

B.T.V.6 50 MILE ENDURANCE RIDE

By S. Russell

At 3 p.m. on Saturday 7th May 1966, 26 horses assembled at the Dowling Forest Racecourse to be vetted, before starting the first Endurance Ride of its type to be held in Australia.

The horses were all inspected for soundness - their legs, feet, backs, girths and heads being the main points. Most of them were in good condition, though some of the horses were not clipped and some had not had the necessary preparation. However, they all passed the inspection.

Riders were then briefed on the conditions, and introduced to their Group Stewards. There were three Groups, and each Steward was responsible for seeing that his Group weighed out, got to the start on time, went through the check, and for anything else that the riders might wish to know. This meant that the Chief Steward was not bothered with details, and eased the problem of organising the ride.

Each rider had a card in the colour of his ride and on this was printed all the information required by him, and by the Scorers at end of the day - vet penalties, times of starting, check and finishing times, correct weight etc. This card was kept by the Group Steward, who went with his group to weigh out, and was signed by the Clerk of Scales. The Steward saw that the riders left on time and had the time filled in by the Timekeeper, and then met the riders at the check, where the time of arrival and time due out were marked, and again at the finish for time and weighing in. The card was then taken to the Scorers for a double check with

their own sheets and the rider then was able to take it home as a souvenir.

At the briefing the rider was also issued with a colour sash, his number, and a map of the course, before being driven round the course on an official tour.

The morning of the ride was cold and misty but with promise of a fine day at 8 a.m., when the first group left the racecourse. After doing one lap of the racecourse, about 10 furlongs, they went out onto the road. The rides left at intervals of 10 minutes, and this seemed to work very well.

The first nine miles of the road were along a bitumen surface, fairly flat and with good gravel edges. The course then started to climb, and at the 13 mile point there was a severe climb of about 600 feet, the riders then being 2,000 feet above sea level. The road then dropped down to the check at the 23 mile mark.

The first ride arrived in the very fast time of 1½ hours, all horses passed the vets, and they were on their way again in 30 minutes - the compulsory time for the halt.

Arriving in just over 2 hours, the second group had one horse out for lameness, and the third group was the slowest with a time of 2½ hours. All horses here passed fit.

After another steep climb just out of the check, the rest of the

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