

## Elroy Karius & Apache Eclipse



### 2011 AERC Decade Team



Rider Name: Elroy Karius

Horse Name: Apache Eclipse

Region: Northwest

Current Rider Lifetime Mileage? AERC 4815, add non AERC include FEI over 5000.

Endurance: 5000 plus

Limited Distance: 85

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? Purchased in August 2002, after a paddock injury sidelined KK Dinnari, a young horse I was competing with. My senior mount Gango Shakem was also out of competition as a result of a trailer wreck. Both injuries were career ending, a huge disappointment and a challenge to my future plans for endurance. I found a replacement, thought I had a deal and in the last hour the owners decided not to close the deal. Frustrated again I started a new hunt and spotted an ad in the Canadian Arabian news for a horse that turned out to be Apache, I had the owner send a photo via the internet and left next morning with my horse trailer in tow, drove 800 miles to look at him, rode him 200 yards, paid the asking price, asked about his life history good news and bad, loaded him and drove back to Kelowna, The decision, return trip and arrival, within 36 hours after I saw the ad.

What is your horses breeding? Apache Eclypse is a Bey Shah grandson bred by Bey Eclypse out of Apache Gem

Sex: Gelding

DOB: May 17 1996

Horse height: 15.2

Approx. Weight: Fit and Trim at 890 lbs

Color: Bay

Shoe size: #2 easy boot

Or, hoof boot size:

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)? Apache was a very striking physical presence, he was a bit (chuckle) overweight, when I saw him, I was however more taken by his eye, rather than any thing else I looked at. His confirmation, bone and correctness were all pretty much in place, his eye however would have out weighed a lot of imperfections. There was a fire, a message that life would be a lot on his terms and yet a deep kind eye that seemed to be looking for something or someone to trust. The life message turned out to be accurate, the rest a combination of his flight personality and the message I get every day I am with him. " I trust you but, lets talk later, after the monster goes away." Apache does not have a mean bone in his body or a mean thought in his mind. he is however a flight response horse.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? yes

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

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Distance riding recreationally and competitive trail were the activity before endurance, now it is endurance or recreational, some recreational cow ranch work.

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? Involved with horses in my childhood years, farm working horses, drove and rode to school with horses/buggy and or horseback. Endurance started as a look-see sport after competitive trail.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? My sister Lil and her hubby Ross Schmidt were doing endurance in late 80's, although I was attracted to the idea,work and life did not have room for the travel to the competitions. My first competition was in 1991.

How old was your horse when first started? First ride? Apache was 5 1/2 years old was started by the previous owners,was destined to be a driving show horse, had some problems(flight issues). I started working with him immediately when I got him and did a conservative 7:08 50 mile ride in late Sept /02.

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons? (list w/ distances) First Season /02

very conservative pace 50 mile ride in late Sept, rest in interim, light conditioning work, late October did 4 day multiday at conservative pace 210 miles in 27 hours. Then full rest till 2003 season start in condition work March 2003. Second season did 13 50 mile rides all completions. Third season 7 starts, completed 3/50 1/100. Learning curve with strange inconsistent lameness, Apache was pulled on three consecutive rides, did not start on fourth, on vet in day, the mysterious issue revealed itself when an abscess popped up and ultimately broke open on center of spine prior to ride start. Likely a foreign object imbedded and was Ride season was over and 2005 was abright new game.

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

How long till you top tenned or raced? (if you did) Top tenned 12 out of 13 starts in 2003 season, BC 4 times of the 12. Raced to the finish line at AERC Nat Championship Red Rock ride, 1st middleweight for 50 mile Championship.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? As much as schedule allows usually Nov to Feb, only light or no work and let them be horses in large turnout.

If you have done 100 s, how much time off do you give after doing one? Today I like to look at one month although schedules may not allow that, absolute minimum would be three weeks to another 100, maybe two weeks to 50, more important are all the other parameters of the larger picture including stress, travel, record of performance and conditions of competitions past and expected. Earlier years only one horse, desire to compete had tighter schedules, there is a cost to the soundness of the horse.

If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? Same as above, the key is what are the parameters of decision based on.

What kind of tack do you use? (saddle, pads, girths, bits, etc.) Have used treeless Sensation for years with multiple horses with great success, balance of tack has varied, sheepskin has lots of pros for comfort and range of use, Conditions can vary what I use.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Barefoot? Barefoot and booted? 99% steel, some pads, occasional boots, glue-ons solved a big problem?

What kind of problems have you encountered? All kinds of issues, ranging from equipment failure and trailer overturn in crash, to penning, stallion and aggressive horse management, feed issues on the road, metabolic issues, lameness issues, stress and fatigue due to pre ride, or post-ride extensive travel.(both horse and rider)

Actual ride day issues are more predictable and manageable, usually with the resources of veterinarian and ride management more readily available. The parameters are usually current events related to decisions made or events, ie falls, lameness or metabolic. What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? Apache has well over 150,000 miles of travel, and in the scope of things injuries have mostly been minor, his most severe was a leg scrape after going down in the trailer when a divider panel broke due to a sudden traffic shift. He reared in the trailer as the panel and the horse next to him squeezed into his space, he went down and got his hind caught under the next divider. We watched it happen via the Camera Unit and were able to respond immediately.

