

FROM THE SEA TO THE SADDLE – THE WOODHEAD JOURNEY



Some endurance riders are born into horses. Others discover them later in life. For Duncan and Caroline Woodhead, their path to endurance began only after another remarkable adventure had come to an end.

In 2018, after many years sailing the world and finally making landfall, Duncan and Caroline returned to one of their lifelong passions—horses. Starting with rehomed Standardbreds, they were introduced to endurance riding by Tenterfield Endurance Riding Club Life Member Michael Combe. They still laugh about their first ride together through Girard Forest.

"We remember riding with Michael and thinking 16 kilometres was an impossibly long way." Little did they know that those first kilometres would spark a passion that would shape the next chapter of their lives.

For Duncan, that journey soon centred around a determined chestnut Arabian mare affectionately known as Ninja. Together they became one of the club's most successful Heavyweight combinations, collecting numerous wins and proving themselves across some of Australia's toughest endurance courses.

Their dedication culminated in Duncan earning his first Tom Quilty Gold Cup buckle in 2022, finishing fifth in the Heavyweight division. He returned the following year to claim his second buckle, sharing second place in the Heavyweight division with fellow Tenterfield rider Allyson Taylor.

AERA- HIGHLIGHTS

DUNCAN WOODHEAD



- Multiple Heavyweight wins with Ninja.
- Tom Quilty Gold Cup buckle recipient (2022 – 5th Heavyweight).
- Tom Quilty Gold Cup buckle recipient (2023 – Equal 2nd Heavyweight).
- President, Tenterfield Endurance Riding Club (2022–2025).
- Northern Rivers Zone Representative to QERA.

MAN ABOUT THE CLUB

Away from competition, Duncan has been an advocate for the club. Serving as President of Tenterfield Endurance Riding Club for 3 years from 2022 to 2024, his tenure included a period of turmoil during the difficult post-Covid and flooding episodes. He continues to be an active committee member and has also represented the Northern Rivers Zone within Queensland Endurance Riders Association. His willingness to pitch in wherever needed have made a lasting contribution to the club and the wider endurance community.



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Caroline Woodhead

Caroline's endurance story has been equally inspiring.

Her first partner was Bangalow Park Cobber, a part-Arabian gelding with no endurance experience. Together they learnt the sport from the ground up, progressing patiently through increasing distances until reaching Open status. Then fate intervened.

Just one month before the 2022 Tom Quilty, Duncan's own horse was sidelined with injury. Caroline generously loaned him the newly qualified Cobber. Against all expectations, the unlikely partnership not only completed Australia's premier endurance ride but also earned a coveted Tom Quilty buckle and a placing.

Almost overnight, Cobber became something of a minor celebrity.

His quiet temperament and generous nature have since helped several Splendacrest junior riders and other competitors achieve their own endurance dreams.

Caroline has continued to build her own impressive endurance career, successfully campaigning both Cobber and her Arabian gelding Nasr in the Lightweight division, including a successful 120km completion at Imbil. Beyond competition, she has given many hours back to the sport as a committee member of Tenterfield Endurance Riding Club and currently serves as Vice President of the Northern Rivers Zone.

Together, Duncan and Caroline embody what makes endurance riding special. Their story reminds us that it is never too late to begin a new adventure. From oceans to forests, from rehomed horses to Tom Quilty buckles, their journey has been built on determination, generosity and a willingness to support others along the way.



Bangalow Park Cobber – AERA Highlights

- Tom Quilty Gold Cup buckle horse (2022) - D Woodhead (HW rider)
- QERA State Championships (2020)- C Woodhead (LW Rider)
- Competed successfully with multiple riders, demonstrating exceptional versatility
- Successfully completed rides from 40 km Intermediate events through to 160 km Tom Quilty Gold Cup competition.
- Competed at QERA State Championships and EnduraFest, highlighting his continued competitiveness at major endurance rides.

