

Performance Shagya-Arabian Registry

Fall 2022 Newsletter

The Tevis Cup

“The Western States Trail Ride, popularly called the Tevis Cup Ride, is the oldest modern-day endurance ride, having been held annually since 1955.” teviscup.org

The 2022 Rider and Horse teams

Potato Richardson and La Princessa Tzia, CA

Pulled R/O Francisco's

Julie Bittick and SS Chevelle, MT

Completed 4:59am, 59th place

Jacqueline Debits and My True Companion, CA

Pulled Metabolic, Robinson Flat

Cameron Holzer and Ch Fancy Finesse, TX

Completed 11:00pm, 5th place

Caroline Lindqvist and Lily creek Kong, Sweden

Completed 12:44am, 14th place



This year 5 Shagya-Arabian horse and rider teams entered the grueling and demanding 100 mile 1 day Tevis cup ride. The ride pits top riders from all over the world against the harsh Sierra Nevada Mountains as they journey from Lake Tahoe to Auburn California. This year on July 16th, 131 riders left Robie Park at 5:15am, only 59 crossed the finish line at McCann Stadium. Gabriela Blakely and her horse LLC Pyros Choice crossed the finish line at 10:24pm the last horse crossed the line at 4:59am. Everyone who left the gate that morning will forever get to hold the memory of his or her day on the Tevis Trail. Read on as fellow Shagya-Arabian owners tell us about their Tevis 2022 Adventures.

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Cameron Holzer
July 22 at 11:00 PM

My TEVIS 2022 Story.

It all started when I took my horses to Colorado and did the Spanish Peaks race. My horses all did amazing and when I was packing to go home I decided why go home? I'm just going to go to California now!!! I called



Diane Stevens and was like uh can I come now? She said of course! I would be there for 2.5 weeks before Tevis. Maggie was leased and I had decided I would ride Summer or Finesse. Kong would rest since he just did a 100 at Spanish Peaks. We get out to California without any issues. I prayed to God to let me know who to ride. He made it very clear to me Finesse was my girl. I was nervous about riding a 6 year old on Tevis but Finesse is a Shagya, and like Kong, she is Shagya tough. She is from my best broodmare, Pocket Rocket, sired by the Shagya stallion KS Tribute. I won the AHA National Championship 55 on Finesse last year at Big South Fork. I knew she handled the mountains with ease.

The very first time I put a Saddle on Finesse as a 3 year old she galloped full speed in the round pen for 1.5 hours in the direct sun in Houston, TX in the afternoon, it was over 100 degrees. I had to put a jump in the round pen just to get her get tired enough to stop. I was amazed she didn't colic, and her legs didn't have any filling, and she wasn't lame. I was like yes, she is a Shagya. At her first 25, Haley Moquin rode her for me and it was in Oklahoma in June and very very hot, Haley told me then she had what it took to win Tevis.

I immediately bought more frozen semen from Donna Coss and bred another full sibling to Finesse. Because of my love for Kong, I bred Finesse. I contacted his breeder once I realized what a star he was and I bought frozen semen from her to breed Finesse. Pocket is a great broodmare that I have sold a couple times and she keeps coming back to me. It seems nobody sees the greatness in her that I do. Which is fine. I will just keep her.

I have always dreamed of top tenning Tevis. My mom finished 3rd last year and that was incredible. I knew Finesse had what it took to do very well at the race but I was going to be doing her first 100 at 6 years old. Kong had his fastest 100 also at 6 years old, so I knew she could do it but I would need to make sure she didn't tire herself out.

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Heather Reynolds asked me if one of her friends could ride Kong, she was an excellent rider from Sweden. I agreed to it and thought it would be good for Finesse to ride with the experienced Kong boy.

Maggie's leasee decided to ride another horse on Tuesday before Tevis! Man, that was stressful but it all turned out for the best. My mom asked John Stevens to ride Maggie; he finished on her in 2019 so he knew her well. He agreed, who wouldn't want to ride last year's 3rd place finisher!!

So off I go to Robie with 3 horses starting the ride. I told John go for it with Maggie, that's what my mom did last year and it worked out well for her. Caroline Franzén on Kong would ride with me and we would take it easier, hoping for a top 20 finish, maybe better.