How did you work through it? We were on a four month road trip, had to pull Apache out of competition for a month, he recovered and carried on compete.

What was the worst or most severe injury you have ever had relating to horses or endurance riding? The crash at night, and overturned horse trailer with two trapped horses is my absolute worst experience. Although the immediate physical injuries were not that severe the emotional trauma and inability to do those physical things required to free the horses, the fear in their eyes remain as clear as if it were yesterday. In the chaos that ensued multiple resources were available from police, fire trucks, to tow trucks and ambulances, but no resources for the horses or people with skills available to handle horses.

The most severe injury was a kick injury in the paddock to our best endurance mare. The injury was an open compound fracture to the ball joint in the hind leg, on Xray the fracture was a multiple spider web like break that had no surgical options and was in danger of bone collapse. This injury occurred approximately nine months before a major competition that this horse was qualified to go to. The prognosis was grim at best with infection the immediate risk second only to the collapse which would mean euthanizing the mare. On the heels of a four month road trip, this mare was scheduled to rest and then condition to peak for the 2010 WEG. All bets were off and we were in crisis mode.

How did you work thru it? Two veterinarians, Grant Scott and my wife Gail, who rides this horse, had absolute faith and belief that what appeared to be impossible, might be possible, dedicated the next months forward to the recovery effort. A story all of its own, we built a shelter around the mare, as she couldn't be moved, 24/7 care, slowly, she regained ability to weight bear, months later short hand walking, finally long walks, then trot, then hours trotting behind an improvised exercise tractor, then short rides with light rider weight, meeting all the dates for soundness declarations for the NF, recovery and condition maintained, NL Temptation went on to compete as the Number One ranked horse in Canada and completed the WEG 100 finishing 35th out of 135 starters (confirm stats)

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? Apache Eclypse nine days after finishing 1st middleweight 50 mile National Championship at Red Rock ride Oct 12 2003 in 5:39, went on to Oreana Idaho and started the 5 day multiday on Oct 21,2003. After 3 days Apache had BC'd day one and two , finished day 3 in his fastest 50 pace in 3:40, was leading the multiday pack, on day four the tree on my saddle split and we lost a lot of time and ended the day, 3 minutes ahead of the second place multiday horse ridden by Sue Hedgecock.

Day 5 had a number of new starters, among them a pretty formidable challenger in the form of Sue Nance and Excaliber. The two Sues were teamed up to start day 5 and the challenge was clear. I took Apache for a walk in the moonlight at 3:00 AM. I knew I was asking a lot, what we needed to do was to be Sue Hedgecocks shadow and the 5 day game was over. I looked him in the eye and the message of fire and his terms as always was there. The day was a surreal experience, the pace was blazing 3:56, Apache, finished second, 8 minutes after Excaliber, minutes ahead of Sue Hedgecock, and went on to BC for the third time in five days. Total ride time for the 260 miles was 24:07. Truly a gift from a great horse, one of many I have come to appreciate.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? WEG 2010. There was so much invested in WEG, the multiple challenges that had come along in the journey to get there, as the O/C put it " the highest level of competition on the planet " Having arrived there and experienced the "hype" Apache ever the flight horse took all the moments in stride and "braved" all the monsters, was probably in the finest form in any race I had ever started with him. We had a super day going and then a man made creek crossing, as were many of the WEG challenges, combined with an overpass, ever so briefly created a monster, his instinct was the undoing, a quick spin in the rocks and the slice into his bulb right hind, left an open wound that would end the day. The walk from the vet post pull area to the barns with a dancing Apache was a very long walk, Neither of us seemed to be able to make sense of this turn of events. A minor nothing injury but all the same the day was over. The moment was the worst. It has passed.

What was your most humbling experience? June 9 2007, AHA National Championship, Raced to the finish line knowing I had at least the Reserve Championship in my pocket, all I had to do was ride in and complete, made a conscious decision to race as I had many times before (successfully), raced a horse that turned out not to be entered in the AHA segment, my horse metabolically crashed at the finish, and the National Champion rode in 20 minutes later. A bad decision lost the Championship and endangered my horse, both of which had lessons attached. Thanks to the vets both horse and rider emerged to ride again.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Each ride is a gift from the horse, the rider plays a significant role, but the gift comes from the horse.

Speed has a price, understand that you risk more potential downside at speed. All decisions must be made in favour of the horse, as difficult as that may be given the competitive spirit of both horse and rider.

A non completion failure is not a failure unless we refuse to learn from the experience, if we learn then we have the opportunity to turn failure into learning and new success. "Denial" is the enemy; know what it means.

Know your horse, know your self, know your competition and then be open to respond to the challenges or gifts of the day.

