

Tom Gower & JG Saqr

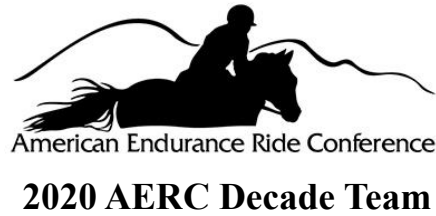


Photo © Becky Pearman

Rider's name: Tom Gower

Horse's name: JG Saqr

Year of First Endurance Ride (first year in the decade): 2004

Region: MW

Current rider lifetime mileage?

Endurance:

Limited Distance:

Competitive Trail: +1500 miles

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?

JG Saqr (Saqr is Arabic for falcon and pronounced like "soccer") was bred and raised by Grace Ramsey and Jan Worthington. I believe I purchased him in 2004. As a former college long distance runner, as soon as I saw Saqr, I thought he was put together to move very efficiently.

What is your horse's breeding?

Arab x Standardbred, gosh I love that cross!!!

Sex: Gelding

DOB:

Horse height: 16h

Approximate weight: 1050

Color: Gray

Why did you decide to purchase this horse?

I looked at a number of horses at Jan and Grace's farm, but fell in love with Saqr. He was not trusting, a very bad spooker (he almost dumped me on my first test ride), but he had the loudest heart I have ever heard in a horse and he just looked like a long distance runner.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? One other, a Belesemo horse

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? > 10

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Dressage, did 4-H as a kid,

How many years have you been involved with endurance? With horses in general? I grew up on a horse farm in central KY and my family boarded 50-70 horses. I was not amused by riding horses in an arena. I returned to endurance riding after my decades of running wore out my legs and "competitive rowing" had too short of a season in Madison WI.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?

How old was your horse when first started in endurance? 5 years old.

How many rides did you do your first three ride seasons?

I did very few endurance rides early on, instead I competed Saqr in Competitive Trail to teach him pace.

What mileage distance did you start with? (25, 50, etc.)

Getting started in the Midwest, I really learned about Endurance from Jan Worthington and Grace Ramsey. They recommended I start Saqr in Competitive Trail. When I lived in WI all my new horses started in Competitive Trail.

How long until you top tenned or raced (if you did)?

How much time off do you give between ride seasons?

1 week/50 mile race, 3-4 weeks for 100 mile race, and usually 2 months during winter.

If you have done 100s, how much time off do you give after doing one?

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one?

No multi-days

Do you use any special type of tack or shoeing with your horse?

No special tack. I shoe my own horses. All my taller horses use wide web (eg SX8's) steel shoes for greater support.

What kind of problems have you overcome with your horse?

A crazy, crazy spooky horse.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse.

This is the easiest question of all. Biltmore 100 in 2008. I asked Susan Kasemeyer to crew for me. I wanted to "top ten", but I had so much respect for the reputation of how tough Biltmore Estates 100 mile race was. Saqr was wild in the first loop, but he settled down and ate really well at every VC. I stood for BC and I can still remember Art King telling us to trot horses out like we wanted to sell them. Saqr's cue to start the BC circles was "Big Trot" and he just about lifted his front end off the ground pushing off that night. All those BC practice trot outs that Stagg and Cheryl Newman told me to do really paid off. He was awesome. CRI of 52/48. He won BC and high VS. We went on to place 4th in the AERC National BC competition that year. A magical day. Thanks Susan!!!

What was your most humbling experience?

Getting pulled at the end of the Ft. Howes 100.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?

What advice would you give to new riders?

This can be a really hard sport to break into and learn. It is a lifelong endeavor. But, unlike any other sport I have been associated with, each rider/equine team can have perfectly valid goals that are in stark contrast to other rider/equine teams' goals (e.g. some make a living doing this, others want to accumulate miles, others want to go fast). Can you imagine me telling my college cross country coach I really do not want to run that hard while I am on a 4 year scholarship because I want to have a long running career!!! My advice: find a mentor(s) that align with your vision for the sport.

Looking back, what do you feel you did right?

Dressage training and starting Saqr off in Competitive Trail to teach him pace.

What would you do differently?

LOL. Bought Saqr after I sorta knew what I was doing.

What was your highest goal for your horse, and did you achieve it?

Truthfully, my goals for each horse are: (1) build a lifelong bond, (2) help them reach their maximum potential, (3) provide them with a wonderful retirement.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?

Cra-Cra!!! Saqr was a BIG "spooker." He dumped me so many times during conditioning rides and races. JG Saqr was the "spookiest" horse I have ever tried to ride. Ironically, he is now one of my most pleasant horses to ride. I guess we all are capable of changing ☺. Hopefully he will reach 3,000 miles in 2021.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most (50s, 100s, multadays, etc.)?

100's

In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life?

Endurance riding keeps me grounded every day. Conditioning rides blow off stress. Barn chores are the highlight of every day. My very best friends are endurance riders.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?

Who knows!!!! But, I strongly believe horses all my horses have benefitted from large pastures and fresh grass during the growing season and great hay during the winter.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program (i.e., changed from one hay to another, added something special) that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem?

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?

A complete supplement. I was trained as a soil fertility/plant nutrition scientist, so I "think" I understand the role of nutrition on plant growth and animal health.

Do you give any kind of joint products?

Adequan following trusted endurance vets recommendations and Legend several days before 100's.

Describe your electrolyte protocol.

Highly variable depending on goal and weather.

How do you choose which rides to attend?

My work schedule and time off for the horse.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? Always (Central, Southeast, Midwest (my region), and Mountain. When I retire I want to ride all the famous rides in Mountain and Southwest regions

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why.

Jan Worthington/ Grace Ramsey. That is the complete team! I soooo admire what Jan and Grace did in the sport and in life.

Stagg/Cheryl Newman. Another incredibly awesome couple. They taught me to train my horses hard and trot out your horse for BC after every training ride.

My dressage instructor, Binky Krahn, back in WI who “bought” into helping me become a better rider and teach Saqr to move more efficiently. After every dressage lesson I would practice BC trot outs and she gave him treats.

Connie and Mike Caudill. Two of the finest human beings and horse people on Earth!

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?

LOL, that is a loaded question. Where I am at now in my life cycle, I want a willing, well-bred and sane equine partner.