Finesse was a little bit anxious at the start but not bad, I wanted to take it easy with her and Kong. We moved out at a good trot where we could, then we did a mix of trot and walk up the long road to High Camp. We rode on to Cougar rock where we both went over the rock, it was amazing! Horses pulsed and ate great at Red Star and Robinson

Flat. On to the canyons! Finesse flew down that road so fast! I knew Finesse was very fast downhill and Kong is very fast uphill so we had Finesse lead down the canyons and Kong lead up. After the second canyon we decided Caroline wanted to slow down a little bit and I would speed up as Finesse was still feeling just as strong as she had been at the start of the race!



Photo Credit Ron Osborn

We had awesome crew at Michigan Bluff! Thank you! We let the horses eat and drink and went on our way. I went through Chicken Hawk fast and Caroline held back so she could slow down. I let Finesse start rolling here. Flew through the canyon into Foresthill. I left Foresthill in 9th. From here I let her go and she kept passing horses. Before I knew it we caught up to Maggie and John before Franciscos. From there we went together to Lower Quarry. After us, a big group of horses came in and I wanted to go straight out to keep my placing. Finesse went out at a gallop chasing Dante. I didn't want to go that fast but didn't really have a choice. So when I caught up to Heather right after the

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bridge I told her I was not going to race her, I just wanted to get into the finish line safely! I finished 5th right behind Heather.

Maggie came in 6th a little bit after me. Getting a top 5 finish on one of my most talented homebred is a dream come true. Having 2 horses in the top 10 at Tevis, unbelievable.

Then Kong came in 14th. All 3 of my horses finished and I am so thankful and grateful. Kong and Maggie now have 3 finishes each. All of Kong's are in the top 20. Maggie has 2 top ten finishes. I would love to get them both on the Wendell Robie Trophy with 5 finishes. Finesse looked amazing the next day and showed well for the Haggin. I am confident she will get another crack at it another year. She is the amazing horse I knew she would be.

Thank you Kong for being the best boy so I wanted to breed another one like him, and for her to turn out like she did is incredible. I feel like I am the luckiest girl in the entire world. God always has a better plan for us than we can even imagine. I always saw myself finishing Top Ten on Kong. He still has the fastest Tevis time of all my horses with a 10:30pm finish time in 2019 only to get 11th place. To top ten on my homebred mare means so much to me. My next dream is a Shade and Finesse Tevis ... that will be one to remember as Shade is equally talented to her sister Finesse. Shade is pregnant right now so it will be a few years away. Thank you so much Diane Stevens, Troy Koehl, Deanna Gray Koehl, Hillorie, Zack, Scott, and Sarah Tycker. Without you guys my success would not have been possible. Until next time Tevis!!!



Photo credit Merri Melde

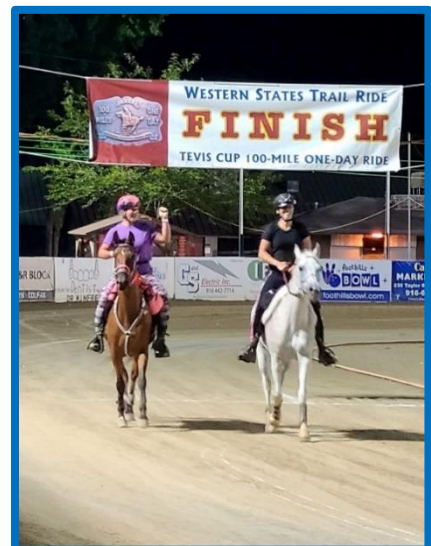


Photo credit Judith Moore

Vandana Jaqueline Debits
July 20, 2022

Reflecting on what to write about Tevis, this is the first, the one that matters most to me... The Cougar Rock of My Heart



Our first attempt at Tevis 48 hours behind us, I walked out to the pasture in the hot, dry morning sun of the Sierra Foothills in drought July. I felt the palpable peace of Ananda Village, and the many prayers of friends, holding us gently.

Tru was grazing off in the distance, while his mama Giselle stood dosing and swatting flies at the water trough. She gratefully lowered her head for her fly mask. I gave her a kiss (best smelling horse muzzle I've ever known). "Your baby gave his all, and that's quite a lot, Mama G."

I stepped through the dust toward Tru, looking routinely for signs of wellness or distress. Tru whinnied deep and handsome and languidly walked to me, not concerned for anything but his morning belly rub and fly mask. I smiled at memories of his sweet-pitched foal whinny and his urgent teenager whinny. I put my naked ear to his flank and listened to the rumbling world of his gut sounds, feeling a thrilled relief at hearing the gurgling party within.

