

Ruth Ambrose & Sodi



2003 AERC Decade Team

1,680 Miles, 33 ride completions
First AERC ride: 1991 • Region: W

Tell us about your horse. When/how did you come to get him/her? In January of 1988 I called about an ad in the newspaper in Contra Costa County, CA for a 3 year old Arabian colt for sale – “....court settlement, make offer”. So, I went to see him. He was very cute and “green”. \$300 and his first trailer ride later, Sodi was mine.

What is your horses breeding? He is a Polish Arab. I don't know the correct way to describe his breeding, but his sire is Diem (supposedly a champion racehorse from Germany) and his dam is Soleba. Raffles and Skowronek lines.

Sex: Gelding ***DOB:*** March 1985 ***Horse height:*** 14.3 h ***Approx. Weight:*** 965 lb ***Color:*** Grey ***Easyboot size:*** 2

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 didn't know much about endurance riding before I bought Sodi. I was trail riding on a Quarterhorse/Appaloosa gelding that was kind of pokey and I just wanted a horse with more “go”.

Did you do endurance with any other horses before this horse? No.

How many different horses have you ridden in this sport? Mostly Sodi, once on my niece's horse in Virginia and a friend's horse on a multi-day ride.

Do you participate in any other horse sports or activities? I just love to trail ride and see new horizons, what's over the next hill. Occasionally I'll go to a natural horsemanship clinic or trail trial.

How many years have you been involved with horses? In endurance? 20 years with horses and 13 years with endurance.

What got you interested in endurance riding? What was it that kept you interested? Some of the boarders at my ranch rode endurance and a few of my good trail riding buddies got started in it and talked me into trying it. I really like the experience of camping and riding new trails with my horse and being around other people who are just as “horse crazy” as me. Endurance riders are fun and so willing to share and help out. The sport has taught me to know my horse better.

How old was your horse when first started? First ride? I started training him at 3 years old. He was 6 years old for our first endurance ride.

How many rides did you do the first, second, and third ride seasons?

First: 1 ride/50 mi. Second: 2 rides/50 mi. each. Third: 2 rides/50 mi. each.

What mileage distance did you start with? 50 miles.

How long till you top tenned or 'raced'? We came in 6th place in our third year.

How much time off do you give between ride seasons? The winter, but we still pleasure ride when the weather is good.

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? We only did one 100 – Virginia City.

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? We completed only one day and 2 half days of a multi-day...he pulled a muscle from a spook. I did get to ride another day on a friend's horse.

What kind of tack do you use? Stubben Wotan English saddle, Skito Equalizer pad, wool string girth, Myler bit, Beta halter/bridle, rope type reins, E-Z Ride stirrups.

What kind of shoes do you use on your horse? This past year we have been trying the natural barefoot trim, which is working well for my horse. I use Easyboots for conditioning and endurance rides.

What kind of problems have you encountered? This could be a long list of mostly minor problems...lost a shoe, a saddle that hurt his back, my horse had slight colic at the end of a ride (very cold the night before and he didn't drink enough), a couple of pulls for slight lameness, missing a turn on the trail and having to go back, my horse skid on some gravel and fell sideways on my foot, the exhaust pipe on my truck fell down on the way to a ride, me getting stung by a bee.....etc.

What was the worst or most severe injury your horse has had? A long time ago he slightly bowed a tendon and it didn't show up at the ride. A friend of mine noticed it at the start of a conditioning ride. My vet checked him out – it was very slight and the ultrasound showed it as already healing.

How did you work thru it? A couple of weeks off with rest in a paddock and then gradual slow work for the next few weeks. It has been sound ever since.

Describe the best ride you ever had on your horse? There are two, and they are so opposite – one was the first time we ever came in first place at Land of the Neversweats 55. We had never cantered so much before at an endurance ride and Sodi just never seemed to tire that day. The second was at Gold Country 50 when we just took our sweet slow time riding along with my girlfriend Chris that I hadn't ridden with for a long time. We talked and laughed and enjoyed the scenery and the horses.

