

## Ludlow - Scottish Endurance Team 2009- Home International and Celtic Challenge

In June I received a call saying I had been selected for the Scottish Team, our fourth time as team members and this year being selected to do the Highest Distance- 160km over 2 days. We (Lorna Hogg & De Marco) had proven ourselves over the distance in on 13/14 May at the Famous Golden Horseshoe ride over Exmoor- where we achieved the much sought after



Gold Award for completing over 12kmph and with finishing heart rate of less than 55 beats per minute. Quite an achievement given the distance we had travelled to the ride and the fact that I did not do so on an endurance bred horse.



A fine line was then to be taken to ensure Marco remained on top form, to enable him to complete again at the same distance in Ludlow, without overtraining him.

Ludlow was hilly, some steep climbs up and down, but Marco was fit to cope with that having had plenty hills across Exmoor too- but the conditions at Ludlow were made more difficult owing to wet weather conditions- it rained daily from our arrival at the racecourse- only letting up for short periods of time- this made the clay soil very deep and slippy and great care had to be taken to remain upright and to maintain some kind of momentum- Marco passed vetting after vetting supported greatly by our Crew, Team Vet, Physio, Chef D'Equip and other Team members who were due to compete the next day- or on Sunday those who had already



undertaken their Team role on the Saturday. I heard on occasions how our other Team Members were faring and was riding on the first day with 2 other team members- one of whom unfortunately was eliminated at the vetting at the end of day 1 due to lameness- this was a great disappointment for her and the team, it also meant that I would be riding without company from Scottish Team Members on day 2 as she

was to be doing the same distance as myself and Marco.

Day 2 saw more slippy and even wetter conditions and changes of clothes at each vet gate, I felt sorry for Marco who was trying so hard yet always had one leg sliding with each step he took in places- we were thankful to have the company of the two Irish 160km riders- it certainly helps keep spirits up. Marco



vetted quicker than the Irish horses at the last vet gate and we set off on the final 7km home alone- and Marco flew- he knew where he was headed and was not in least bothered that his new friends were no longer with him!

Word had gone back to rest of the Scottish Team supporters that we were our way home and they were all waiting force for us as we entered the racecourse- there was great temptation canter down the racecourse to them all- Marco had given me so much over the 2 and at the end of the day the main thing get him vetted sound and with his HR recovered so since we were alone we sauntered in at a gentle trot and walk- but with Marco eyeing the crowd rather suspiciously and with pricked ears- perhaps it was as well we came in slowly or we may have ended up going in the wrong direction at speed- which would not have gone down well with our Chef!



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Marco passed his final vetting with flying colours and helped the Home International Team to Second Place to Ireland. The Celtic Challenge was also won by Ireland with Scotland in Second.

Individually we were placed 4th in the 160km out of 7 starters.

De Marco and I have continued with our success in 2 day 160km rides in the 2009 season by being placed 5th at the Red Dragon Festival of Endurance in Builth Wells, Wales- another hilly tough testing route- but extremely enjoyable!!



I hope in 2010 to complete a one day 160km ride- however for now we are enjoying a more restful time until the start of our training again in January 2010