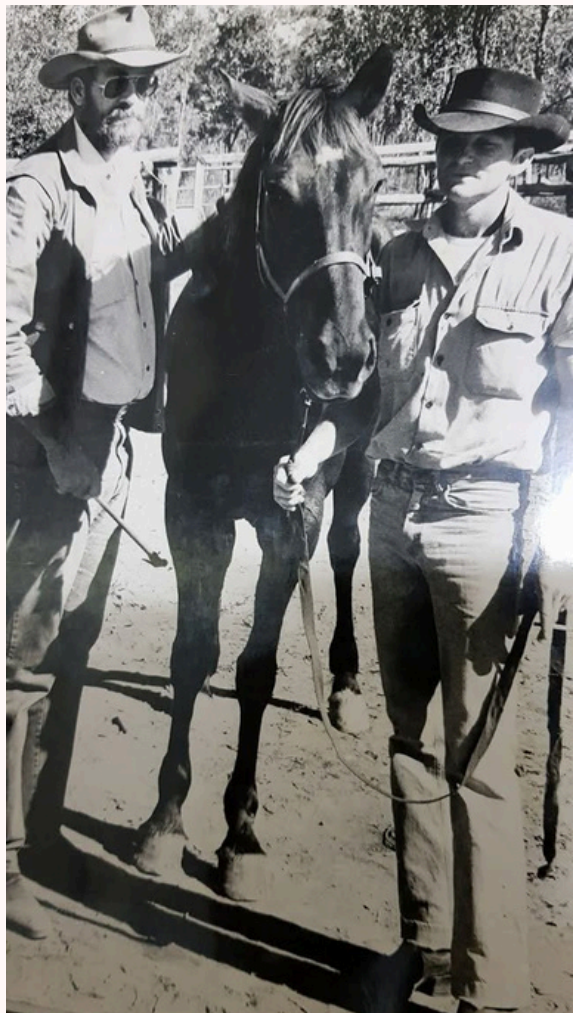


A LIFETIME WITH HORSES AND ENDURANCE RIDING- IAN MAINS



Horses have been part of my life since I was about nine years old. My father taught me the basics, often reminding me to keep my “hands down and elbows in”. His practical advice and steady influence stayed with me throughout my riding life.



I became involved in endurance riding in 1986, with Dad accompanying me to most of my early rides. It was a busy first year. I completed a 40-kilometre ride, placed third lightweight in a 100-kilometre event and finished second lightweight in the 250-kilometre Stockman's Hall of Fame Ride.

Since then, I have completed 104 rides and travelled a total of 8,073 competitive kilometres. I competed in eight 160-kilometre rides, including five State Championships, successfully completing six of them. I also nominated for two Tom Quilty Gold Cup rides and was fortunate to complete both.

Another important achievement was completing the 320-kilometre Far North Queensland Marathon, where I placed second lightweight.

Over the years, I competed on 17 horses. Five came from the Matta Mia Stud, seven were bred at our own stud, and the remaining five were either purchased or gifted to us. Each horse contributed something different and helped shape my endurance experience.



*above left:
Me in 1986 with Dollar
preparing to compete in the
Stockman's Hall of Fame 250km
Ride, in which we placed 2nd.*

*Left:
Riding my last endurance horse
Lady Saphira at Southbrook
ride in 2024. I saved the best
until last.
(Sarah Sullivan Photography)*

In 1996, I established my Arabian stud. Over the years, the stud stood four stallions, including two that were home-bred. Breeding and developing Arabian horses became an important part of my life alongside competition.

Some rides remain particularly memorable. These include placing third lightweight in the 100-kilometre Bowen River Ride in a time of five hours and eleven minutes, finishing second lightweight in the 320-kilometre FNQ Marathon, and placing second lightweight in the 250-kilometre Stockman's Hall of Fame Ride.



Me running out Emerald to collect the fittest horse at the Tablelands



2019 Tom Quilty ride on Kohnray Emerald alongside Michael Combe on Nasr

Completing two Tom Quilty rides was also very special. Another memorable result came at Inkerman, riding Matta Mia Naddara. We placed first middleweight in five hours and thirty-six minutes and received Best Conditioned Horse. It was also the day I managed to finish ahead of my mentor, which made the result particularly satisfying.

My father was one of the greatest influences in my life, especially when it came to horses. He passed away in 2002, but in a way, he still accompanies me on every ride. I carry some of his ashes in a small saddlebag attached to my saddle.

After many years, many horses and many kilometres, endurance riding has given me lasting memories, friendships and experiences. My father's early advice remains with me still: hands down, elbows in.