Not wanting to ask anything of him today, I kissed him and inhaled his warm, herbal scent of sweat and pasture grasses, before starting back up the slope for the barn. The dry grass crackled behind me with his footfalls. He followed me and stopped touching his belly to my breast. He curved his neck round to reach me gently with his muzzle. "Be here with me a little while, my friend." I draped my arm over his back, and my tears started rolling.

"Thank you so much. You tried so hard. I'm so proud of you....We have to figure out the start....I know now, it's something inside of me, not just training you."

"You want to win. That's what's inside you, and I want to give it to you," Tru said, so simply, and nibbled some grass, staying close to me. I'm just a rider, trying, learning, very few competitive miles. I feel small to the 11,000, 27,000 miler riders, afraid of the ego impulses, of what winning requires...searching to define a winning way for us, curious to find out what it makes of me, reaching for the courage to step up to the task of Tevis and of this Tru-ly powerful horse. I called him into this body, for this purpose, for this journey together. How do I live up to him?

I stand humbled by the first try turning out exactly the way I did not want it to. The lack of water in most of the troughs at Robie Park Thursday night and Friday morning took away his opportunity to do his routine of drinking trough to trough in camp. I'm so used to him taking good care of himself that his dehydration Friday caught me completely off-guard. The 60 BPM, slow skin tenting, C's on gut sounds shocked me. He drank and ate mash and re-checked at 40 BPM and A gut sounds. He drank at least 122 swallows by the time we arrived at Robinson Flat. He ate grass along the way. He pulsed down to 56 at each stop within minutes, just as we agreed. We simply did not have time to recover the deep hydration he needed to ride out his way.

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On the start, I sought advice, I trained. No advice was really right for us. None of our strategies for other ride starts apply to Tevis. Mostly, I got sympathy. Seems that most people just don't know how to solve this one. They either have a "steady-Eddy" or the fight and ride it out horse; both train the best they can, and give it a shot.

At the awards banquet, a good rider told me she is not sure she wants to ride like that again, in the top 10, over the Granite Chief, watching rocks fly, horses misstep and recover as they slide again 6 inches into the deep, fine dust of the treacherous trail, asking her horse to slow down, fighting with him as he gets emotional to catch up. Sounds familiar. The horse who died trotted out of Robinson Flat with The Tevis Cup winner. Only the winner mentioned the loss, the cost through the microphone.

"All feeling, all character, all thought, all life, exist for us only in so far as it can be reflected upon...Stand still where you are, stand alone, isolate your life, and forthwith you are nothing. Enter into relationships...look upon yourself and be looked upon from without, and then indeed you are a somebody, a self with a consistency and a vitality, a being with a genuine life."~G.W.F. Hegel



Probably the best advice I got came too late for this try...from a rider whose horse stood stabled next to Tru in Barn C. As she waited for her husband to literally come and pick her up, she generously chatted with me: "Try to stay toward the back. In training, don't let him get up on the butts of other horses, and don't let horses get up on him. It's worked so far." That strategy probably would have been our only chance, given the hydration deficit, but it's not what we had practiced. Holding back takes energy, maybe more than moving out.

The canyons after we pulled, at 120 degrees, would have been more dangerous still. She finished in the last half hour, with a 6 year old whom she had never let go out ahead. "Now, maybe he is ready to go out in front." Maybe we should not have started at all.

Admittedly, I do not know how to achieve that. In our meditations the weeks before, I could feel the promising possibility of a calm start together. In our dressage lessons, we found lightness, suppleness and power. At the start, he stopped on my exhale at the back of Pen 2. He walked quietly, weaving carefully among the horses and stopped on my exhale again at the front of Pen 2. I had given up the Pen 1 ticket to avoid its big energy rush, but was warned and it happened...

Once the trail was open, horses and mules surged forward, and Tru found a way through on the left. "Sorry," I called out. "It's okay," I heard back. I had to ride with as straight a back as I could, sliding the bit across his mouth, quick jerks up, guide and ride our way through, as safely as possible. We stayed in our lane. We slowed. We surged. With the trail open in front of him, he

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shied 4-6 feet back and forth across it, emotional to be scouting out front. We felt exhilarated, embarrassed, forgiving, worried, grateful, honored, chastised, everything.

Within a minute or two we were up into the Pen 1 horses. Guide and ride this freight train forward to a spot where we found one horse/rider at the end of a string who was not bothered by us up on her butt. We probably should have stayed there. But we passed with another rider who we thought might be smart about the trail, to relieve the pressure, not wanting to be a problem for others. Slow a bit, give trail, rush to catch up, pass to relieve. Repeat. It was what we could do, this time.

