



The First Four Years...

What do you do when you live on an island and want to run in more barrel races but the cost of taking horses off the island is outrageous? You start your own club! That was the incentive behind the formation of Island Barrel Racing (IBR) over four years ago. Charla Nikkels was one person who pioneered this club. She saw the need for more races to be available on Vancouver Island in order for people from there to be competitive when they went to race on the mainland. She also knew it needed to be affordable and fun to get people to join.

The first meeting was held around a kitchen table and the biggest question was where to start???? Members needed to be recruited, sponsors needed to be found, race dates needed to be picked, venues needed to be booked, rules needed to be established, insurance needed to be bought.... the list went on and on. With support from some major sponsors ~ Kiwi Magic Fishing Charters, Gordon & Gordon Interiors and SHC Autographic ~ a successful first season was held in 2010 with 28 members and 14 races.

In 2011 the club increased to 33 members and 15 races were held between Courtenay, Coombs and Port Alberni. Beside the opportunity to enjoy more barrel racing without having to leave the island, the races provided those who wanted to compete elsewhere with opportunity to improve their skills. As a result, people from Vancouver Island who went to races produced by other clubs usually did well ~ if they did not place in the prizes many ran personal best times.

In 2012 there was a decrease in membership to 26 members but the enthusiasm for barrel racing did not decrease. 17 races were held in locations all over the island from Duncan to Courtenay, Coombs and Port Alberni. The Vancouver Island Exposition (VIE) in Nanaimo invited IBR to hold races at their fair and added \$1000 in prize money. It turned out to be a popular attraction and the VIE has invited the club to come again in 2013, hopefully with even more money added!

Island Barrel Racing is now entering its 4th year in 2013. The racing schedule is set and starts March 9th. There are 18 races this year with a special event on May 11th to celebrate the club's 50th regular season race. It seems like such a long time ago when this club was just an idea being discussed among friends. There have been some growing pains but it has made it this far and will continue as long as there are people with a shared love of horses and of barrel racing.