

COMPETITIVE TRAIL RIDING 101

by Shannon Mayer

PHOTO (LEFT): JOHN EIGLER



Competitive trail riding is a fantastic way to see some scenery, bond with your horse, and have a great time

Long distance riding has been around for thousands of years in many forms. Whether it was a grueling pace across desert sands to defend their homes or a three day gallop to deliver a message, people throughout history have used horses to cover incredible distances in relatively short periods of time.

Now the world has gone high tech, so the use of the horse has been relegated to sport and pleasure riding, for the most part. The sport of long distance riding is most commonly known as endurance riding. However, there is another sport attached to long distance riding that is a brilliant introduction to the discipline without the intensive training, conditioning, and time associated with an endurance ride.

What is CTR?

Competitive trail riding (CTR) and endurance riding have similarities. They are both set over a trail system that is marked with flags and a map. Both have natural obstacles such as downed logs, rough terrain, and water that the riders are expected to navigate without injury to themselves or their horses. Both sports are closely monitored by veterinarian judges.

One of the main differences between CTR and endurance riding is that CTR is not a race. There is a set amount of time given to complete the designated course, with allowances for difficulty. Each rider paces his or her horse according to the distance and amount of time given.

Out in the World

The number one thing you need to know about CTR—besides how much fun it is—is that you do not need an Arabian (as usually

found in endurance riding) in order to compete. In our club (BCCTR), we see a very diverse group of horses: Morgans, Standardbreds, Icelandics, Quarter Horses and others. Any breed can successfully compete in CTR.

Most competitors ride in pairs. We all know it's much more fun to ride with a friend, and it helps to lessen the concern of "What if I get lost?" Don't worry, there is always someone who knows the way, and the long-time competitors are always willing to help.

Another concern for new riders is whether or not their horses are ready for a CTR.

To complete a Level 1 ride (approximately 4 hours long) you should be riding at least three days a week, 1 ½ hours each ride. It's best to use a variety of terrain (hills, trails, flat stretches, hard and soft ground) when you are conditioning your horse. This will not only keep it interesting for you, but will help your horse become fit overall.

Unlike most disciplines, CTR does not have set requirements for tack. You can use any style of tack you wish, with as much or as little "bling" as you like. Wear your most comfortable boots, tack up with your best-fitting saddle, and come as you are! The only rules set in stone are:

1. Juniors must wear helmets
2. No leg wraps/boots
3. No standing martingales (running martingales are allowed).

Always check your local association for rules in your area before you ride.

The scoring system of CTR is based primarily on the horse's condition. Prior to

the ride starting, a veterinarian judge will go over your horse and check all his vitals. As the ride progresses, the vet has a baseline with which to compare your horse's working vitals. A final evaluation at the

end of the ride scores the horse according to soundness, condition, behavior, and attitude.

This is a fantastic sport that builds on the bond between horse and rider as they work together to achieve a common goal. If you'd like to learn more, please visit www.bcctra.ca. **NWHS**



PHOTO: SANDI FRANCHESINI



PHOTO: LYN RILEY

UPCOMING RIDES in British Columbia

CTR Bowser

Sunday, May 4

Ride Manager: Linda Warnock
Contact: 250-752-1062 or
kolabear@bcsupernet.com

CTR Chemainus

Sunday, June 1

Ride Manager: Michelle Balme
Contact: 250-743-6192 or
obalme@shaw.ca

CTR Giddy-Up Gogo Nanaimo

Sunday, June 29

Ride Manager: Nicole Vaugeois
Contact: 250-245-4405 or
vaugeois@mala.ca

CTR Nanoose

Sunday, July 20

Ride Manager: Linda Warnock
Contact: 250-752-1062
kolabear@bcsupernet.com

CTR ER R&T Rocky Mountain Challenge: Canadian Nationals

July 31 - August 1

Ride Managers: CaLDRA

Website: www.canadiannationals.org