

## Robbi Pruitt & Gulastras Splash



### AERC Decade Team

**5020 Miles, 89 ride completions**  
**First AERC ride: 1993 Region: NW**

***Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her?*** I bred a group of three mares for some friends and was supposed to have the other 2 foals from the group but Splash was to be theirs. He was supposed to be a filly, not a colt and they were dismayed with his excessive white markings so they gave him to me.

***What is your horse's breeding?*** Splash is an own grandson of Gulastra who was born in 1924. Gulastra was one of the famous stallions from the Maynesboro stud that W.R. Brown used to compete so successfully in the U.S. Calvary endurance tests. He is straight CMK (Crabbet, Maynesboro and Kellogg) breeding and probably has the oldest living sire line in the world.

***Sex:*** Stallion

***DOB:*** 4/21/88

***Horse height:*** 14.3

***Approx. Weight:*** 925

***Color:*** Chestnut

***Easyboot 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)?*** Splash's sire was 28 years old when I purchased him and I always regretted not being able to ride him, so Splash had to be the one to prove what I thought those bloodlines were capable of.

***Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse?*** Yes.

***How many different horses have you ridden in this sport?*** I've ridden several horses over the past 25 years in this sport but mainly my first Arabian, Sierra Rafter - 2085 miles, Assouel - 7070 miles, and Splash - 5020 miles.

***Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities?*** Mostly I breed horses these days and take care of them but trail riding is what I like to do the most.

***How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance?*** I've owned horses for over 40 years and been endurance riding for over 25 years.

***What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested?*** Pictures of endurance riders in the Western Horseman magazine initially got me interested in the sport. Then I went to an endurance ride and saw this magnificent grey stallion cross the finish line. He looked so fresh and like he was still having fun after a grueling hot ride. I was hooked. The stallion was Grey Image and the

rider was Cheri Briscoe who later became my mentor for the sport. Cheri and her husband Jeff became wonderful friends and invaluable help as I learned about the sport.

***How old was your horse when first started? First ride?*** I started Splash in endurance as a 5 year old.

***How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons?*** The first year we did 3 rides two months apart. The second year we did 745 miles (14 rides) and that was probably a little too much. The third year we only did 400 miles.

***What mileage distance did you start with?*** I don't do LD. I feel that it gives the horses too much confidence in going fast. I prefer that they know that they are going a loooonggg way and learn to rate themselves from the beginning. So the answer to your question is 50.

***How long till you top tenned or 'raced'?*** We snuck into the top ten at some multiday rides his second year, but never really ran at his race speed until his fourth season.

***How much time off do you give between ride seasons?*** I'm not much of a winter rider, so the horses generally get several months off while the ground is frozen here.

***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'm not big on 100's either. I think they take too much out of a horse. I do a few and I give them several weeks off after one, probably wouldn't do another endurance ride for at least a month. Or even several months if the 100 were fast at all. I also feel that most riders over condition their horses prior to 100 mile rides. The main reason that I don't like 100 miles rides is that I see far too many skinny, spent horses at the finish line. Not all, but too many.

***If you have done multidays, how much time off do you give after doing one? What is your schedule in the month leading up to the ride?*** Well, I love multiday rides, but they are also pretty hard on horses. I try to bring a fairly fresh horse to a multiday ride and give them several weeks to a month off afterwards.

***What kind of tack do you use?*** I subscribe to the minimalist theory of tack. The least you can get away with is the best. I rarely use a breast collar, never a crupper, the least amount of bit or preferably hackamore or some type and usually an English type saddle. I currently ride in an Arabian Saddle Co. Solstice saddle and love it. I prefer natural fabrics to synthetics and always use pure wool saddle pads. The most important thing about tack (after fit of course) is that it be CLEAN!!!

***What kind of shoes do you use on your horse?*** Whatever my very capable farrier puts on for shoes, NEVER pads and Easyboots whenever the trail is too rocky or I am riding fast.

***What kind of problems have you encountered?*** Splash has been a fairly problem free horse. My biggest problems with him have had to do with figuring out his emotional issues dealing with stallion/territory issues away from home.

***What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had?*** Splash had an ankle injury his second year that healed with some scar tissue. Other than that his worst injury was a torn muscle in his neck where I roped him when he was a yearling because I couldn't catch him.

