

My Shazada experience. By. Isabel Foster

As I step out of the car on to Shazada turf I start to wonder what will happen, will everything go well or will it turn up Side down?

The couple of days before the 3am wake up was definitely nerve racking, though I tried not to think about it too much.

I knew I had my mum there to support me and my dad the greatest strapper and my little sister to do the canteen runs.

As we rode out on the first morning every horse was fit and feisty and just wanted to get going, but with conditions underfoot it was not possible. Thousands of thoughts and feeling were flowing through my head, and my horse wanted to gallop the whole way around, if only he knew there were 4 more days of this to go.

Walking back from vetting was the same deal, how did you go? "Great" thanks, you? Or Oh no! What happened? Blar! Blar! Blar!

As another morning arrived and the sun rose over us at the top of some crazy high mountain, I was riding with some experienced people telling stories and laughing and having a great time, when your riding you start to wonder about all these thing I never thought I would ever think about, like what is Barack Obama son's name is " if he even has one"

Tuesday morning was going really well horses were happy and fit I knew my mum was heading out on the first day of the mini marathon on her young horse that had done 4x40 km rides perfectly. We were probably going to meet along the way as she was riding out of base I would be riding into base. I knew both her and her horse where going to be a little nervy but they would be O.K. I arrived at the last check point 8km from base and realised Neil was holding mums horse I automatically though mum was peeing on track already, I asked where she was and they said she had a nasty fall and had severe head and neck injuries, I was shocked and very worried and still asked the same silly question "is she ok"? The ambulance is on the way they replied.

As I kept riding along, apparently I picked up the speed said my riding buddy, then there she was, my mum sitting on the side of the gravel road with severe bleeding and abrasions and could not move, it was not a pretty site, I burst into tears (knowing that mums modelling career was now over), she just kept repeating "I will be ok, keep going, and don't stop for me." And that's just what I did. I knew I had to continue riding for next 3 day for her.

As much as I didn't want to leave her side I had to, there were many people there to help her and me. When I was vetting through Dad and Modena (sister) were watching mum get air lifted to West Mead Hospital. That evening another pre-ride talk began as people were asking what happened and how is your mum? I was happy to answer everybody but I didn't know anything and I wish I did and I had a big day the next day and couldn't deal with the stress. People that were there with her told me that she just kept repeating don't let her withdraw don't let her withdraw. Back at camp I had a huge responsibility to the horses and to looking after myself doing everything that mum would usually take care of. But with

everyone's support and help I did it, I know mum was in safe hands in hospital with all the care she needed so that was a relief. That pre-ride defiantly wasn't my favourite, Boyed's in the dark and Prestons In the same day I know it was going to be hard Wednesday (known as hump day) Going to bed was going to be lonely as dad and Modena have travelled 3h to visit mum in Hospital. I walked back to camp and there is mum in the float she looked terrible purple and bleeding, Mum (being Sharon) discharged herself from hospital and took a taxi back to base. I curled up next to mum and cried for 3 hours. The next two day were hell I was really sore and had bulging blisters and rubs on the insides of my legs. The days were filled with being scared, nerves, happy, and most importantly laughter. Approaching the steps I was defiantly nervous so I just kept thinking about all the advice Maureen Felton had given me. I started to shake and then needed to pee, and wouldn't shut up, but once I was stuck in the situation it wasn't as bad as I imagined.

As the last day came over us I wasn't tired, I knew I was the only junior rider left in the ride and was pumped with energy. The hardest leg the scariest leg, was going up the steps I was in good company with Caroline Windle, and Carol Magor. Kalarney decide he didn't want to go any further and spun around on the steep rocks only a little skin off the back leg, I just kept saying give it all you got girls, this is the last hard part before our last vetting. I felt like bending over in pain and screaming, but I couldn't stop otherwise my horse would lose momentum, lucky for with my lanky legs I could actually step up the steps. When I got to the top I felt like lying down and crying, but I just got on and kept going, tears running down my face but still managed to take a selfie.

Last vetting was nerve wrenching, and exiting I checked the time it was around 3.14 the time that school finished I was thinking about all my friends leaving school for the weekend, I bet not one of them was thinking about how I was going, as I finish one of the worlds hardest endurance rides the ultimate test. My friends would have been relieved to have finished 50min of maths.

I didn't look up until the very end of the trot out OMG no one knows the amazing feeling that went through me when the vets had huge big smiles on their faces with their thumbs up, I was so excited I hugged Kalarney so hard he was probably choking and forgot to hug the vets. Unfortunately my wonderful riding buddy of 43h Caroline Windle joined the *exclusive* Friday club. Her short legs were a bit tired and they had a fall on the steps. Thanks to her I made it through the whole Shahzada. We yelled at each other, cried together, laughter with each other and deafened the birds with our singing.

We had a great time,

It was great to have everybody's support throughout the whole ride and was wonderful to have my mum there at the end to support me and hug me. When I finished I went and got a whole block of chocolate and ate it all watching everybody else vet through.

I came to shahzada with two goals to complete and to be last junior

and that's just what I did. To finish is to win

