

## Jonathan Bowman & Heigh Ho (aka Kitt)



American Endurance Ride Conference

### 2006 AERC Decade Team



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**Rider's Name:** Jonathan Bowman

**Horse's Name:** Heigh Ho (aka Kitt)

**Region:** Pacific South

**Sex:** Gelding

**DOB:** 04/27/91

**Horse height:** 15.1

**Approx. Weight:** 900

**Color:** Chestnut with flaxen mane/tail

**Shoe size:** 1

**Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?** In 1995 when we first saw Kitt, we were not looking for another horse. We had met the breeder for Arabian Farms at Scottsdale and got an invitation to tour their Santa Ynez facility. After a marvelous tour, Tomasz said, "I have one more horse I'd like to show you." He brought out Kitt and let him run at liberty. It was love at first sight. Within a couple of weeks, he was living with us.

**What is your horse's breeding?** He is a pureblood Arabian. His sire is Gondolier\*\* a World Champion Stallion and the Polish National Stallion. His dam is A-K Neheila from the Moniet El Nefous line.

**Why did you decide to purchase this horse?** I bought Kitt because he had a really wonderful way of

moving. He has a very powerful and athletic build and would be able to easily carry my weight. He survived a career as a racehorse, so I reasoned that his legs were strong. In addition, he is a very handsome horse with lots of cowboy chrome.

**Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?** I had only ridden 1 LD with another horse.

**How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?** I have ridden two horses at rides and have another coming along.

**Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?** We do a lot of trail riding and cowboy dressage.

**How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance?** I have been involved in horses for 12 years and in endurance for 11 of those.

**What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?** There are 2 main things that interest me in endurance: the partnership and the places. It is truly a marvelous experience working, living and competing with a highly tuned athlete in a virtually symbiotic relationship. Also, by traveling to rides in different areas of the country, you get to see the countryside of many interesting places. (Oh, I am also pretty competitive and that keeps me interested).

**How old was your horse when first started? First ride?** Kitt was 5 when we did our first endurance ride, the Sunland 25.

**How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons?** We did only that one LD in our first year. The second year had 1-25, 1-50 and 1-60 mile ride. The third year had 2-50s.

**How long till you top tenned or raced?** The first time we top-tenned was at the Santa Fe Hunt in 1998 and it was completely by accident and was a surprise.

**How much time off do you give between ride seasons?** Our ride season rarely ends. He has been racing pretty consistently for the last decade.

**If you have done 100's, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?** He generally gets a couple of weeks off with little or no riding. I will ride him on a couple of light rides on the weekend 2 weeks after a 100-mile race. Working up to a ride, we taper off of the hard training rides and only do light riding for about 3 weeks leading up to a ride.

**If you have done multadays, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?** The answer here is very similar to the answers above in the 100-mile question. However, I am less inclined to give him as much time off after a multiday.

**What kind of tack do you use?** I currently ride in a Sharon Saare and have ridden in one of her saddles for most of the last decade. We had a brief foray into another semi-custom saddle which did not work out very well. I use Equipedic saddle pads and have been very pleased with it. The girth is elastic and leather with a neoprene cover. We rode for 6 years in a snaffle bit, but finally graduated to a Slotted Kimberwick.

**What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Pads? Easyboots?** We have had pretty good experience with Natural Balance shoes and only pad when going to a particularly rocky ride. Easyboots are only used in emergencies.

**What kind of problems have you encountered?** Considering what we have been through together, I am happy to say that our career has been relatively problem free. The most recurring problem that we have is that he is very sensitive to cold. Even when it is warm out, if there is a good breeze and he is wet, I need to take care that he does not get chilled.

**What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had?** We are lucky to have remained mostly injury free. He currently has a mild ligament issue and is getting a well-deserved couple of months off.

**Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse?** There have been so many memorable rides, but there are 2 that stick out in my mind: Tevis and the Pan American Championship in Trout Lake, Washington. They were both significant rides for us, but for different reasons. Tevis is obvious: it is a tremendously difficult, challenging and beautiful ride. We finished in 26th place with a wonderful feeling of accomplishment. The journey to the Pan Am was an incredibly epic journey and riding at an international level was one of my goals. Being selected to the four person scoring team was an extra bonus. I am glad that we were given the chance to ride, compete and complete at that level, with so many experienced riders from all over the world.

**Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse?** Any day with my horse is a great day! But one of the worst experiences we had was when he fell off a cliff at the Malibu ride. One of his back feet slipped on a rock, causing his rear end to slide off the trail and the rest of his body followed. Luckily, I jumped off, landing on the trail and he got caught in a bush just beyond the edge. We both struggled to get him up and he collapsed on the trail in exhaustion. After resting, we walked 5 miles to the vet check. The vets there found no problems except a couple of scratches and we were allowed to go on to finish in 7<sup>th</sup> place.

**What was your most humbling experience?** Every ride is a humbling experience and I hold these creatures in awe. I am always humbled in Southern California because we have so many talented and competitive horses and riders. I am always amazed at how fast the front runners finish.

**What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?** I think a lot of our success is that we rode many, many miles before getting into endurance and really campaigning. This not only helped us to become a smoothly operating team but to ensure that there was a good base in his physical training from which to pull.

**Where does your horse live? At home? Full turnout?** Our horses live on our property and are turned out in a dirt arena most of the time.

**What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in?** He was in pasture for a couple of years and then spent some time on the racetrack.

**What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses?** He is a marvelous hill climber. He sets a certain speed and doggedly works at that speed, regardless of the terrain. We do not have a lot of sand to train in where we ride, so we have always slowed down when the footing is really sandy.

**What advice do you have for new riders?** Take your time in training and conditioning. Do not be in a hurry to start going to rides and especially to start racing at rides. When you are ready, make sure that you ride your own ride. Know your horse and don't let other's influence your pace or riding strategy.

**Looking back, what would you do differently?** There is not a whole lot that I would do differently. It has been a great 10 years.

**What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it?** I had a couple of goals. The first lofty goal was to race at an international level. We attained that in 2003. Then, for this year, was to finish his 10th 100-mile race in our 10th year. We did that with our completion at 20-Mule Team in February.

**Describe your horse's personality. How is it like or unlike yours?** He is very energetic, enthusiastic and willing to learn. I think we both have that in common. However, he is the talented one. I make up for my lack of talent with high energy, humor and an extremely talented horse.

**What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most?** I really enjoy any ride that gets us out to places that are far away from our normal paths. They can be multi-days, or rides of any distance. They all have challenges and hurdles.

**Describe your electrolyte protocol.** I pre-load with a powdered electrolyte 2 days before a ride, then use small portions of an electrolyte paste on an hourly basis throughout a ride. If we cannot stop hourly or he has not been drinking, we'll wait until it is possible to give it and he has been drinking.

**What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?** probiotics, strategy supplement, ground flax seed and vitamin E.

**Do you give any kind of joint products?** No

**How far do you usually travel to rides?** The shortest has been 5 miles and the longest 1,000. However, it is usually around 200-500 miles.

**Do you go to many rides outside of your region?** I try to get to as many rides that are within a reasonable distance to be able to see new places. We have done many rides outside of our region.

**Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why?** There are many people that have been mentors and inspirations throughout my career. Suzy Kelley is a fantastic horsewoman who cares about her horses above all else. She has had an incredible endurance career that is beyond compare and is a fabulous person and a good friend to boot -- always willing to share her knowledge. Kim Fuess is another phenomenal horsewoman who has inspired me to get close to my animals. She knows and cares about her horses and they are successful because of the intimate

partnerships. There are many others who have influenced me over the years: Dabney Finch, Linda Morelli, Fred Beasom, The Duck, Crockett Dumas and Fred Beam to name a few.

**Did you have a mentor or first trail partner?** Tell us about him/her/them. My first mentor was a cowboy. He taught me basic horsemanship and that there should really be no hurry in training and conditioning your horse. In endurance, I have had many mentors. I incorporate all of their teachings and impromptu lessons to create my own riding style.

**In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?** Many of the same attributes that Kitt has: strength, power, determination and will power.

Kitt and I have had an incredible journey and I hope that it will continue for many more years. He is an unbelievable animal and his accomplishments need to be celebrated:

Miles: 3305

Years competing: 10

Rides Completed: 56

Completion Rate: 91%

Top Ten: 68%

First Heavyweight: 50%

100s: 10

Wins: 4

BC: 2