



Moonee Valley Racing Club

SPRING EDITION

THE OFFICIAL MOONEE VALLEY RACING CLUB MAGAZINE

ON TRACK



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 SPRING EDITION

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

DON CASBOULT

2020 has been a year of challenges, but it does not dampen the Club's excitement as we build-up to the Ladbrokes Cox Plate Carnival.

Fortunately, racing in Victoria has been able to continue after the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions. All industry participants are grateful for this opportunity to continue to race under the strict bio-security protocols that are now in place.

This year the Moonee Valley Racing Club is celebrating the 100th running of the W.S. Cox Plate which, from humble beginnings, is now an institution on the global sporting calendar.

Through these unprecedented times, we are delighted to retain \$5 million prizemoney and offer the \$1 million Ladbrokes Cox Plate Boost for our signature race.

An opportunity presents itself now for connections to write their horse's name into the history books and take home a solid 9-carat gold commemorative Cox Plate 100 trophy, valued at more than \$200,000.

Member attendance at the 2020 Ladbrokes Cox Plate Carnival is now ruled out due to the restrictions currently in place. However, the Club will do everything possible to ensure Members are engaged in the build-up and across the 24 hours of unmissable sport, which gets underway on Friday, October 23, with the running of the \$1 million Ladbrokes Manikato Stakes.

This year, more than ever, we are working closely with our broadcast partners Channel 7 and Racing.Com to ensure we can bring our Carnival to life and into your loungerooms. Through innovation, engaging stories and the thrills of the racetrack action combined with a reflection on the Cox Plate legends of the past that will pay homage to 99 legendary runnings of 'The Race Where Legends Are Made,' it will be an event not to be missed.

While this year has been unpredictable, we can always count on making the Ladbrokes Cox Plate Carnival LEGENDARY.

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of our On Track Magazine, and we can't wait to have our Members back trackside as soon as it is safe to do so.

Don Casboul
Chairman
Moonee Valley Racing Club



"The Land of the Rising Sun" – Lys Gracieux winning the 99th running of the W.S. Cox Plate

99 RUNNINGS, ONLY ONE W.S. COX PLATE

By Michael Manley

The W.S. Cox Plate is a race that evokes great memories. The hype that it is Australia's greatest weight-for-age race invariably lives up to that billing.

Each Cox Plate has its own story and its own level of drama. It's unmatched as Australia's premier weight-for-age race and for that matter Australia's best race.

The 100th running of the W.S. Cox Plate on October 24 will see the winner's name sit alongside immortals such as Phar Lap, Tulloch, Rising Fast, Ajax, Kingston Town, Winx, Sunline, Might and Power and Dulcify on an unrivalled list of winners.

Somehow the race continues to grow in prestige and go to another level. That's going to happen when Winx wins four years in a row and is then followed by Japanese superstar Lys Gracieux, who powered away with the race last year.

That was underlined with Winx being rated the world's best racehorse in 2018 and last year Lys Gracieux being named fifth.

It's a race which absorbs racing fans. In the lead-up, they are fascinated with who will win. They are then immersed in the race itself, which usually takes a tick over two minutes, but so much happens it feels like you've watched a feature-length movie.

Then there's absorbing what happened in the aftermath of the race.

When you think of the Cox Plate, there are so many levels to it. There have been the dominations, the duels, the wars of attrition, the tricky photos and the falls. It's pure theatre.

I was indoctrinated early on into the cult of the Cox Plate. How could you not when racing was a popular topic at the Catholic Boys school I attended. If you were into racing, you were into the Cox Plate.

Here are my top ten Cox Plate memories stretching from the first one I attended in 1976. Some are well known and part of racing folklore. Others are my quirky favourites.

99 RUNNINGS, ONLY ONE W.S. COX PLATE

1. KINGSTON TOWN 1982

The Sydney star won his first two Cox Plates in an almost perfunctory manner. He didn't look comfortable at The Valley, nor in Melbourne. He couldn't quite let down with his fantastic finishing burst as he could in Sydney as he couldn't stretch out on his Melbourne leg. Despite this, he was still able to win the 1980 Cox Plate by five lengths and the 1981 Cox Plate by three-quarters of a length.

It was his historic third win that is the most remembered.

The magical commentator Bill Collins call of the 1982 Cox Plate has almost become as famous as the victory when he declared 'Kingston Town can't win.' From that moment he picked up rival after rival to win, and the crowd responded with an unmatched fervour to make it a record three Cox Plate wins. There were cries in the outer grandstand of "Long Live the King" as the crowd went over the top celebrating the win.



