



THE TOM QUILTY GOLD CUP 2006

BOONAH, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA, JUNE 8 – 12

QUILTY TO BE BIGGEST ENDURANCE HORSE RACE IN THE WORLD

It's the toughest horse race in Australia and this year it will be the biggest event of its kind in the world. The punishing 160km-long classic, the Tom Quilty Gold Cup, to be held in Boonah, South East Queensland in June, is expected to attract a field of more than 350 riders from around the world. Together with their entourages, they're expected to swell the local population by 5,000.

Competitors will fly in from the Middle East, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the USA and Europe to test themselves alongside the Aussies, who are ranked world-first with more international medals to their name than any other country.

The objective of the Quilty is to test horse and rider - '100 miles on one horse in one day'. Competitors will begin the ride over bush tracks at a freezing midnight on Friday 9th June. Although they have a full 24 hours to complete, the winners are expected to cross the finish line in about 14 hours – arriving from 2pm on Saturday afternoon. Riders will also be vying for the coveted Best Conditioned awards, which reward the excellent physical condition of the top endurance horses.

Ride Organiser, Dick Collyer said seasoned international gold medallists would be riding alongside eager locals. "That's the glory of endurance riding – everyone can take part.

"We'll have members of Middle Eastern royal families, wealthy Japanese businessmen, a Malaysian prince and his crew, and some experienced riders from Europe. We'll also have Australian riders who have qualified for the Quilty by having previously completed at least one ride of 160km.

"Included in this group are some of our top riders - members of the Australian Youth Squad, who won Gold in December at the World Youth Championships 2005 and adult Squad members who took out Silver in the World Championships 2005.

"Yet we'll also have riders like the Weier family – five kids from Boonah, members of the local Fassifern Pony Club, who've been training on borrowed horses for the past two years and selling horse poo at \$2 a bag to fund themselves."

Collyer said the Boonah track was a very scenic one, taking in some lovely views of the surrounding Scenic Rim of mountains. It included some climbs to the top of the Dugandan Range, but also a lot of cross country riding across private grazing land.

Quilty Head Vet, Dr Brian Sheahan said throughout the night his team of 35 vets would be checking all horses. The Quilty is conducted in five legs. Tracks follow a clover leaf pattern with horses and riders returning to the base after each leg for vet checks.

"We test for soundness to continue – pulse, metabolics, heart rate and gait. We're pretty strict. Endurance riding is the most vetted equestrian sport there is.

"All of these horses will have been training for up to three years for this event. They're fit and in peak condition but anything can happen and we have to be sure they're OK."

Collyer said preparations for the competition were on schedule. This year activities were being broadened to offer more for the general spectator and the town of Boonah was getting behind the event with enthusiasm.

Riders were expected to arrive with their horses as early as two weeks before. A food and wine festival was being held on the Sunday and a country music concert was being planned for the Thursday night.

For further information, please contact:

Pamela Robson on (07) 3839 8747 or 0412 158 886 or email:
pamela@robson-dixon.com

Dick Collyer on (07) 5463 1979 or email: collyer@gil.com.au