

Congratulations to the 2024 Distance Horse of the Year, Cheys Cocamoe Joe, a 9 year old gelding out of LC Psylent Knight X Orinoca and owned and ridden by Dave Rabe.

Thanks to long-time SoCal Endurance rider Marci Cunningham for nominating Dave Rabe and his magnificent steed, Cheys Cocamoe Joe, for the Arabian Horse Association Distance of the Year Award. Marci's story highlights many of Cocamoe Joe's accomplishments and outstanding achievements. However, there are many other worthy elements and memorable moments to learn about, which come directly from Dave Rabe's wealth of knowledge and experiences. I asked Dave to share a few unforgettable experiences, and as always, he didn't disappoint.



Photo Credit: Steve Bradley Photography

Dave recalled, "I think I have placed in the AERC West Region standings every year I have ridden Cocamoe Joe since our beginning in 2012. He has never had a bad year!" When I asked Dave which rides stood out the most, he replied, "Actually, every time I ride him, it is a challenge and always lots of fun." Dave reminisced about the Virgin Outlaw XP Ride: "We took off in the morning in the snow, and it was snowing pretty hard, but we continued and came upon Steve, the photographer. He took our picture, and I remember it was cold that day—my legs were getting pretty chilly. But we pressed on through the snow until we returned to camp for lunch. Riding in the snow is pretty cool, and it seemed like Cocamoe Joe loved it. He was traveling beautifully and didn't spook at anything, which is rare for him. The snow made for a different ride, but it was a super fun day. This picture serves as a reminder of Cocamoe Joe and me on that snowy day at the Virgin Outlaw XP Ride in Southern Utah."

Dave continued, "Another ride that stood out was the Virginia City 100-miler. I rode it with Connie Creech, Max, and Darlene Merlich from Oregon. It's

the only hundred-mile ride I did on Cocamoe Joe, perhaps because my ankles can't handle 100-milers anymore. Cocamoe Joe could do them all day, as I've lent him out for three other hundred-milers that he completed."

"The Tahoe Rim Endurance ride is right behind my house and is another memorable one. It's on my home turf, and Cocamoe Joe knows the trail well; he even won that ride. I usually don't let him win, as I try to conserve him to keep him sound and prevent overexertion so he will last for many years."

My relationship with Cocamoe Joe can sometimes feel like a love-hate battle, but I mostly love him with all my heart. He can be stubborn and prefers to do things his way, while I aim to manage our rides with pacing and conservation. He doesn't always agree with my conservative approach but sometimes understands me as we cover miles together. He is a fantastic horse with no issues, but when riding with other horses, especially more than one, he becomes overly competitive, which I prefer to avoid.

When I first started riding Cocamoe Joe, he wasn't as competitive as he is now. He would happily ride with a group without issues, allowing me to enjoy rides with friends. However, after five or six thousand miles, he became incredibly competitive; whenever we're near other horses, he feels the need to go faster and be in front. Sometimes, his energy is so high that I must get off and walk to slow him down. I'm not sure why he developed this "I'm going to win" attitude, but we can usually manage it when riding at my pace and alone.

During a ride in Oregon called the Bandit Springs Ride, I rode with Tami and Gina. We started together, but things soon turned into a disaster. There were cows hidden among the trees, and those cows wore bells around their necks. Cocamoe Joe could hear the bells and completely lost it. I had to dismount and walk back to camp, which was only about six miles away, but Cocamoe Joe ran circles around me for the entire trek. When we finally reached camp, I took him to the vet, who advised me to return later as his pulse was too high. After returning to my trailer and letting him loose in the corral with my other horse, White Cloud, he started running White Cloud around for half an hour before he finally settled down. That experience was the worst ride I've ever had on him.

Riding a horse like Cocamoe Joe is always an adventure; you never know what the day will hold. It could be great or take a turn for the worse, but as the day unfolds, it often ends on a positive note, and I can say it was worth it. I intentionally avoid taking off with the leaders during rides because Cocamoe Joe is driven to win. He is focused on being the front-runner and keeping all the other horses behind him at all costs. I wouldn't have a horse if I allowed him to race at every ride. Instead of a 2,000-mile horse, I now have an 11,000-mile horse who is sound and always eager to go. That's how our partnership works; it's a compromise between us.

Honestly, Cocamoe Joe is more athletic than any horse I've ridden in all my years of endurance riding, and I've ridden at least 100 different horses. He is very light on his legs, smooth, agile, and can navigate the tightest turns with speed, even on narrow single-track trails. He rarely trips, even when traversing rocky terrain.

The main point of contention between us is our pace. He has his speed, and I have mine. However, as his caretaker, I usually win those arguments, and then we ride at my pace, or I get off and walk on foot.

The other argument would be the spooking issue. I guess he's like most Arabs who love to spook, especially at odd-shaped rocks and down trees. I've been pretty lucky, though, and he's never spooked me off yet.

Cocamoe Joe is very easy to care for. He is a good eater and easy to trim for the farrier. He loves his 2-acre irrigated pasture with a creek that runs through it. He thinks he's in heaven. He always rolls in the black dirt, so he is usually a pretty dirty horse.

For a horse, he is a great companion as he is very friendly, likes the attention he gets from everyone, and loves his cookies. Keeping him sound has been pretty easy, as I use Easy Boot Gloves and Easy Boot glue-on boots. That's all he's had on his hooves for over 11,600 miles. His good health and soundness are also attributed to Select The Best equine supplements like Hyla Lube pellets, Mega MSM, Vitamin E/ Selenium, and Select Daily Balance vitamins. I have used their products for all of his career, which is now over 11,600 miles!

Written by: Nina Bomar