

1st Southern Hemisphere Championships, Royal show 2010

The largest mounted games competition ever held in South Africa was recently held at the royal show in June 2010. It was named the Southern hemisphere championships, and will be held in alternating countries every year from now on. There were 5 teams that took part, including Australia, New Zealand, 2 South African teams, and a Pony Club team from Pretoria, Medunsa. We also had a referee who came out from Luxemburg (Jens Martin) to ensure the competition was fairly run. Having him there gave the competition a completely professional finish.

The touring teams from New Zealand and Australia arrived in Ashburton on Wednesday 26 May, and were given their competition ponies on Thursday morning. They then practiced on them until Sunday, and had to be ready for the competition. The Medunsa team brought their own ponies in their large truck, and also had training slots in the weekend. We had an absolutely amazing practice venue at the Kritzingers in Ashburton which got everything off to a super start!

There were activities planned for all the riders, which were kicked off with a game drive at Tala game reserve on the Monday before the competition. Most of us then headed over to the local go-kart racing track and spent the afternoon there. That evening the Lipizzaners were doing their display at the Royal show, which we all went to watch.

The competition started on Tuesday, with a practice session to let all the teams see what their ponies would do in the main arena with all the screaming from the rides, the building of the stage and many other petrifying new things. Wednesday was a rest day, and the competition started on Thursday. Points were then carried over to Friday, and the totals were calculated to determine the winners.

After the intense competition, we all went to watch the bands play at the show that night, and went for a deep sea boat trip the following day. This left a couple of the riders feeling a bit green! They then had time before the final banquet in the evening to recover and freshen up. Speeches from Ian Marr, Megan Marr and Jens Martin set the evening off. Before dessert, Chris Kritzingner (SA A team) ran a "fines meeting", where riders were called up onto the stage for silly things they did, who had the most falls etc. this was greatly enjoyed by all present! The riders and some parents then danced the night away.

The SA teams were as follows:

A TEAM:

Graeme Dyall
Chris Kritzingner
Courtney Smith
Danielle Vinay
Megan Marr

B TEAM:

Sherri Pegler
Victoria Patrick
Shannah Mayne
Kirsten Mayne
Kyle Trollip

Congratulations to all riders, it was a great learning experience for everyone! These competitions show the difference between the overseas riders who compete in mounted games only, compared to us who do it for fun once or twice a year. My plan is to change this, and to organize many more mounted games competitions, to give our riders more competitive experience. I have a super group of enthusiastic parents who would like to get involved so I think that this competition has also marked the start for MGASA.

In 2011, New Zealand will host the 2nd Southern Hemisphere Championships at their annual Horse of the year show in March. Riders who are interested in getting involved in this exciting sport must contact me (Megan Marr) or my dad (Ian Marr) on marr@sai.co.za.