

Does a Retired Arabian Racehorse Make a Good Endurance Horse?



3 August 2018, USA ~ The answer is YES. On 28 July 2018, Heather Reynolds of Dunnellon, Florida, riding the retired Arabian racehorse, ten-year-old, Cayucos (Virgule Al Maury x Tikis Wing Beat) was first across the finish line in Auburn, California, at 10 PM, to claim her third Tevis Cup victory.

By all accounts, the 2018, 100 Mile Tevis Cup was a tough race, made tougher by extreme heat on the trail and treacherous air quality from a number of devastating Northern California fires.

Out of 153 horse registered to start the race, only 64 finished, the last being McCamey Kimbler who came in on HV Cimmarons Goliath at 5:09 am.

Helen Shelley has been training race horses in California since 1995 with a record of over 308 race starts. Cayucos was bred by Betty Jo and Paul Richards and was sent to Shelley for his early training.

"When he was three, he was big and uncoordinated," Shelley said. "We had him racing in Delaware and he was aggressive on the track, but he wanted to run through the bit. Even so, he did have a few wins."

Cayucos showed fortitude but was not a natural on the track and Shelley felt he would do better with another job. Shelley has helped to repurpose over 300 retired racehorses, and many have excelled in endurance, including Tevis Cup winners: 2016, Royal Patron (Monarch AH); 2014, French Open (Okba); and 2013, Take A Break (Virgule Al Maury).

Hillorie (Bachman) Farace Di Villaforesta has found many of her top endurance horses from Helen Shelley's racing barn, and owns both French Open and Cayucos. When she first saw the horse that would be the winner of the 2018 Tevis, she liked the chestnut's size and loved his

race breeding. *"I saw this horse in 2013 and told them he would be great as an endurance horse. I asked if I could buy him when his race career was over."*

"After he came to me, I gave him six months completely off, then took the next 2 years to put base dressage training and foundation miles on him," said Villaforesta. "He is a pleasure to ride and very kind. Last year he seemed to be telling me something needed to change, that he was ready for more. In horse speak he was making any excuse to go faster and balking during his baby-sitter rides, so I sent him back to Mark Schuerman and said, 'lets go, he is ready to pick up the pace'. Mark is an all-around horseman and wonderful horse trainer near Auburn, California. Mark has a gift, talent and experience to understand what a horse needs and where they are at mentally and physically."

Top endurance rider Reynolds and Villaforesta have been a team for 20 years, and they felt Cayucos was ready for the Tevis.

"You can put Heather on any horse, any day, and she will shine," said Villaforesta. They also had help from equestrian body-workers, Zeb Rabow and Lisa Jordan.

"I love my team. The day was challenging and Cayucos is a big horse and Tevis was hot."

Reynolds finished 18 minutes before second place Gabriela Blakeley. Temperatures on the 100-mile course climbed to near 100°F with high humidity. Additionally, smoke from devastating fires in Northern California infiltrated areas of the trail, irritating eyes and noses and cutting visibility.

Heather Reynolds said her mount did his job with enthusiasm. *"Cayucos is a funny guy who is very serious but he throws in his sense of humor once in a while. He had a great time hunting dust on the California loop. He would spot dust and then catch the next horse."*

"Cay runs very hot as he is a thick bodied guy so we had to be very careful in managing his body temp throughout the day."

"He's an amazing horse. He volunteered everything. From the moment I mounted up at Robie Park he was on a mission to take me to Auburn."

The Western States Trail Ride, popularly called the Tevis Cup Ride, is the oldest modern day endurance ride, having been held annually since 1955. As such, it has been the inspiration and model for the most challenging endurance rides worldwide. <http://www.teviscup.org/the-ride/about-the-rid>

Full Finish list:

<http://webcast.teviscup.org/>

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Photo: Trio at 2016 Tevis- Hillorie on French Open, Dreaming of Tevis essay winner, Chantelle Du Plessis from Dubai, Mark Scheurman on Cayucos - Photo by Dominique Cognee/www.kumbavisual.com

Editor: July is the month of the Full Buck Moon when a buck's antlers are in full growth.

~ Pamela Burton