

## Anne Sands & Windy Knoll Mistral+/-



### AERC Decade Team



*Photo by Jane Wilson*

**4160 Miles, 78 ride completions**  
**First AERC ride: 1988    Region: W**

**Sex:** Gelding

**DOB:** 2/28/82

**Horse height:** 15hh

**Approx. Weight:** 980-1,000 lbs.

**Color:** grey

**Shoe size:** 3 (note: that is not a typo!)

Mistral's male line goes to Overlook Design (Gaffizon); his female line goes to Metczy Rose (Meczet/Comet). Mistral was born at Windy Knoll Arabians in Lincoln, CA and was trained by Richard Barsaleau, DVM, of Loomis, CA.

Anne bought Mistral for her husband, Russ Faure-Brac. It was love at first sight, and to this day Mistral happily goes out on the trail with Russ, whenever he can steal his horse back from Anne!

Mistral and Anne are not out there to win, but to have a great adventure on as many miles of historical trails as they can find. In 1989 they completed 650 miles of the Pony Express trail between Salt Lake City, Utah and Carson City, Nevada, winning the overall BC award. Twelve years later they covered 500 miles of the XP 2001 trail between St. Joseph, Missouri and Virginia

City, Nevada. Their ride records include two starts and two completions of the Tevis ride in 1990 and 1991, and 3,000+ miles of multi-day rides.

Mistral has developed a reputation for being a great "uncle" to young or inexperienced horses. He seems to instill confidence and is an excellent trail partner. His good manners and quiet way with people were of great importance during the years we were members of the California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit. Mistral would stand patiently while being stroked by young campers, and willingly carried flags in the local parades. He presented a regal picture!

I have become so spoiled by his unwavering kindness and willingness to go down the trail. It is hard to accept that he is 22 years old and that I will not have him as my endurance partner forever!

***What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most?***

I enjoy the multi-day rides put on by Dave (the Duck) and Annie Nicholson and the awe-inspiring challenge of the Western States 100 (Tevis). Most of the one-day 50's I have encountered are too crazed for my taste. I much prefer the style and grace of well-mannered horses and polite riders who stop to help each other and even forfeit a completion to aid a horse or rider in trouble. This does not mean there is no competition on multi-day rides! The competition is the trail and the clock and your own goals for the day or week, as well as the other riders. To me, there is nothing more satisfying than completing a 5-day, 250-mile ride and winning BC on the last day.

***What advice do you have for new riders?***

Train with someone who is successful at keeping their horse sound and who rides the way you would like to ride. Do not treat training rides like mini-races. Stay focused on your horse and how he or she is doing that day. Go slow and steady with plenty of little rest stops. Allow your horse to eat and drink along the way while training. Trot gentle downhills for short stretches a few times a month to condition bones, ligaments and tendons. Take lessons so you can learn how to use half-halts to balance your horse at all speeds and over all types of terrain. Be careful of the Big Trot. It may be fun, but it can overstress your horse's legs and lead to lameness problems. Learn all you can about nutrition, but don't feed every supplement out there! Feed good quality grass hay if you can get it and a basic grain mix produced by a reliable manufacturer with a good research program. Get a farrier who understands what you are asking of your horse. Use a vet who knows what kinds of stresses your horse is under and who is willing to combine traditional and alternative medicine approaches as necessary. Pay attention to your tack and have your saddle adjusted as your horse becomes more fit. By this I mean your horse's abdominals and back/loin are developing\_not that your horse is losing weight and becoming ladder-backed! Listen to your intuition; if you feel you are over riding your horse, you probably are. Slow down, and save your horse for another day. There is no shame in recognizing this is "not your horse's day" and pulling yourself from a ride. In fact, this is the admirable thing to do.

***What was your worst experience with Mistral?***

My worst experience was on day 13 of a 15-day XP event in 1990 between Carson City and Salt Lake City (the reverse of our BC ride the previous year). Mistral and I found a badger hole with our names on it and I lead him into the next vet check in tears. I later found out we were being considered for the overall BC again that year. Sigh. Sometimes these things happen. I still remember how it felt to trot happily along and then feel Mistral's right hind leg fall out from under us. The good news was that it healed nicely and never bothered us again. We were lucky!

***What three people involved in the sport of endurance do you look up to, and why?***

Cassandra Schuler, DVM. I got into the sport because of my veterinarian, Sandy Schuler. She saw me on my first Arab in 1984 and encouraged me to enter the local Drake's Bay 50 here at Point Reyes. The night before the ride I lay awake listening to a steady downpour..it kept raining off and on all during the ride\_it was cold and foggy and the trails became slippery and I had never had so much fun on a horse in my life!

Doris Anderson I met Doris and her husband Deane on the XP trail. She was a fierce and fair competitor and taught me how to get a horse through day after day of rough trail and unforgiving heat, sand, dust, rain and rocks. She was always way in front of me, so I learned from a distance! Doris was one of the toughest women I have ever known. She was so determined to finish that 650 mile ride I spoke of earlier, that she rode the last 3 days with her broken leg in a cast, partially strapped to the saddle. She opened her heart and her home to us and I will never forget her.

Paul Critchfield Paul and I rode hundred's of XP miles together. Our pace and riding styles matched well and we often crossed the finish holding our hands up high. He taught me the importance of riding your own ride and not being distracted by other riders. Paul never complained or criticized other riders\_he just beat them to the finish by using strategy and taking good care of his horse.

***Looking back, what would you have done differently?***

I would have gone back to Windy Knoll Arabians and bought more Overlook Design babies!

**Some additional advice from Anne, which is Great Stuff! Please read :-)**

- o Ride and train with people who pay attention to what is going on with their horses and with yours Avoid riders who are going faster than you want to; let them pass (you will probably pass them later in a vet check)
- o Don't be in a hurry; be deliberate and consistent with training and riding
- o Use multiday rides as starting ground by doing one or two days with rest days in between
- o Let horse eat grass and offer rest stops to pee
- o Get off and lead down hills or anywhere the footing is nasty enough that you'd be walking anyway
- o Take opportunities to practice leg yields and half -halts while on the trail
- o Practice TTEAM work on your horse at home and at rides (bodywork, work in hand over obstacles and so forth)
- o Train with a heart monitor once in a while to measure progress in fitness
- o Toughen up legs carefully by trotting on hard ground for short periods and downhill for short stretches on training rides (don't over do it and don't wait for an endurance ride to do this)
- o Use half halts to teach your horse how to stay balanced going downhill and uphill
- o Take riding lessons from someone who can help you and your horse get balanced
- o Don't feed every supplement that comes along; keep horse's diet simple and find what works
- o Don't feel you have to do the ride you set out to do. Be flexible about time and distance and terrain; if your horse is not having a good day, back off and shorten the ride. Likewise, don't feel you have to finish every endurance ride you start! Plenty of top riders have "called it a day" and saved their horse for another ride.

- Get your horse in good enough shape so you'll not be out there all day, but go the pace that works for you.
- Remember that NO ONE will remember where you placed or how long it took you. Your competition is the trail and your own personal goals and the limitations of your horse on that day.