

My Shahzada Experience on Bevolin Nafisah

By Karyn Sands



“Shahzada” the word evoked a myriad of images and emotions. The stories and pictures of places such as The Steps, McKecknies and Boyds sounded formidable and challenging - to put it mildly.

As a new-comer to the sport of endurance riding, commencing with a couple of rides in 2013 on my then four year old Arab mare Bevolin Nafish aka Honey, Shahzada was a goal to aspire to but I was not quite sure we could actually reach. Well with lots of training and a couple of 40’s and 80’s successfully completed during this season I thought “why not” I can do this. So in went my entry for the mini Marathon. I wondered how 120kkm could be considered a “mini” but in comparison to the 400kkm it is.

On arrival at St Albans the excitement is palpable, yards were being erected, dogs barking, camps being sorted, people are catching up with friends, horses are being exercised, strapped and attended to.

The ride ended up being 125kkm of varied country that included panoramic views of valleys from atop ridges, misty gullies filled with ferns and mossy trees, steep climbs up hills that seemed to be

endless, historic roads with memorials to the hard yakka and toil of past prisoners, and to add a little fillip, a muddy quagmire of a goat track spiraling down the side of a hill with some hair pin turns with barely a hoof width between boulders in places. The weather was mostly rain and mud interspersed with the occasional blue sky and more mud.

Of course the torrential down pours seemed to increase just in time for vetting. The vetting area was fast turning into a boggy mess that made it even more challenging for the hard working TPRs and vets. I was pleased that the only heart rate that was taken was my horse's as my heart rate would soar as I awaited the results of each inspection.

I was so proud of my girl at the end of each day as she worked hard and gave her all. I was pretty chuffed with myself also as I managed to achieve a goal that I thought was maybe a bit to ambitious in our first full season.

Our Shahzada picture is hanging in pride of place over the mantelpiece with the Shahzada sash draping it. I think my smile says it all.