"Kingston Town can't win" – a three-time W.S. Cox Plate winner

2. MAKYBE DIVA 2005

As she's known as the only three-time Melbourne Cup winner, it tends to over-shadow that she also won a Cox Plate as a seven-year-old mare, which was at her second last start. And what an extraordinary win it was, in a race which was a truly unique one. Jockeys were shaking their heads after the race saying they had never ridden in a race like it. It was as if the winning post had been placed before the turn as the race was on from the 800 metre mark. In an amazing race with 200 metres to go, there were eight horses across the track all making their runs with Makybe Diva six out and eight wide and travelling comfortably. Turning it into a staying test was only going to suit one horse, and in the finish, she won easily.



Makybe Diva and Glen Boss in 2005

99 RUNNINGS, ONLY ONE W.S. COX PLATE



The Great Mare completes the Trilogy of the Turf

3. WINX 2017

In three of her four Cox Plate wins she won with ease. It was the third of her four wins though where she was challenged, which was the most memorable, as for a fleeting second it looked as if she might be beaten. In the 2017 Cox Plate, her jockey Hugh Bowman treated her rivals with contempt, as he was happy to sit wide knowing that she was the best horse in the race and that she had her opponents covered. That looked to be

going to plan, and another easy Cox Plate win looked on the cards when she cruised away from her rivals when she took the lead on the turn. The crowd started to ramp up its clapping, but that stopped quickly when Humidor emerged from the pack and quickly charged up to her. A hush enveloped the course though, as for a brief second it looked like Humidor was going to get past her, but that turned into cheers when she fended him off to win.

99 RUNNINGS, ONLY ONE W.S. COX PLATE

4. SUPER IMPOSE 1992

For drama, the 1992 Cox Plate is unmatched. On paper, it was a vintage Cox Plate with the likes of champions such as Let's Elope, Better Loosen Up, Super Impose, Mannerism, Sydeston and Rough Habit taking part. That said, most of them though were now past their prime and taking on a rising star in Naturalism, who looked to have their measure and was subsequently sent out a \$2 favourite. With 600m to go, Palace Reign fell, and Naturalism and Sydeston lost their riders in the incident. It was mayhem. As racegoers were trying to digest what had just happened, there was more chaos to come in the closing stages as in the straight it was every man for themselves in the closing stages, with horses shifting in and out. Let's Elope veered in and interfered with several runners including Better Loosen Up and Prince Salieri. While all this was going on, Greg Hall on Super Impose, who had been out the back, sailed past his rivals to win at \$17. The race was so good a Melbourne independent band Mr. Floppy put out a song entitled the 1992 Cox Plate on one of its albums, with several commentators' versions of the fall and then the finish spliced into a song. It was an interesting experience to see them play it live – fair to say it didn't translate that well to the music punters.



Greg Hall salutes aboard Super Impose

5. MIGHT AND POWER 1998

For an awesome, jaw-dropping powerhouse display to win a Cox Plate, nothing matches Might and Powers win. As race caller Bryan Martin called - "the earth started to rumble" - when he won and so did the stands as he smashed the track record in a time of 2:03.07 seconds. He was a champion at the top of his game having also won the Caulfield Cup by seven and a half lengths and led throughout to win the Melbourne Cup the year prior.



"The Earth Starts to Rumble" – Might and Power

6. BONECRUSHER 1986

The 1986 race was a one-off Cox Plate when the two Kiwis decided to stage a match race, taking off with 1000m to go and slugging it out. One second Bonecrusher had the advantage, the next Our Waverley Star and so on and on until they hit the finishing line. Bonecrusher called on all his reserves to win by a neck. Again, Bill Collins' call added another dimension to the race. He was also out of tickets by the end of the race but managed to force out the unforgettable line "and Bonecrusher races into equine immortality."



The famous 1986 W.S. Cox Plate duel

99 RUNNINGS, ONLY ONE W.S. COX PLATE

7. SUNLINE 2000

In Cox Plate history you almost feel sorry for Sunline. She tends to get overlooked as she's a dual Cox Plate winner and also finished second and fourth at her next two attempts. It was her second Cox Plate win that was the memorable one.

It's not often a Cox Plate is over with 800 metres to go, but it was this year. From the moment Greg Childs took her to the front, she went further and further ahead in a jaw-dropping performance, which gave the crowd a chance to cheer her home.



