

affiliations

Shagya

North American Shagya Arabian Society

Shagya-Arabian

Captures World Cup

In torrential rain, a soaked rider on a grey horse comes galloping into the Aachen, Germany main arena, his arms spread like wings, his face reflecting incredible joy, but also the strain of a long, hard, 100 mile ride. Miguel Vila Ubach from Spain and his Shagya-Arabian gelding "Hungares" are greeted with a standing ovation by 20,000 spectators welcoming the gold medal winner of the 2006 World Endurance Championship. Hungares may be soaked, but he is fit and passed the final veterinary inspection with flying colors.

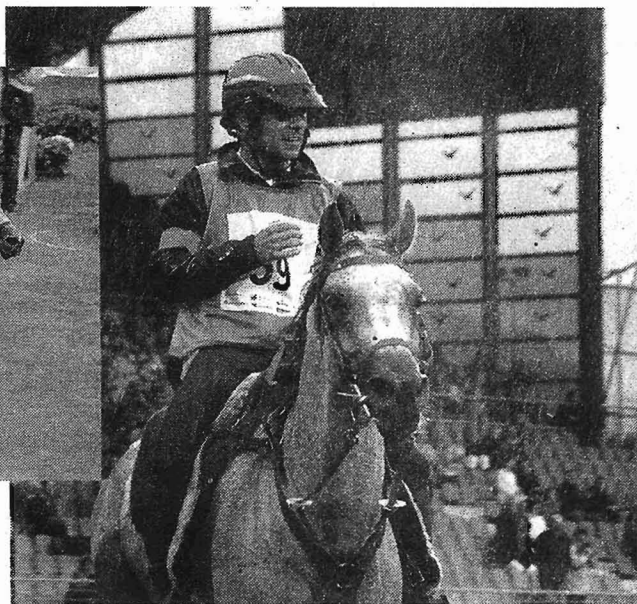
Over 150 riders from 42 nations set out on the classic 100 mile distance – a very tough ride through Germany, Belgium, and Holland, with many ups and downs, along asphalt and gravel roads, and through muddy lanes made soggy by the constant rain, in hopes of winning the coveted "World Cup 2006".

The winner paced his performance well, reaching the first vet check in 47th place and from then on slowly but surely working his way through the ranks. At the last vet check, there were still 8 riders in front of him.

How Miguel, 33, managed to reach the first placed during the final 13 km, even he can't quite explain. The heavy rain was the worst part of

the ride for him, as he normally never even trains in the rain. "I lost my mind", he said, "and just let my horse run. Apparently he can fly." He finished the 100 miles in a riding time of nine hours, 12 minutes, with an average speed of 17 km per hour, averaging nearly over 23 km per hour on the final loop.

Miguel's mount, the 8-year-old Shagya-Arabian Hungares, was born at the "birthplace" of the Shagya-Arabian breed – the Hungarian National Stud Farm "Babolna". The Shagya-Arabian breed originated at the Babolna Stud well over 200 years ago when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was at the height of its power. Utilizing mostly desert Arabian blood, this special breed was developed as an elite military mount by utilizing rigorous performance testing for both mares and stallions. For example, shortly before WWII a broodmare candidate had to successfully complete a 800 km (500 mile) ride in 10 days. Since the average European cavalry officer was larger than the average Beduin desert-dweller, Shagyas were not only bred for trainability, tractability and endurance, but also for increased size, frame and bone.



Hungares and his Spanish rider entering the main arena in a downpour at Aachen, still "flying" after 100 miles!

The modern Shagya-Arabian has inherited this genetic legacy, and the high quality of today's Shagyas is maintained through systematic inspections and performance testing of breeding stock overseen by the worldwide "International Shagya-Arabian Society" (the "ISG"). The relative rarity of the breed (approximately 3,000 individuals) has tended to keep this breed out of the equestrian spotlight, but Hungares's World Cup victory has certainly sparked the interest of the endurance community!

In Canada and the US the "North American Shagya-Arabian Society" ("NASS"), founded in 1986, is the ISG-member Shagya Society. A number of NASS-registered pure- and part-Shagyas are now competing in distance riding, a sport for which they are proving themselves eminently suited!

For more information, visit the NASS website: www.shagya.net.

Submitted by Jamie Buck