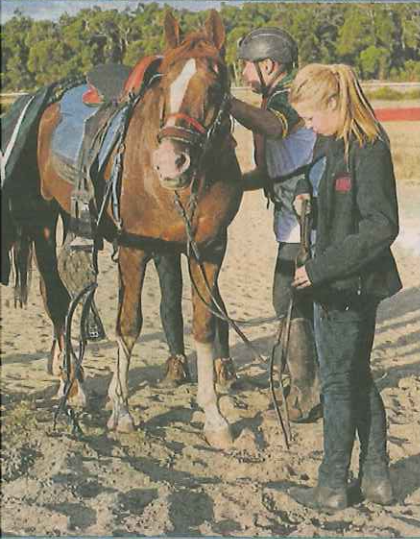
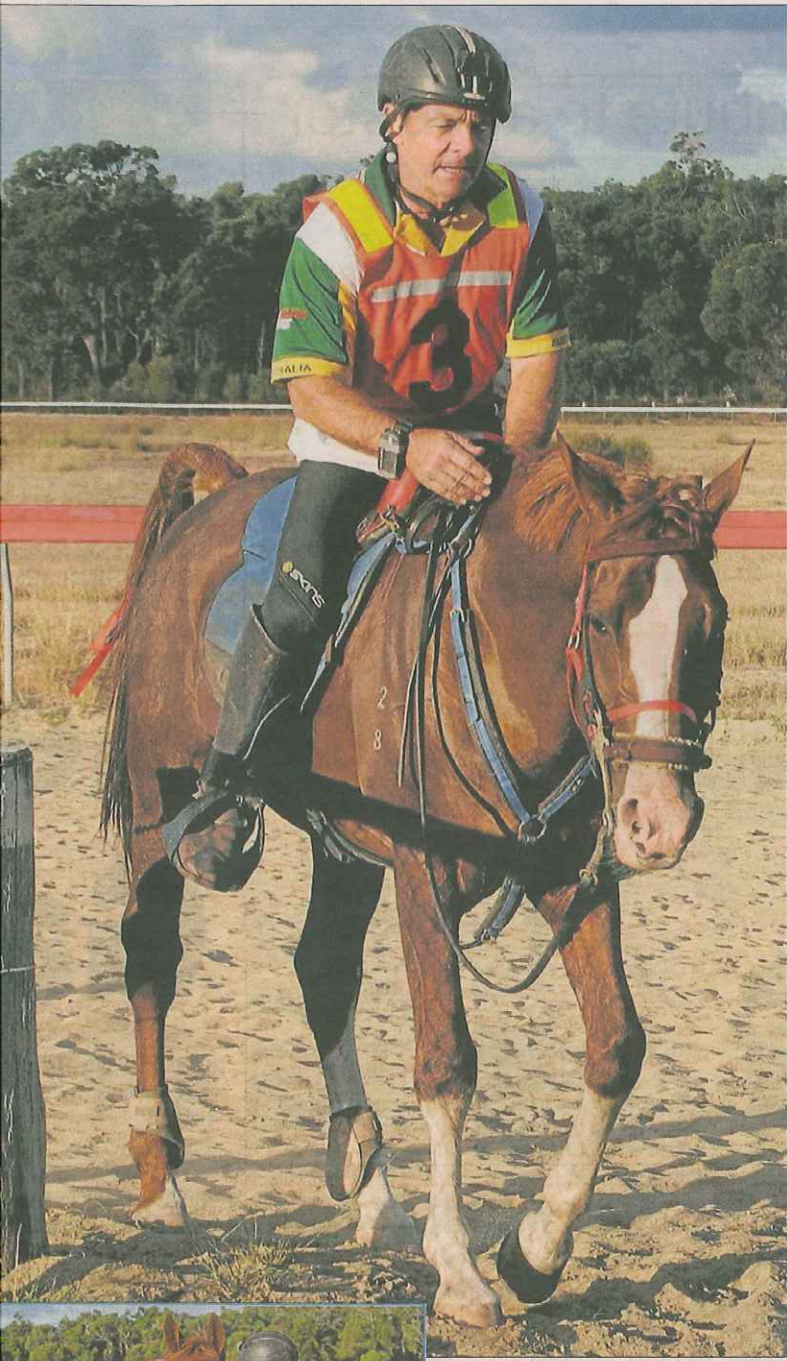


n national squad



SAFELY HOME: periodontist Dr Norbert Radney brings West Coast Acheron through the finishing gate at the end of the 160-kilometre Qasim Challenge at the Collie race course on Saturday.

LEFT: Rebecca Radney waits as her father, Norbert, lifts the saddle and saddle cloth from Acheron's back.

"HE'S a tough little horse," remarked one official, as 13-year-old Arab stallion West Coast Acheron strolled past the finishing line after a 160-kilometre trek through bushland south-east of Collie.

His journey had started shortly after a midnight on Friday, following a vet check, and ended between 4.30 and 5pm on Saturday.

The little chestnut had not raised a sweat at the end of his journey around the Collie racecourse and through the bush. He had been cantering towards the finish when his rider, Norbert Radney, slowed him to a walk.

Another rider explained that coming in quietly would lower his heart rate and help cool him down before the compulsory vet check.

The cool wind would also help, she added.

After the vet check, there were hugs all around when the WA Endurance Riders' Association honorary veterinarian, Dr Anne Barnes of Murdoch University, announced Acheron and Dr Radney had qualified for the Australian squad to contest the Senior World Endurance Championships at Euston Park near Newmarket in England during August.

Dr Barnes, who also chairs the Endurance Riders' Association's national selection panel, said she would preside at one more qualification ride in Queensland.

Final selection of the national squad would take place in June. "It's nice to have a choice between qualified combinations but a devil of a job to choose between them," she said. Also involved in the weekend selection was NSW judge Dr Patricia McKay-Annetts.

This will not be Dr Radney's and Acheron's first world championship. In September 2010 they competed at the World Endurance Championships in Kentucky. They did not complete the course, being pulled out for veterinary reasons.

Earlier this year, Dr Radney and his wife, Jane, were both riding to qualify with Acharon for the world competition. Both could not ride the one horse so they tossed for it and Norbert won, Dr Barnes said.

About 80 riders and horses contested the various categories at the Collie race course.

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