Describe the worst day you ever had with your horse? It was on a conditioning ride. We were cantering along and something flew up between my horse's hind legs. He dead stopped and kind of jumped and bucked in place. It threw me back and forward in the saddle and I smacked my right eye several times on the back of his head. I bailed off. Later I had one of the worst black eyes anyone has ever seen!

What was your most humbling experience? Nothing specific does not come to mind, but many miles in and out of the saddle has its moments.

What lessons have you learned along the way that you feel are the most important? To ride your own ride – don't get caught up in what other riders are doing because it might not be right for you. Pay attention to your horse and really know him and what is best for him on each day, ride or situation.

Where does your horse live? He lives at home on about 8 acres of high desert pasture with my young mustang, and two mules and a donkey. They all have access to the stalls in the barn for shelter from the sun, wind, rain, and snow.

What kind of environment did your horse spend the first few years of its life in? The first 3 years before I owned him I think he had a corral and paddock. Then when I got him, he got to be on various pastures of 10 – 100 acres with small herds.

What are your horse's strengths? Weaknesses? Strengths – he is sensible, trusts me, sure-footed, competitive, takes his job seriously and just keeps on going. When we come into a vet check, he immediately relaxes, his pulse comes down fast, and he eats and drinks and rests. He is a very relaxed camper. Weakness – sometimes his competitiveness causes him to waste energy when he wants to catch up and pass horses ahead of him.

What advice do you have for new riders? Really know your horse, practice/simulate new things at home, start out slow and gradually increase the distance and speed to condition, do your homework and talk to and ride with experienced riders, ride your own ride.

Looking back, what would you do differently? Not much. Have a job where it was easier to take off weekends to do rides. Try more multi-days when my horse was younger. He will be 20 this spring.

What do you feel you did right? I took my time conditioning my horse before competing, did not over-ride him, provided good quality feed, safe environment with other horse buddies for companionship, used a saddle that fits well, paid attention to the footing on trails and rode accordingly.

What was your highest goal for your horse? Did you achieve it? To try and finish a 100 miler. Yes – Virginia City 100.

Describe your horse's personality? How is it like or unlike yours? He is like me in that he seems to like getting out on the trail and seeing new places. Friendly and easy going nature. Sensible. Competitive. Cooperative and trusting yet sometimes a little rebellious streak (ha, ha).

What kinds of rides do you enjoy the most? 50's. Although the multi-day ride was a lot of fun and would really like to do more of those.

Describe your electrolyte protocol. Powdered mixed with applesauce and syringed – once a day a couple of days before a ride, the night before a ride, at vet checks if he is drinking well, after a ride, and then once a day for a couple of days after a ride.

Is there anything special about your nutrition program you attribute to your success? Good quality

grass hays, one of which has about 20% alfalfa, supplements, clean water, fresh air and sunshine.

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? During ride season I use soaked beet pulp, COB, wheat bran, Accel vitamins, Vetracel (vitamin E and Selenium).

Do you give any kind of joint products? Presently, no. I have used and may start again with glucosamine.

How far do you usually travel to rides? 30 – 300 miles.

Do you go to many rides outside of your region? No. Once I rode in Virginia on a limited distance.

Name three people involved in the sport of endurance that you look up to, and why? There are so many people in the sport that I have learned from...the names everybody knows and the ones whose names I knew for only a day. They have good common sense and put the well-being of their horse first.

Did you have a mentor or first trail partner? My first trail partner was my girlfriend Diane Gray. We started out just pleasure trail riding together. We had a lot of fun. Her neighbor Laurie Meyers got us started in endurance. Our horses personalities, gaits and speed were well matched. So it was easy to ride together and help each other.

In choosing your next horse, what would you look for? Another Sodi. Although, I adopted a young wild mustang a couple of years ago and will try him at endurance. He and my Arab are quite different.