***How did you work thru it?*** Plenty of time off.

***Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse?*** Headwaters of the Rogue ride a few years ago. Most beautiful trail in the Northwest, perfect weather, just me and my horse. We were in perfect harmony that day for some reason. We went down a steep trail with a sharp 90-degree turn in it to get water. There was no way to get back to the trail except to back up. I'll never forget just picking up his reins and he backed straight up the steep muddy hill around the corner and back to the road and shifted back into his trot as light as a feather in my hand.

***Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse?*** Probably my first Tevis attempt with Splash. I couldn't sleep all night and I heard him pawing about 3:00 a.m. He doesn't paw and that made me nervous. Got up an hour later and realized there was no manure around where he was tied. I decided to pull and hauled him out to Auburn to a vet clinic. He didn't pass any manure till 5:00 that afternoon and it was a VERY long day.

***What was your most humbling experience?*** Death Valley Encounter, 2nd day. We fought all the way to lunch, he wanted to go fast, I didn't. He won. We lost -- pulled at lunch with muscle cramps.

***What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important?*** Take your time, enjoy the time you have with your horse, you won't have him/her long enough. Enjoy the trail, enjoy your friends, ignore the bad things that happen and thank the ride manager for his or her time and effort. Try to always finish with gas left in the tank and a happy, healthy partner to take home.

***Where does your horse live?*** Splash is a lucky boy. He lives at home in an irrigated grass pasture with full time turnout.

***What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in?*** He's been a pasture horse his entire life. With a herd until he was 3? Then he had to be separated for obvious reasons.

***What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses?*** Splash's greatest strength is his ability to take good care of himself. He stops when he is tired and eats and drinks when he needs to. Weakness? Not a word I usually associate with Splash.

***What advice do you have for new riders?*** Ride a horse that you truly enjoy spending time with. Learn to ride really well. Learn everything there is to learn about your horse and let success come with time. Most of all, respect your horse for the truly outstanding athlete and friend that he is.

***Looking back, what would you do differently?*** My only regret about Splash is that he was born one month before my daughter and two years before my son. My children had to come first so Splash often took a back seat to my Mom duties.

***What do you feel you did right?*** One thing, I never bred him until he was well broke and started in endurance. I think that has contributed greatly to his wonderful disposition. Most people we've ridden with over the years never even realized he was a stallion till someone happened to mention it.

***What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it?*** Finishing Tevis and 5000 AERC miles and yes, we made both.

***Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours?*** Splash is nicer than I am. He has a wonderful work ethic and cheerfully does whatever I ask of him.

***What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most?*** I like multadays best, 50's and 70's are great too, everything except 100's which I do only under duress.

***Describe your electrolyte protocol.*** I've ridden many thousands of miles with NO electrolytes. I use them sparingly now and feel that they are one of the more abusive and dangerous aspects of the sport these days.

***Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success?*** Not really, I believe that horses should live and eat as closely as possible to the way nature intended for them to live. Lots of good quality roughage, not a lot of grain.

***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?*** Not that I can think of.

***What kind of supplements (if any) do you use?*** I usually add a vitamin/mineral supplement and E-SE supplement when I'm competing.

***Do you give any kind of joint products?*** I've used Legend when I felt it was needed, other than that, no.

***How far do you usually travel to rides?*** As far as I need to go or can go. I love to see new trail.

***Do you go to many rides outside of your region?*** As many as I can.

***Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why?*** Dave Nicholson, for his preservation and work with trails, for being one of the best vets involved with the sport and for his horsemanship and compassion for horses. Hank Cook DVM, he never forgot a horse or a rider and never missed anything even if he was watching the girls trotting their horses out. Ron and Ruth Waltenspiel, for riding all those miles together and raising their daughters with horses and always having a smile to give and never, ever a bad word to say about anyone.

***Did you have a mentor or first trail partner?*** Cheri Briscoe as mentioned earlier was my first mentor. I have to give her credit for teaching me that the most important thing about this sport was to finish with a healthy partner.

***In choosing your next horse, what would you look for?*** A horse that I enjoy spending time with.

The sport of endurance would be a much better place if we all worried less about where we finished than HOW we finished.