

ABOUT HEIDI TELSTAD

A graduate of the University of Calgary and a former competitive mountain bike rider, in recent years, Heidi has changed course and returned to her equestrian roots of horseback riding. A corporate lawyer by day, she has spent her downtime training, practicing, and pursuing her dream of competitive endurance racing, becoming a skillful and successful endurance rider. In August, she tied to win the 8th annual Mongol Derby, adding Canada to list of winning countries of this foremost endurance riding event.

THE MONGOL DERBY

In what ABC News calls “one of the toughest races of any kind,” 44 elite competitors pushed themselves to the limit of what's physically or mentally possible. Enduring fierce hailstorms, torrential downpours, and oppressive heat, the racers galloped 1,000 kms across the steppes of Outer Mongolia, on the backs of over 1,200 semi-wild Mongol horses.

With horse stations positioned every 35 kms, expert horsemanship is necessary in selecting, mounting and then taming each of the 28 horses needed to win the derby. To win the derby, riders must push their mounts to the limits of performance and exhaustion, always aware that their equine race partners must pass stringent veterinary health tests at each check station.

The 2016 field of competitors invited to participate mainly included extremely accomplished riders from Europe, Australia and the United States – each with the singular goal of winning.

Averaging 140 kms each day for over 7 days, often in isolation, the Mongol Derby champion must endure levels of physical, mental, and emotional pain and fatigue that are rarely experienced by any athlete in any other sport.

Being the sole Canadian competitor in the 2016 Mongol Derby's elite field of athletes carried a lot of responsibility.

HEIDI TELSTAD BIOGRAPHY

Heidi didn't find her true calling as naturally as most athletes who progress through the professional ranks of their sport. She grew up on small farm north of Edmonton and learned to ride from a very young age. To Heidi riding always seemed like home, not something that would one day take her halfway around the world. After high school, Heidi left home, and riding, to put herself through university. But her memories of riding at breakneck speeds were too strong to keep her from pursuing other extreme sports outside the grind of the office.

Heidi's passion for speed, adventure, and the outdoors evolved into a successful competitive mountain biking career until a serious race accident sidelined her for years of rehabilitation. Heidi's passion for speed burned brighter, but without an outlet. It wasn't long before Heidi, teamed with her cousin and childhood riding partner, decided to each adopt thoroughbred racing horses off the track and learn to ride again. It didn't take Heidi long to become a proficient and then advanced rider as she explored a variety of equestrian sports in BC, before finding her true calling in endurance racing.

Heidi is a model of professionalism, healthy living and the 'outdoors' lifestyle. She has participated in several marathons, but has mainly focused on riding every chance she gets. Her determination and preparedness set her apart and winning the Mongol Derby is the achievement of a lifetime.

"My favourite quote which also completely describes me is by Steve McQueen, 'When you're racing, you're living, everything else is just waiting,'" says Heidi Telstad.

ASSOCIATED LINKS

- ABC News Video: Mongol Derby - World's Longest, Toughest Horse Race: https://youtu.be/Y7nePo_stVo
- Global News Interview with Heidi: <http://globalnews.ca/video/2907609/canadian-competes-in-mongol-derby>