

GAUTENG & LIMPOPO REGION OF THE SAPC

Report on the Pony Club
display at the 2010
Rand Show
1 - 5 April 2010

2010

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PONY CLUB



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Introduction

Towards the end of 2009, Isabelle Weyer forwarded two e-mails to me for consideration. Both were opportunities for the SAPC to participate in large exhibitions in Gauteng.

- ⌘ The Jo'burg Sports Expo, from 19 - 21 March 2010 at Riversands Farm, Fourways
 - We negotiated to use the large '**Horsing Around**' Zone; planned to put up a stand, put on daily mounted displays and offer pony rides. Unfortunately the organisers decided to postpone the event to a more conducive post 2010 Soccer World Cup date
- ⌘ The Rand Show organisers invited the SAPC to put up a stand at the MTN Expo Centre at Nasrec during the Easter school holidays

Background

- ⌘ The Gauteng & Limpopo region of the SAPC suggested putting on a mounted display instead of a stand, so we were referred to the management company for the **Horse Extravaganza** to be run at the Rand Show over the Easter weekend. I liaised with Karen Wilkie of Boswell Wilkie Circus and sent her photographs from the 'Compleat Pony Clubber' display the region had staged in the Bob Charter arena at the 2008 Avis South African Derby. Our half an hour display on the penultimate day of the show had focused on the all-rounder nature of pony club riders and mounts. The exhibition included elements of a musical ride, mounted games, utility and show jumping.
- ⌘ The display concept was put to regional SAPC members at the first meeting of the newly re-amalgamated Gauteng & Limpopo region in 2010. Representatives from Medunsa, Irene - Midrand and Benoni branches were keen to put on a mounted games display, because of its spectator value, and their experience in this discipline. Blue Moon centre members were volunteered as arena crew seeing this as an opportunity to learn the games rules and then put these valuable skills into practice.
- ⌘ Karen Wilkie's proposal that we put on two performances a day (and participate in a daily parade) for the 5 consecutive days of the **Horse Extravaganza** from 1 - 5 April was met with mixed reaction. The consensus was that 5 days of performances would be exhausting, expensive and a logistical nightmare with teams travelling from several branches all over the province. The pros and cons were debated via e-mail with all branches, the centre concerned and Boswell Wilkie management. This took almost a month.

With the distances that the mounted games teams and their mounts would have to travel, we proposed that they cover the rehearsal on 30 March and the first two days of performances only. Being geographically closer to Nasrec, Walkerville branch would partner up with Blue Moon centre riders, assist with training and transporting mounts, in order to put on jumpkhana performances over the last three days of the show. Karen Wilkie, working with professionals from other organisations like the SA Lipizzaners and Diamond X Ranch, as well as teams of professional dancers, singers and actors, who would all perform the same sequences day after day, was unsure whether we would be able to carry it off...

What the pony club proposed to do was put on 10 performances, 5 parades and a rehearsal using several groups of child and teenage riders, with the assistance of volunteer arena crew and announcers from the youth sport organisation! Boswell Wilkie was understandably concerned, but they agreed to give us the opportunity to get our name out there, and to cover our costs, on the signing of a performance contract. We were allocated a budget of R18, 000.00 to cover transport costs, the hire of equipment, the assistance of grooms and lunch for riders and arena crew. The cost of stabling the games ponies at Blue Moon centre, to make travelling easier, was included in the budget.



Figure 1 : The Blue Moon riders and crew prepare for their first parade

Preparation and rehearsal

In the hectic weeks leading up to the **Horse Extravaganza**, teams and prop crews met to practice, and the contract and indemnity were signed. As final names, numbers and ID photographs of riders and support crew were due to be submitted, Irene-Midrand branch decided not to send a team. At the same time a re-shuffle took place in the Benoni committee, meaning that rushed contingency plans had to be made to enlist the support of more volunteers, as well as make up a third games team to compete.

- ⌘ As the Benoni and Medunsa teams were on their way to the venue for the rehearsal it was discovered that the agreed 40% of funds that were supposed to be made available prior to the commencement of the first performance had not been released. Unknown to me, the signed contract had not been received due to an e-mail glitch! This also meant that parking tickets and ID cards had not been produced timeously.
- ⌘ Despite the incredibly long travel time, the practice session went well, and parking and entrance tickets were distributed. The Benoni and Medunsa teams loaded their ponies to travel to Blue Moon only 30 minutes drive away.

Performances – potholes and praises

- ⌘ We encountered many logistical pitfalls over the 6 days. The Benoni horse boxes got lost on the way to Blue Moon after the rehearsal, one of the tow vehicles got a puncture on the way to the first performance and they were not being able to secure sufficient boxes to transport mounts. Some volunteers felt frustrated at the lack of two way communication which resulted in some of our officials being less than polite to Rand Show and Boswell Wilkie staff. I spent much of the only day that I was not able to attend the Rand Show (being at work), mediating between Karen Wilkie and Pony Club officials.



Figure 2 : Walkerville riders ready themselves for the parade in the shadow of the new Soweto Soccer stadium

- ⌘ Despite the fact that teams and support crews had hassles getting access to the show grounds and that branch volunteers had to pay for food and transport from their own pockets initially, most were incredibly obliging, showing great team spirit and creative problem solving.
- ⌘ On the conclusion of the first day's displays and after participating in one parade, the Medunsa team chose to return home, leaving the Benoni team to cover the next full day's performances and the procession alone.
- ⌘ Walkerville branch and regional representatives organised arena equipment, crew and riders overnight, which resulted in two successful

Working Pony / Horse displays and a parade on the second day. The Benoni members thoroughly enjoyed riding alongside the DC of Walkerville and regional Chairperson through the MTN Expo centre along with the colourful floats, performers and show contributors.

3 The following three days ran much more smoothly, becoming more professional and polished as teams grew in confidence. Despite rain on one day and no electricity on another, we were able to include a Power jump into the programme, and include children from the audience in an unmounted Jumpkhana challenge with the support of sponsored Easter egg prizes from Spar.



Figure 3 : Spectators enjoyed running the jumpkhana course ...and the Easter egg prizes!

- 3 The team work and enthusiasm displayed by the accomplished arena crew, committed grooms, parents and branch volunteers resulted in the pony club display drawing a bigger crowd than the Lipizzaners on more than one occasion!
- 3 Participation in the pony club displays gave our centre riders and their families a glimpse of the bigger picture and the opportunities presented by our movement. We were able to show people what an incredible, inclusive, developmental organisation the pony club is.
- 3 The Diamond X Ranch cowboys worked alongside us in the programme, along with the Lipizzaners, dancers, medieval weapons experts and JJ, an up and coming Country & Western singer. The Western riders invited us to join their montage on the Sunday afternoon; a great joint PR opportunity where the press were invited to take photographs and members of the public could meet the riders and ponies.



Figure 4: Pony Clubbers get to ride with the cowboys!

- 3 Our PR stand selling branded SAPC merchandise was very effective in gathering contacts for potential new branches. We have learned that we need to market ourselves more professionally and comprehensively.
- 3 I believe that this exercise was a phenomenal experience; we enjoyed it immensely and learned a great deal. We exceeded our own expectations, as well as those of the management company who afforded us the opportunity. These are Karen Wilkie's words in an e-mail she sent us :

Dear Michelle and Gang

We were not expecting the fantastic program you presented during the last 3 days of the Rand Show. Wow WoW WOW , we were totally gob smacked.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all involved.

Yes if the opportunity arises we will definitely have you back 1000% yes yes yes.

Karen Wilkie