

NARELLE CHILDS- An enduring passion



Narelle Childs was already in her mid-30s when a three-year-old Andalusian/Welsh Mountain pony named 'Gavin' arrived for the family's eight-year-old daughter. There was just one small problem—Gavin was rather a handful for a young child who had never ridden before.



Narelle decided she might as well take on the challenge of sorting the little pony out herself. A little social riding followed and, in 1998, she was introduced to endurance. She spent her first year doing training rides on Gavin, although his resting heart rate was, as Narelle remembers, "bordering on a vet out".

Despite that less-than-ideal introduction, she was hooked.

Wanting to tackle longer distances, Narelle bought her first Arabian, 'Flynn', registered as Arsley House Eryldene. He became not only a remarkable endurance horse but a much-loved friend who took Narelle on some of her greatest adventures.

By 2002 the pair had completed their first Tom Quilty Gold Cup, finishing ninth Lightweight. The following year was extraordinary: Narelle and Flynn won the Lightweight division of the 2003 Tom Quilty and then went on to win Lightweight at the Queensland State Championships. In 2004 they returned to the Quilty and placed fourth Lightweight.

Those early successes were the beginning of a riding career that would span more than two decades. AERASpace now records 120 endurance rides and 11,555 endurance kilometres for Narelle, as well as another 930 kilometres in intermediate and introductory rides.

AERA- HIGHLIGHTS

NARELLE CHILDS



120 open endurance completions

11555 km

7 Tom Quilty Buckles incl.
2003 1st LWT and BC
2004 4th LWT
2015 Top 10 completion
placing 8th MWT

2 X 400km Shahzada
Marathon completions



Two photos that capture the early years and the final chapter in a remarkable riding career

An enduring career

Endurance was never simply Narelle's individual pursuit. For the Childs family, it became very much a family affair. Daughter Kacey competed alongside her mother for many years and developed into a successful junior rider in her own right. Her AERA record includes 15 junior endurance rides and more than 1,200 kilometres in the junior division, with wins and placings at rides including Lake Manchester and Bonalbo. As she grew older she continued competing in the senior divisions, bringing her recorded endurance total to 1,671 kilometres.

Meanwhile, Graham was the constant behind the scenes. He travelled with Narelle and Kacey to rides all over Australia and became an invaluable strapper and supporter. Endurance meant horses to prepare, kilometres to travel, camps to set up, vet checks, feeding, strapping and long hours waiting for riders to return—and Graham was there through it all. Perhaps even more impressive is that the family managed this commitment while Narelle and Graham were both juggling the responsibilities of full-time work and raising four children. Endurance became woven into family life, with weekends and holidays often revolving around horses, training and the next ride.

Over the years Narelle was privileged to own and ride a number of special Arabian horses, but another who holds a particularly important place in her story is Halo Kazaam—or simply ‘Kazaam’. Narelle describes him as “a true tough guy”, and his record certainly supports that description.

Together they completed some of Australian endurance riding's toughest challenges. At the 2011 Tom Quilty they finished 12th Middleweight, followed by 13th Middleweight in 2013. At the 50th Anniversary Tom Quilty in 2015, Narelle and Kazaam finished eighth Middleweight.

Kazaam also carried Narelle through two successful Shahzada 400 kilometre marathons, finishing fifth in 2012 and an outstanding second in 2014. One of those rides produced a story that perhaps says more about Kazaam than any placing ever could. Only two kilometres from the end of the event, horse and rider were struck by a car and trailer. Kazaam was knocked down, yet remarkably continued on and presented to the vets with a low heart rate, passing the final examination with flying colours. His toughness and courage left a lasting impression on Narelle.



Enduring memories

Narelle's career ultimately earned her seven Tom Quilty buckles, beginning with Flynn in 2002 and continuing through to her eighth-place finish with Kazaam at the 50th Anniversary Quilty in 2015. Her record also includes strong performances at State Championships across the years, including her 2003 win with Flynn, fourth Middleweight with Kazaam in 2013 and third Lightweight aboard Workalot Taser at the 2020 Queensland State Championships.

Even into the later years of her riding career, Narelle continued to be competitive. With Lasca's Leroy, she recorded wins at Killarney and Johns River in 2022 and at Tenterfield in 2023, along with further placings during 2024.

For all the kilometres, buckles and placings, however, Narelle has always believed that success in endurance begins with the welfare of the horse. Her philosophy is simple: good preparation, giving a horse sufficient time to physically build up to the demands of distance riding, and always riding within that horse's capabilities. Horse welfare, she believes, must remain paramount.

Narelle has now retired from competitive endurance riding, but she has certainly not retired from the endurance community. She remains an active member of the Tenterfield Endurance Riding Club, regularly joining working bees and social events and continuing to support the sport that has been such a significant part of her family's life.

Looking back, the results tell only part of Narelle's story. The greater legacy lies in the adventures shared with some wonderful horses, thousands of kilometres travelled with Graham and Kacey, the challenge of fitting endurance around work and raising a family, and the friendships formed along the way. For Narelle, those friendships, challenges and shared experiences are what have made endurance such an enduring passion.

