

Here's a report on our endurance ride at Katjapia on April 18, 2009 from Ingeborg Hernes.

Our English guest – Sue Speed – Farrasha, Ameer and I left on Friday morning for our two hour journey to Katjapia: a farm approx. 100km north east of Okapuka of which 60km is through the mountains on a gravel road. We arrived there at noon, settled our horses and tried to settle ourselves as well. Unfortunately our lodging wasn't ready yet and we were told that it would only take a few more minutes. Those minutes were definitely Namibian minutes! By the time it was time to do our entry and take our horses to the pre-vet check the rooms were still not ready. So we decided to get the formalities over and done with. Sue decided to compete in a 60km ride in the No Weight Division even though she made the Standard Weight Division, but she liked to support the FEI test by competing in the No Weight. I decided to compete in a 60km ride in the Standard Weight Division – I still have that dream of competing in the world championships next year!

The pre-vet went perfectly: Farrasha heart rate of 36 – a bit higher than normal and Ameer heart rate of 32 – maybe finally he's getting used to being out on endurances? After presenting our horses our rooms were ready – or so we thought. The cleaners drove in front of us because apparently our accommodation was somewhere in the middle of nowhere. After 6kms we had to open a gate, but unfortunately the cleaners had the wrong key and had to drive back. In the mean time Sue and I took some photos of our surroundings. Once the cleaners came back – this time with the right key – we drove on and after 2 more gates (no locks this time) we arrived at our house. An old farm house with almost antique furniture and without electricity! No time to look around we quickly changed into our riding gear, left the cleaners behind and drove off to the venue. Quickly saddled up Farrasha and Ameer and went for a quick spin as the last training session. Everything went perfect and the horses felt super! After a lovely meal we went back to our house in the pitch dark. Luckily we brought our head torches!

Saturday morning – early wake-up call at 03.45 hrs as we had to start at 05.30 hrs. It was freezing cold!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Only 7 degrees!!!!!! The horses on the 100 and 80kms left at 4.30! Glad we decided to do a shorter distance! After having a cup of coffee and some rusks we saddled our horses. Farrasha was easy going and calm. Ameer was all over the place. The plan was to leave as the last riders of the 60km group. Unfortunately more riders had that plan. After crossing the start line in a walk we decided to trot up to the riders in front of us. I shouldn't have done that because Ameer was having a ball and way too much energy; trotting in front and cantering with his hind and of course changing legs in between as well. Yeeehaaa rodeo!

Farrasha was not bothered at all, but got frequently highly irritated by Ameer's behaviour and was pulling nasty faces. It was only after 20km that Ameer settled down – well his way of settling down. Anyways, despite him losing a lot of energy and me as well, we had a ball. Trot trot trot, canter canter canter. We only had 8kms more to go on our first leg. Everything went smoothly. Crossed our first finish line, presented our horses within 4.5 minutes with an average speed of approx. 14.5 kph and heart rates of 58 and 52. Finally we had time to look after ourselves. After 40 minutes it was time to leave again on our second and last leg. I decided to wait for Sue as she was only 30 seconds behind me. When I was at the start line waiting for the signal to go I overheard someone saying that the leaders were just 2.5 minutes in front of us. Yeh, for me that's the same as putting a red flag in front of a bull! So, Sue and I went off – no, not like maniacs, but very tempting though. Ameer was behaving picture perfect and I even had time to take some photos of Sue on Farrasha. Within 7 minutes we saw 2 riders in front of us

and we decided to overtake with another 3 riders just in front of them. Just to make sure that we put a little bit of distance between those 5 riders and us we increased our tempo to 22kph.

When the first waterpoint came we stopped to have the horses drink and we could see the other riders closing in. So, off we went again canter, canter, canter looking behind us no one is following!!!!!! We haven't seen those 5 riders back ☺. I was still worried about the leaders. Where were they?! We should have caught up with them by now, but unfortunately there was nothing. We decided to stop at every water point because the temperature was already 30 degrees and that at 09.00 in the morning! Of course we didn't want to get vetted out because of a dehydrated horse; that would have been a silly, very silly rider mistake. Suddenly, when we were at the last water stop a rider came! Oh No! "Sue, get going out of here and speed up Farrasha! I will follow later!", I yelled. When I found out that the guy was also doing a 60km I thought "No way you're going to beat us!" So I jumped on Ameer and started chasing Sue, still keeping my eye on my watch because I was not allowed to arrive at the finish before 5 to 10. But we were going so strong and nice that when I caught up with Sue and we were doing 24kph I thought if I'm going too fast I will wait for 10 minutes before I cross the finish line. Just to make the rules clear: Ameer is a novice horse and that means that his average speed is not allowed to be over 16kph. If it is, you're disqualified and that would be another silly rider mistake. And I can't afford to have those! When I realised that the number of kilometers left between us and the finish line was only 7.5 and I still had 10 minutes to go before 5 to 10 we kept on cantering at 24kph. Suddenly just 700 meters before the finish line we saw 3 riders and thought we finally caught up with the leaders. Sue and I looked at each other, nodded and shouted charge!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Of course we didn't have to say that twice to our horses and they got wings!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Crossed the finish line full speed, but we did it. Now all we had to do is present our horses again to the vets. Ameer's heart rate dropped within 7 minutes to 61, but I decided to wait for Sue and Farrasha. Within 11 minutes we were at the vet check (we could have used the full 30 minutes, but why bother ☺) and passed everything. Not just us but also the horses were grinning!

Our results:

- Farrasha (official name Blackie) with Sue Speed
60.7km: 1st place No Weight Division in 3.48.02 hrs / average speed 15.973kph
- Rechar Ameer with Ingeborg Hernes
60.7km: 1st place Standard Weight Division in 3.48.01 / average speed 15.973kph

HEAVEN!