



Brad and Jive tackle The Steps on the final day of the ride.

Shahzada's Best Managed

Story and images by Animal Focus.

Brad Jones is a gentle bear of a man who would do anything for anyone. Whether holding a camel to ensure the safety of passing riders or offering a helping hand to anyone in need, Brad's kindness - and wicked sense of humour - can be depended upon.

For Brad, from Windeyer near Mudgee, family always comes first. Although the man of the house is often firmly pulled into line by the women in his life, the pride he feels for wife, Wendy and daughters Shelley and Allix cannot be underestimated.

Successful endurance riders in their own right, the Jones women could not have been prouder when 58-year-old Brad won the Best Managed award at the 400 km Shahzada Marathon in 2018. After a massive 53hrs 15mins riding time, Brad Jones rode Shellal Jive into base on Friday afternoon, an experience he described as "very special".

Jive, an eight-year-old Arab/Thoroughbred/Stockhorse cross, was discovered at Roma Showground in Queensland. The tough 16.2hh grey fitted the bill for size and strength to carry Brad around endurance rides.

"He was doing tricks," Brad says proudly. "He can bow, he can count and he can do a barrel race by himself! He's got a bit of character. He's very gentle and puts up with a lot - he's just a pretty laid back type of horse. He's pretty cruisy



Brad and Jive stride out across the common on Tuesday.

and he's my forever horse."

2018 was Brad and Jive's 3rd attempt at Shahzada and their first successful completion.

"I've been involved in different rides in Australia and around the world and Shahzada is just the greatest ride in the world," he said. "Friday afternoon is special. You can take all the Quiltys and other big races around the world but you don't get any better than Shahzada.

"Jive felt amazing all week," he said. "For such a big horse, he's amazing going up and down Prestons, McKecknies and The Steps."

Presentation on Saturday morning saw all those who had successfully completed the gruelling ride lined up to receive the much-coveted Shahzada buckle. From 43 starters there were 26 completions with times ranging from 41 hrs to Brad and Jive's time of 53 hrs, and they all stood by the fundamental principle of Shahzada that *To Finish is to Win*.

But for one man, the icing on the cake was yet to come. Noone was more surprised than he was to win the prestigious Best Managed award, as judged by the veterinary team. It recognizes the horse, the work of the rider and the strapping team and may require years of preparation, ever-vigilant awareness by the rider and horse management while covering the 400 Km course/five days.

"I couldn't believe it - I was nearly in tears," Brad said. "If I never win another thing, I'll take (the memory of) that trophy to the grave with me!"

Brad's advice to anyone considering doing Shahzada is to give it a go. "You've got to want to do it for the five days," he said. "The hard work and the fitness you and your horse have got to put in before the start, that's the biggest thing in my mind."



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