



MONICA BRETHERTON

on the adventures of Jas Shearer-McMahon and her home-bred Akhal-Teke Patrickhan at the world's toughest Endurance Ride.

At Friday's vet-in at McCann Stadium, Patrickhan held his head high to study the scene. He lowered it to scrutinize the examining veterinarian, stood calmly for his check and trotted out with nonchalance. He looked just the way you'd want before embarking on one of the most testing rides in America, the Tevis Cup.



Patrick becomes number 157

"He's a loner normally. He loves attention from humans, not other horses." Jas Shearer-McMahon knows Patrick well — since 2001, when he was born at her Magic Valley farm. A purebred Akhal-Teke, he was her breeding stallion until a few years ago, when he was gelded and she began to compete him seriously.

This has helped him to focus in a busy environment, but hasn't changed his essential nature. "On rides he likes to pick one horse to protect and travel with," Jas says, but when they condition in the foothills northeast of Fort Collins, Colorado, they are almost always alone on the trail.

So Tevis was going to be quite a challenge. Not only was he going to go further than ever before (they had done back-to-back fifties, but never a hundred-miles in one day), he was going to be travelling in company. A lot of it.

Next morning, most of that company was circling in the field just prior to the 6:30 a.m. start. Within the swirl were a group of six horses from Kenlyn



The Kenlyn Gang

Arabians, led by Linda Fisher. Linda was the instigator for Jas and Patrick coming to Auburn. That meant not just a spot in their trailer, but riding together.

This was unusual for Jas as well as her horse. "I always ride my own ride, and that sometimes involves another person whose horse matches pace with mine. I hardly ever ride in groups."

In the days before the ride, Patrick showed little love towards the Kenlyn horses, reminding them through lunges and nips what a tough guy he was if they got too close. Jas sighed over her horse's behaviour, but the other horses didn't seem disturbed. The two day trailer ride had made him part of their herd.

The Kenlyn team spirit was tested before the ride officially began. Within the circling mass of 178 starters, Jas explained, "the Kenlyn group did our own little circle and that worked up until the part when everyone started bunching up at the start line." A control rider was to take all the horses out at a walk because of safety concerns with the improvised route.

One of the Kenlyn riders came off his horse in the excitement. Three members of the group had already left, unaware of trouble behind them in the darkness. So Jas, Linda and Lynn Williams stayed until the rider was remounted and went out with his horse sandwiched between theirs. "That was the agreement — no-one was ever going to be left behind."

The incident underlined Jas' pre-ride philosophy, "I knew luck was a big part of completing at Tevis, so I didn't worry about things I couldn't control."

That included the snow that had whited out the usual first half of the Tevis route. This was a ride Jas had been waiting thirty years for, and she intended to savor every moment. "I was there to ride the Tevis so if they told me the ride went straight up a mountain or straight down in a river I would have gone."