

Tom Quilty – Nanango Qld

2008

-by Anne Barlow riding Tyto Ivan

I read the article (Courier Mail – Monday 22nd September 2008) titled “Riders on the Storm Take Gold:”... aptly named!

Following the crippling effect on everything equine late last year with travel restrictions due to the Equine Influenza, the Tom Quilty, our national championship looked to be in real jeopardy for 2008.

However a couple of ladies in Nanango (SEQ) were determined that there should be a TQ in 2008 and worked hard for 10 months to bring it to fruition. Barb Timms and Colleen Shaw approached our State Committee with the idea in January and worked tenaciously all year to ensure that it was to be a Tom Quilty not to be forgotten.

Little did they know that the weather would play the biggest part in their ‘storm in a teacup’ event!

The ride started as per schedule at 4 am on Saturday 20th September, 204 riders and horses departing from the Nanango Show Grounds and heading off to ride 100 kms or so in the East Nanango Forest and surrounding properties.

The first two legs involved an “Away Check” or a traveling vet check. The location for this check was a relatively easy 6 kms by road from Nanango Township at a property known as “Treebys”.

Riders and their strapping teams had visited Treebys on previous days depositing all manner of strapping gear, horse yards and other commodities in readiness for the event.

So when we riders made the final ascent to Treebys to the welcoming faces of the crowd, all the commodities of home camp were waiting.... well for some teams! In fact for our family, the strappers had left the human food box & eskie back in the show grounds. Not to be deterred my

nephew, Grant, queued for some time to get some food, as our neddies had vetted and were happily munching in their small yard.

As the temperature climbed, so did we on the second leg of the ride, which involved quite some hill work amongst the hoop pine plantation. After a few hours we were all thirsty....and those radio checkpoints with horse and human water were very appreciated by all!

A climb back up the hill to Treeby’s and things were much quieter when we arrived the 2nd time. The ‘front runners’ camps and strapping teams had left and the pace was slower, the toilets were freer and we were soon on our way again, descending into the forestry once more for a loop before returning to the show grounds for the next check.

Cool drinks for all, and some cool strapping for the horses - we were wishing for cool change....

My anticipated arrival time was underestimated, but due to the hot conditions (must ride the course to the weather conditions) we arrived back in the show grounds and vetted through. Sadly hubby Steve and his mount Dunwingeri Maashhar did not vet through – in fact both were lame.

So sister, Karen and I proceeded onto the 4th leg. This leg was a pleasant jog around the back streets with some lovely cross country riding through an old stock route, and we followed behind a short rain shower, which had apparently dampened the riders in front.

Back to base and a vet through, off we headed – the threatening storm appearing still to be a way off, and maybe headed somewhere else?

Well no, we hadn’t been riding for long and had just about finished climbing a long hill by road, hoping to reach the Treeby’s checkpoint, when all Hell broke loose. The lightning was all around us, the wind was extremely strong and the rain was driving into our faces, we tried to continue. We happened upon the fence of a property with a large rural shed and yelling at each other through the storm, we agreed that to take shelter in the lee of the shed might be a good idea. At that stage we were in the midst of a severe thunderstorm, lightning all around and riding on a hill in open country, not exactly a safe place to be! So we let ourselves into the

property and were delighted to find that on the other side of the shed there were 4 open bays. After a small amount of coaxing, both horses agreed this was a suitable shelter and joined us to watch the action from our high vantage point for 15 minutes or so. We were already wet through to the undies!

After thanking the property owners and whilst still in the midst of the aftermath (lots of lightning to show us the way) of the storm we continued, arriving at the Treeby's radio checkpoint, just 1 km up the road, to find the SES guys still waiting for us!

Riding wet to the undies the remaining 6 or 7 kilometres back to the show grounds, we found that the base had also suffered from the deluge. We were fortunate that vetting had just resumed and the horses passed through quickly enabling us to return to our camps. Suffice to say that the camps were in a bit of a shambles, but we quickly changed all our clothing. Karen and I likened this to a previous TQ @ Mt Pleasant in SA, when changing everything down to your underwear during the event became a regular occurrence!

Back out we ventured for the final 14 km leg, jumping puddles and progressing slowly through the more precarious track conditions, caused by the heavy rain of the storm. At approximately 2 am we completed our mission, with a successful Tom Quilty buckle in store, we retired for what remained of the night.

However many of the horses and riders who had been held for 1.5 hours due to the closure of the vetting area, continued and the last riders to complete the track arrived back at the show grounds @ 5.30 am, just 25.5 hours from the start time!

Congratulations to all those who rode, successful and not, it was a true test of horsemanship and management in ALL weather conditions.



Tyto Ivan and I at Shahzada just a month before – 10th Buckle for Anne, 4th for Tyto Ivan



Treebys – Steve & Maashhar, Ivan and I, my strapper, daughter Christine followed by Karen and Shadow – 2nd check point