

Endurance Racing

-coming soon to a trail near you!

BROOKINGS, S.D. When local horsewoman Lisa Simpson moved from Minnesota to South Dakota with her horses, she saw plenty of wide open spaces, public horse trails and thousands of local horsemen and women, but oddly enough, no sign of one of the fastest growing equestrian sports in the world: Endurance Racing.

The sport, which dates to 1955 when Wendell Robie rode his horse over the old 100-mile Pony Express route from Lake Tahoe to Auburn, California, with the simple goal of *Completion*, is a mix of man vs. man, man vs. nature, and man vs. himself. Of course, "man" in each of these cases is paired with a horse, and so in many ways, it is a "team sport."

An endurance race typically covers a course of 25 to 100 miles, often over the roughest terrain and in extreme weather conditions. Fitness of both horse and rider is paramount as competitors race not only to win but also to finish the race in the best physical condition possible.

Internationally recognized, endurance racing may soon be featured on the Olympic stage. Ranked in popularity only behind show jumping and eventing (already Olympic sports), endurance racing is gaining in popularity worldwide, as the simplicity of the sport appeals to even the most casual equestrian competitor.

Any person of any age is eligible to compete and all breeds of horses and styles of riding are welcome.

Equipment is non-standardized and chosen for comfort rather than flashy style. It is truly the "every (horse)man's sport"!

As someone who has competed in endurance racing for nearly two decades, Lisa Simpson sees great opportunities for the sport in the state of South Dakota. "We have the riders, the horses and the trails, now all we need is the public's interest!" she said in reference to our inherent infrastructure. "If we can only show people how much fun it is to get out and not only ride in a competition, but get to see some of the state's best scenery from horseback, this could be huge!"

With these thoughts in mind, Lisa and several other area horse owners created the first annual Endurance Riding Clinic, which was held at the Animal Science Arena on the campus of South Dakota State University on November 17. Held with the oversight and assistance of the SDSU Horse Extension Unit and Horse Club, the clinic featured hands-on demonstrations of horse conditioning, nutrition issues, farrier and veterinary topics, as well as an open question-and-answer-session with active riders, nutrition experts, veterinarians and farriers. "This was a chance for anyone interested in seeing what the sport is all about to check it out in casual and fun environment," said organizer Lisa Simpson.

For more information, call Lisa Simpson at 605.874.2293 or go to www.ahilio.com and click on the link for Endurance Racing.

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