Tru is A LOT of horse—energy, heart, talent, drive. “Managing him” is not enough, not even “it,” perhaps. I was not clear inside on how to ride the horse I have, the emotions we both have in this heady moment. We are still on the journey of a 1,000 miles to this 100.

“You can’t die for this, Tru. Not worth it!”

The worst nightmare flashed through my mind—the stories from riders hearing the horse die in the canyon, one of three horses that went off the trail this year. I can’t write what I heard, in deference to the rider who must be in such agony now. I winced at my own memories of Tru clenching his belly in pain, stomping, pointing at his side. “Mama, it hurts right there. Help me.” I pushed my fear’s drama away, and said to him again “We have to figure this out.”

“We will. I trust you.” He nibbled some choice blades of grass near him, barely taking steps, staying with me, as I held him, my arms around his vast, sleek shoulders, his wither jutting above me—the Cougar Rock of my heart. I cried into his freckled white coat, once star dappled dark grey, astonished, humbled, grateful that my Shagya war horse would want to be with me even more, after all that.

“I don’t want to give up winning,” he said. “I can do this. We can do this. It’s not just my potential we’re living into. It’s yours too. Go figure it out. I’ll be ready when you know it in your body.”

“For now, let’s just go back to grazing, together.”



Julie Bittick
July 18, 2022

Here's our story

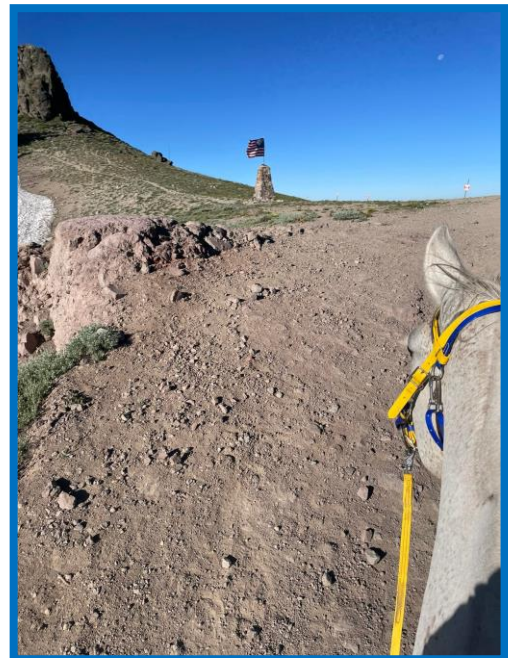
some fun facts:

- 45% completion rate this year with 131 starting and 59 that finished.
- The horse has to pass a vet exam and be considered fit and sound enough to keep riding in order to successfully get a completion.
- The trail has 35,700 ft of elevation change packed into that 100 miles
- There are 3 steep canyons that get well over 100 degrees. They said it got to 110 in the canyon the day we rode ☐
- You must finish the ride in 24 hours or less and that includes all your breaks and vet exams throughout the ride.



4:45am I joined the masses of other horse/rider teams to warm up and walk the 1 mile trek down the road to the starting line. I used this time to really study the horses and riders around me in order to do my best on finding a spot that would be surrounded by the most seasoned of teams. (This is a single track trail. I didn't want to get stuck behind someone else's drama). With some strategy and luck, I felt we found a perfect position in the pack, and we were off. It's about 7 miles of working your way down and up the crevices of the mountain until crossing highway 89.

Once we crossed it's a grueling climb that literally goes up and up and up. All the way up to and past the Squaw Valley Ski Lifts. 3000 ft of elevation is gained in a very short distance. We took our time walking, with a little trotting. I was surprised at the amount of riders that passed me at speed and couldn't help but think that I would be seeing many of them pulled at the next vet check.



After we topped this mountain, we began losing just as much elevation off the other side. This area is known for its bogs and boulder fields. It's a landmine out there and very tough. Chevelle

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was leading a pack of about 4 other riders and someone in the back yelled. "Hey Montana I bet your used to this kind of riding". Nope I said. This is Hard! We did make a lot of time up here though. Chevelle is smart with her feet.

Then we started to climb again to crest the next mountain top. Here is the famous Cougar Rock! I had made my mind up months ago that we would go over it and didn't have a moment hesitation.

