top of the first hill. Ha! You never know, do you? Bucks just ran out of gas.

"I was walking him thinking, 'Well, second place isn't bad in this ride,'" said Weidel. "Then some horses passed and I thought, 'Well, fifth place isn't bad in this ride.' More horses passed, and I thought, 'Top ten will be okay.' Then, when even more horses passed, I thought, 'I'll just be happy to finish this ride!'"

Lightweight Karen Cummings, who was

continued on next page

## National Championships...

sponsoring junior rider Kyla McAfee, also had high hopes of winning, or at least helping Kyla win the junior division. But that wasn't to be either. At the first vet check they found themselves in third and fourth place.

"About three miles out from the finish line," said Cummings with regret, "my horse just stopped. I got off and walked him almost to the top of the hill. While I was trying to get back on him, Deb Shaffer with her grandson, Austin Shaffer, passed us. I was so disappointed for Kyla.

"At the top of the hill (about a mile and a quarter from the finish line), my horse drank about 10 gallons of water," recalled Cummings. "He then began to canter on his own. I told Kyla to go and I would be right behind her. I did not want to race in, so I let a rider [featherweight Katherine Shank on Wind



Riding Cash Bonus, Joni Buttram was the first junior to finish the 100 mile ride, in 11:05. Photo © Genie Stewart-Spears, [www.geniess.com](http://www.geniess.com).

Dancer-Bey] go by me. But I hollered to Kyla, 'Go fast!' Kyla looked back and then took off to finish ahead in fourth place."

Lightweight Deb Shaffer, along with her 9-year-old grandson Austin Shaffer, com-

pleted two seconds apart for second and third place overall. Shaffer said, "My goal was just ride my own ride, like any other ride, and take care of my junior rider and both horses and hope it would put us in the top ten. Our horses love to canter the hills and that was an advantage for us."

Lightweight Linda Hamrick completed on Zahar's Gallant Dancer in 4:26. Lightweight Eva de Paulis completed one minute later on Arabah Firedance. Middleweight Bob Steller finished in 4:30. Junior rider Maggie Becker was tenth overall on Twister in 4:31.

One hundred and one competitors completed and four of the top ten showed for best condition judging. Spectacular Gold easily won this coveted award and Cummings' horse, PF First Knight, was reserve best condition. ■