

Olympic Magic

— by Jo Dowling



CHRISTIE VALENTINE-ANDERSON

Never did I imagine the joy and excitement my purebred Arabian mare Wealdbarns Lorna would bring me when I purchased her from Erica Williams as a just-broken four-year-old. Lorna is now rising eight years and has done everything that has ever been asked of her. She has succeeded in endurance, hacking, official dressage, pony club gymkhanas, barrel racing, working stockhorse classes, showjumping, and most recently eventing. She is also the best lead pony for racehorses you could ever ask for.

Sired by Tallangatta Muftakher from Rokeby Laura, Wealdbarns Lorna was bred for endurance. She completed several training rides easily in her first season and quickly cemented her place in my heart with her intelligence, kind attitude and willingness to work. Health problems curtailed my involvement in endurance riding, so I began schooling Lorna in dressage and taking her to shows. She scrubbed up pretty

well and it wasn't long before her education had progressed to where she won countless ribbons in hack rings and dressage arenas, accruing EFA dressage points. When I can, I have lessons with Vince Corvi, who has told me Lorna is one of the best moving Arabians he has seen and with more education would be capable of every high school dressage movement.

We then gave showjumping a go. I had never been much of a showjumper, but with Lorna's patience, athleticism and willing attitude I quickly learned to love it. While we have cleared fences of 145 cms, I don't intend to make a habit of jumping that height. Call me chicken! Eventing is another challenge we relish and as Lorna sailed through the Introductory and Preliminary classes, I decided to make the quantum leap, for me, into Pre-Novice. At Easter time this year at the Goondiwindi One Day Event we placed 4th, finishing on our dressage score. We also won at the

Toowoomba One Day Event in May. My goal was to compete at a Pre-Novice 2-day event and my chance came in July at the Goondiwindi International 3-Day Event. Admittedly I felt somewhat out of place and intimidated by the high standard of riders at this event, as there I was on a 15 hand Arabian, the smallest horse in the competition, competing with world class horses and riders. After a beautiful dressage test we were in second place but lost 9 time faults in the steeplechase, so went into the showjumping phase in fourth place. It was a testing course and not many horses went clear but Lorna rose to the occasion with a clear round. I was so ecstatic I didn't realise that two of the riders placed above me had lost points with rails down, moving us into second place behind Christine Bates, who was on the shortlist for the Olympic eventing team. I was over the moon.

However, these achievements almost paled into insignificance when,