Finally making it into the first big vet check and one hour hold Cody was there waiting for me with his hunter orange hat on so I could find him in the mass of people. Chevelle looked great so I quickly took her to the vet check. CRI 44/48! The vet said she had the best CRI he had seen yet. That moment will stick with me just as much as crossing the finish line.

After our hour hold, we left towards Last Chance vet check and to begin our decent into the worse of the 3 canyons we had to face. Jumping off my horse we walked/jogged down the mountain 1.5 miles with 2000 ft elevation loss. It was incredibly hot and the further down in the canyon the hotter it gets. The views are spectacular but I wouldn't recommend looking down. The trail is very narrow and there are some spots where it's nothing but air if you take a step off the trail. Once in the bottom I took Chevelle into the river and drenched us both. We were about to go straight back up the other side and cooling off seemed to be the smart move. Chevelle once again led a pack of about 5 up that canyon. Lucky for us we have places like Tumbledown and Cameron to train on. She is a power house when climbing.

2 more canyons after this and finally onto Forest Hill. Mile 68 and our second 1 hour vet hold. I anticipated this being our hardest to get through. Extreme physical exertion in extreme heat I worried that her pulse would be hanging. Sure enough CRI 60/68. Ugh but everything else looked excellent so they wanted to do a recheck 10 minutes before I left to make sure she was recovering. @ Recheck we were 60/60 and she was eating and drinking great so they gave me the nod to go.

Cody got my night riding gear all ready and off we went into the dark. Trotting the first little bit through the town of Forest Hill everyone was lined up cheering us on. Then a truck pulled up by the little country bar with some younger adults that probably had been enjoying a few beers already. They had a big train horn installed and managed to blow it right when we were riding by. Good GRIEF!! Trotting horse, steel shoes and asphalt. Thank you lord for giving me a solid mount that barely flinched, she just looked over and I believe gave them the equivalent of a middle finger. 😊. Good girl!



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It was so dark in the next canyon you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. This was my favorite part, I trust my horse completely so never turned on my headlamp. It doesn't matter if I can see, only that my horse can, and she can see better without the annoying lights. I sat balanced, my only job was to stay out of her way and follow her lead. She trotted where she could, took the sharp turns of a switchback where needed. Only once did she ask for my help. She came to a stop and then I felt her nose on my leg. Turning on my headlamp all I could see was a rock cliff with a small trickle of water coming down it. Looking around I finally found where the trail turned back almost on top of itself. Light off and making a 180 turn on the haunches we were off again.

Once the moon came up it was spectacular. The trail glowed in the moonlight and I could just make out the American River way down below us. I did my best not to look over the edge too much. The trail is narrow and the edges soft, I didn't want to do anything that might accidentally get us too close and ultimately go over the edge. This had just happened to a friend and his horse down the trail a little ways. Luckily, both are fine but it took several hours for the rescue crew to show up and help get the horse to safety using ropes.

At mile 80 Chevelle finally hit the proverbial wall. I've been told to look for it about mile 64-68 but on this day, for us, it was mile 80. I could feel her slightly tightening in her hind end and she was hot and tired. Luckily about 100 yards up the trail was a water trough. She drank and drank and drank. Feeling good about that I gave her 2 doses of electrolytes and decided to spend the next 30-45 minutes handwalking down the trail until I felt her catch her second wind. We did lose precious minutes during this time which meant we were now in a race against the mountain and the clock. It was the right call though. Not only best for my horse but it ensured we stayed out of the danger zone metabolically.

At mile 85 we came to the river. There were volunteers that asked if I wanted a shot to celebrate the river crossing. She told me if I took a shot now she would give me a second for the other side. "Give me the good stuff" I said. After a shot of JD and a small bottle of JD in my pocket we forged the river. I didn't take the second shot. Instead, it's going in my little souvenir trunk to remember the night by.

Those last 15 miles I had a wonderfully fresh and forward horse. We gained back the time lost and made it to the finish line with 15 minutes to spare. She looked great and her vet card confirmed it.

What a ride and to complete it with my Chevelle that I've spent the last three years conditioning and hardening up feels pretty incredible.

I'll be back! Kind of sad I have to wait a whole year to go do it again 😊

Huge thank you to all the vets and volunteers that make this ride a success. My husband who quickly learned how to be a great pit crew, my family who stayed glued to the gps tracker the whole 24 hours so they could give Cody updates on when I would show up. And to all the wonderful people in my life that filled me up with words of encouragement. ❤️



You might have to wait until next year for Tevis
but Distance Nationals are coming soon!