

Roberta Harms & Sha-Win



AERC Decade Team



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Rider's Name: Roberta Harms
Horse's Name: Sha-Win 9815 Miles, 166 ride completions.
First AERC ride: 1990 Region: MW

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? I bought him as a 4 year old in 1989, from Jan Worthington.

What is your horse's breeding? Half Arab/Saddlebred.

Sex: Gelding

DOB: April, 1986

Horse height: 15.3 h

Approx. Weight: 950

Color: dark bay

Shoe size: 1

Why did you decide to purchase this horse (or if you didn't purchase, why did you choose to use this horse in endurance)? I bought the horse because he was big enough for my husband, was a smooth ride and mostly because he had unusual ears!:)

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? I had already been riding distance horses since 1984. I ride both endurance and competitive. I had ridden about 5 different horse endurance before I started Sha-Win. He was to be my husband's competitive horse.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? I've lost track, but maybe 10 in endurance.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? Only competitive trail as done in UMECRA.

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? I have owned horses for 35 years. I used to show them in western & English pleasure, a little jumping, and gaming events. I've been an AERC member and rider since 1984. I dropped out of all other horse sports after finding endurance.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? I really wanted to get into the athletic and sport area of horses. I always rode my horses for hours and showing only took a few minutes per class. Also I liked the outdoors and trails most.

How old was your horse when first started? First ride? He did his first rides as a 5 year old.

What mileage distance did you start with? Sha-Win started on 25 competitive rides and did 325 miles the first year. He was a miserable comp. horse and too smart for my husband. I then rode two 50 endurance rides on him at the end of the year to see if he could do it or be sold!

How long till you top tenned raced? I don't generally allow a horse to race until he has 1000 miles of rides. Not good for their brain!

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? I give 4 months off over the winter except for some trail rides.

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? I give at least two weeks off after 100s often 3 weeks. prior to the 100, I give 2-3 weeks also. Other horses may need more, but this horse has always been strong!

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? I have done only a few multiday rides. I would give three weeks off before and a month off after depending on the distance.

What kind of tack do you use? I use a DeSoto endurance saddle, woolback pad, neoprene girth, biothane (beta series) bridle and a Tom Thumb bit.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? Horse forges too badly to use Easyboots or pads. I use St. Croix Saddlecloths on his feet and have him done every 6 weeks. Barefoot at least 5 months in the winter.

What kind of problems have you encountered? This horse is very strong and has had few problems until recently.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? Sha-Win is currently healing from torn ligaments in his front ankle and inflammation of the ankle.

How did you work through it? He is resting in a small paddock, got shock wave therapy and joint injections of Hylartin V. We're still working on it.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? I guess his best ride was at the Pan Am in 2001 as a team horse for the Central Time Zone and the team got the silver medal. The Pan Am in 1999 was also a great ride for us on the CTZ team where we were the first horse in on the team and the team got the bronze medal.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? The time I realized he was NOT invincible and had to rest and heal his ligaments!

What was your most humbling experience? Currently I am starting new horses and have to be careful. I am slow and in the back mostly, when I am used to being in the front and running. It is an adjustment.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? Start slow; build slowly for a long lasting career, one brick at a time. LISTEN to your horse and spend allot of time with him. I have learned that it is better to take it easy for one ride or more and have your horse to run another day. Never race every ride! Enjoy the trail with your good horse and/ or other riders and leave it at that. Pay careful attention to what your horse is saying. Never believe him when he says he can beat everybody, all the time. Always believe him when he says, "I don't feel right."

Where does your horse live? He lives at home in a three-acre pasture with full turnout except in winter when he is in the barn at night.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? He spent his previous 4 years in pasture, no barn at all.

What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses? This is a VERY TOUGH horse, mentally and physically. He always takes good care of himself. He does tend to be stubborn, but that just means he will NOT allow me to override him. Weaknesses involve his way of going: He always forges. No shoer has ever stopped that. In his younger days, he consistently pulled his right front shoe after it was on 6 weeks. He rarely does that now as my farrier is better at keeping him shod and he has learned to trot slightly out of line. He switches sides so does not get sore or over muscled on one side.

What advice do you have for new riders? DO NOT RACE. Learn the game and your horse first. Do not ask your horse for a hard, fast ride every time you take him to a ride. Find a mentor to teach you, even if you have to pay for that knowledge, it is worth it in the long run.

Looking back, what would you do differently? Very little with this horse needed changing. I did need to slow down and get help with my learning curve with earlier horses.

What do you feel you did right? I learned to feed him for the work volume he did and he was always happy and healthy on trail. Because I never overrode the horse's conditioning level in his early years, he has always been strong and happy doing his job. Never asking for all he has to give at each ride. Some rides are just for fun and miles.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? A team medal at the Pan Ams I attended and yes, I did achieve it. I also wanted a Tevis buckle, which we accomplished in 2000.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? He is impatient and stubborn and so am I. He is very smart. People say he must really like me because he gives 100% all the time that I ask.

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? I do like 100s, but 50s are much more fun. I don't necessarily feel multiday are fun. I would rather not do too many of them as they are a tremendous lot of work.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. I give plain salt at home in the feed all the time. I give lytes after a particularly hard conditioning ride only. I use Enduramax lytes night before the ride, in the am and at each stop or 15 miles, whichever is shorter. I use 1.5-2 oz at a time. I ride in the heat and humidity of the MW.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? Not particularly. Good hay, commercial feed (Nutrena Vitality 12%).

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? No.

What kind of supplements (if any) do you use? General vitamins, salt.

Do you give any kind of joint products? Glucosamine has always worked better on this horse, also have used Legend IV. Lately, I've worked with a lot of them like Conquer and Chondrogen EQ. I don't necessarily recommend them, I'm using them on this one horse only because I want to heal him. Time is I guess the best agent for that.

How far do you usually travel to rides? I usually travel 4-6 hours to rides (200-350 miles) I have hauled two days to the east coast, Canada, Montana and even 4 days to the Tevis.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? I enjoy getting out of the region to see other people and horse and how others do things, but I usually stay at home. We have rides†every weekend in a reasonable driving distance.

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? I learned a lot from Louise Riedel and Jan Worthington. They are both local riders for me and I would talk with them and ask questions about feeding, riding, strategy, etc. I often just observed them for my learning. They were THE most successful people around at the time I started.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? I look for a long, ground-covering stride. I also want a horse with sense that can take care of himself. That often means a horse that is a bit lazy and stubborn, because they are smart and won't run themselves into the ground for a silly rider. No picky eaters, please.