The biggest mistake we can make is to believe, this is the super horse and expect that the gifts that we receive will be the norm for the future. When we experience the exceptional, it is because we are in tune with the spirit of the horse, sharing the reality of the experience in the moment. Sometimes it means today is not going to be exceptional and that's OK

A rider on a horse with exceptional ability is one kind of success, a rider who can achieve with multiple horses brings skills to the game worth observing.

A rider, a horse, returning to compete, mile after mile, year after year as a team, speaks volumes for both, for they have found each other and live in a relationship that is unique to them.

Look in the eye, you will see the spirit of the horse, if it is not there I will show you a horse that has been ridden past the place of pleasure, the race may be won, but the spirit is defeated. The rider records a win, the horse records defeat.

Where does your horse live? Full turnout? Our acreage, full pasture turnout, often in a bunch, after rides always minimum 3 day turnout with full observation.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of it's life in? (pasture, w/ a herd, etc.) Pasture and bunch.

What are your horse's strengths? Apache is every the "artiste", life according to Apache is his motto, "catch me if you can" or "I'm here" are games played equally well. Apache knows his job in the endurance game, He will start up front, in any crowd and go with the flow. Apache will pulse down in a flash and go into rest mode almost at will. He loves a good race and knows when he needs to go there. Adapts well to travel, always has. Second effort and rebounding energy are natural providing you take the time to let him go there.

Weaknesses? Flight is instinctive response to any threat, be aware. A hyper energetic race start will end

his day, if you don't take him out of it, he will respond to the pull back pace. Apache needs a rider who reads and responds to the moment.

What advice do you have for new riders? Learn the sport from ground up. Winning is fun, the mistake you will make is to think it will be the norm. If you stay there the potential to break your horse is huge.

Learn to pace and ride the pace you have prepared your horse to do. Your horse is probably equal to most, provided you take time to find its potential and protect its ability to achieve.

Learn from your mistakes or from the mistakes of others and grow into the sport. Choose mentors wisely and look closely at what success you choose to follow. Not all winners have the same concern for the horse.

Treatment for your horse, if recommended is best done early than late, your home vet or the ride vet should feel like they are your best friend. Be compassionate if you see a horse in treatment offer support to the owner/rider, you may be next, and there's much to learn, your unjudgemental kindness will be appreciated.

Looking back, what would you do differently? Not much, growing into the sport has a learning curve.

What do you feel you did right? Most decisions were based on the horses ability to stay in the game for the long term as opposed to speed in the short term. My speed record is up there, and we are in the decade horse range nearing 4000 miles What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? My goal was to compete with the best in North America, competing at the World Equestrian Games was riding with the best in the world.

Describe your horses personality? How is it like or unlike yours? Apache, a striking good looking, is a flight mentality horse, dedicated to the task, has learned to play the game, loves a race to the finish, willing to give it all. I think we are a matched pair except I'll stay for the fight and he gets the compliments for looks, I don't.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? (multidays, 100 s, 50 s, etc.) Any ride is a good ride, distance preferred. In what ways has endurance riding made a positive influence in your life? "To finish is to win". I apply that motto in my work and business, my clients love it, pay attention to detail makes the difference, I know when to rest and when to ride another day.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. Northern Lites dissolved admin in 1/2 doses more often with water after flush.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? Stay natural and normal in feed, no magic buckets, if there is a added nutritional requirement it is based on specific need.

Are there any major changes you've made to your nutrition program (ie, changed from one hay to another, added something special) that you feel made a noticeable improvement or solved a problem? Hay cubes and beet pulp presoaked are great for travel and dehydration related issues, Anxious travelers can lead to ulcers, precautionary treatment early is better than late.

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? Wheat Bran added, electrolytes during hot travel, anything else is specific to condition.

Do you give any kind of joint products? (describe) The road warriors get Adequan and Legend (vet administered)

How far do you usually travel to rides? 1000 miles is average, 3000 miles is unusual

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? Many

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? Gail Jewell DVM, my wife, helps me stay focused on the horses, we share the stay natural, respond specific and intervene early concepts. Jim Baldwin DVM, taught me that a good vet is your best friend, was true to his teaching when I experienced my first tie up. Valerie Kanavy, tons of experience, not shy about going the distance, had kind words and helped me through that first tie up experience sharing knowledge and her experiences. As a competitor she was so far ahead of my experience, yet she cared about my future in the sport and encouraged me to learn and move on.

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? Tell us about him/her/them. Daphne Richard is the mentor in the sport, always the example of great horse care, horse first, gear spotless, a class act in diplomacy, a sport builder, a new rider and youth promoter, a fierce enough competitor to keep checking where she was on trail, She set the standard for an ideal sport participant.

Describe the first rig you had and then tell us how it compares to your current rig? Class A Motorhome and straight haul two horse was the starting rig, Currently new weight spec 3500 GMC dually with Northern Lite camper, modified three horse angle haul packs four horses. Special add ons include Trailer Eyes Camera, roof carrier, power plant, water tank, loaded to the max, we are self sustaining for 12 days except water on the road legal at 22000 lbs.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? Looks a lot like Apache Eclipse, refine the flight mentality a bit, wouldn't trade that eye for anything.