

LOCAL & REGIONAL

Missing Morgan Horse Located With Help From Tracking Dog

Staff Report

SOUTH WOODSTOCK — About two days, 6 miles and one 2,400-foot mountain removed from where he ran away Friday, Odyssey the horse was captured and returned to his owner.

The 16-year-old Morgan gelding was found early Sunday afternoon in Bridgewater off of Curtis Hollow Road, said Molly Hutchins, marketing manager for the Green Mountain Horse Association, which owns the 65-acre facility in South Woodstock from where Odyssey bolted. The horse, owned by Eunice Froeliger, of Charlotte, Vt., had run off from her owner around 11

Friday morning during a foliage pleasure ride.

Although Odyssey's saddle had slipped and was hanging around his belly when he was found, the horse was given a clean bill of health after being examined by a veterinarian, Hutchins said.

The horse was spotted first by a man walking his dog, Hutchins said, and just shortly after by Lalita Karoli, a South Woodstock owner of a dog boarding business who had set off in the woods with her tracking dog, Shiloh. Tracking a horse on Sunday posed special challenges, Karoli said. It had been raining, the terrain was still muddy and wet, the track was

not fresh, there was no wind and, unbeknownst to the trackers, the horse was on the other side of the mountain. Those circumstances combined to mean that Shiloh, a 1-year-old 80-pound plott hound on his first real search mission, had to keep his nose close to the ground rather than follow an air scent. Ground tracking, Karoli said, involves a lot more trial and error. At times, the tracking party wondered if Shiloh was doing his job, Karoli said.

The eight-person tracking party started around 9:30 a.m. at the place where the horse had last been seen, went off toward the Coolidge State Forest and up to the top of Old

Baldy Mountain. Judging from Shiloh's behavior atop the mountain, Odyssey spent some time at the summit, perhaps circling it a few times. And judging from where Shiloh wanted to go, Odyssey had eventually headed straight down a steep and muddy ravine, Karoli said.

"Who would think a horse would do that?" she asked. "People doubted the tracking dog; I doubted the tracking dog."

While half the tracking party returned, Karoli and the remainder descended the ravine. At the bottom were fresh tracks. Shiloh got so excited, he started dragging Karoli.

Sure enough, there was Odyssey, standing by himself on a trail with a saddle around his belly and the stirrups ripped off. Karoli talked softly to him, another person put a lead on him and the horse was given some maple-syrup water for replenishment.

"He was a tired boy, with his head hanging low," Karoli said.

And those who had at one point doubted Shiloh's abilities realized what a fine tracker he was.

"Everyone was rewarding him after, but he was too excited to eat," Karoli said.