Sunline gaps the 2000 W.S. Cox Plate field

8. NORTHERLY 2001

He was called the 'Fighting Tiger' as he loved a scrap as his two Cox Plate wins underlined. His first win showcased his true fighting capabilities. He was part of a three-horse war down the straight with Sunline and three-year-old colt Viscount. It was the battle of battles, which played into the hands of the tough West Australian who proved too strong.

He then had to survive protests from both the place getters to keep the first prize.

He came back and made it two in a row the next year when he again sat behind Sunline in the run and proved too strong for a field which also included Lonhro and Grandera. In the springs of 2001 and 2002 in Melbourne, he won nine races from ten starts. He was a freak of the turf.



"The Fighting Tiger" denies Sunline a third W.S. Cox Plate

99 RUNNINGS, ONLY ONE W.S. COX PLATE

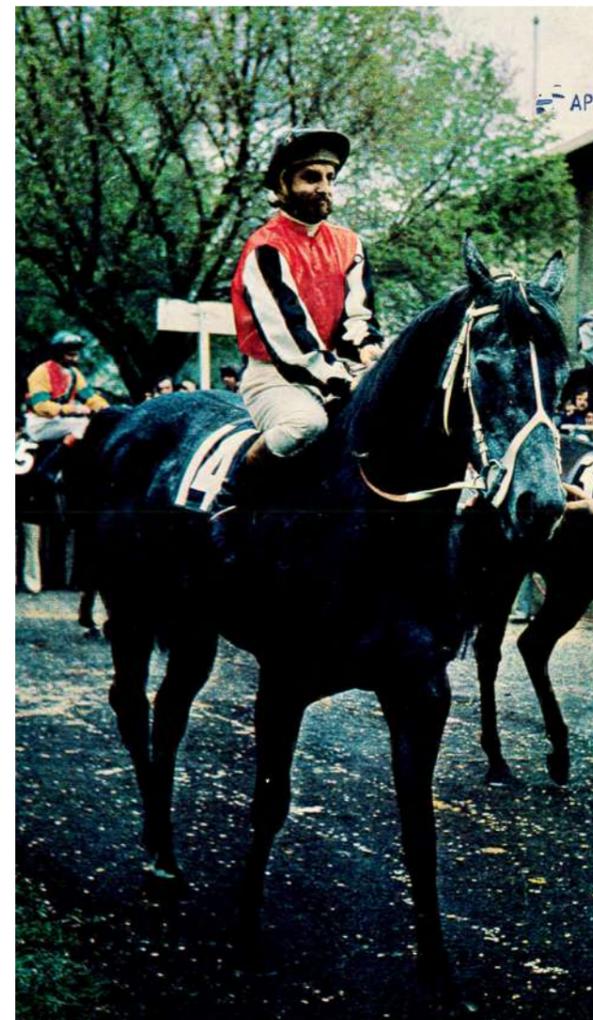
9. RUBITON 1987

For me, this was a special one. As a racing and sportswriter for the Geelong Advertiser, there was many a morning spent with legendary trainer George Hanlon in his jeep watching his array of top-class stayers work up and down the hills of his Leopold property. On the Sunday before the Cox Plate, in the pre-mobile phone days, Hanlon tracked me down at my parent's house in Melbourne to say, firstly Rubiton had been sent to his stable, and secondly, Bruce McAvaney and Channel 10 were going to film him at trackwork the next morning and to be there. I adjusted my schedule accordingly and saw the Cox Plate favourite work at Leopold and again later in the week. He had been sent there for a change of scenery after a disappointing run under his Adelaide trainer Pat Barns.



Geelong trained Rubiton wins the 1987 W.S. Cox Plate

It was a brutal Cox Plate with Vo Rogue setting a cracking speed. At the halfway mark of the race, Rubiton was third last and 20 lengths from the leader. In the straight Rubiton, ridden by Harry White, had to get past Our Poetic Prince and after a brief battle did so to take out victory.



Surround created history in 1976

10. SURROUND 1976

My first introduction to the Cox Plate was witnessing Surround, the only three-year-old filly to win and she was dominant winning by three lengths and setting a new track record. The Geoff Murphy trained grey filly was in an extraordinary vein of form. She won the Caulfield Guineas before the Cox Plate and went undefeated in seven wins that spring. No three-year-old filly since has matched her exploits. It was also a memorable day as there was a total eclipse of the sun at 4.39 pm, which lasted for three minutes and 27 seconds. To make it even more remarkable, the last race was won by a horse called Cosmic.

What the 2020 Ladbrokes Cox Plate as in store is anyone's guess. But one thing history tells us, we are set for another LEGENDARY edition to celebrate 100 runnings of 'The Race Where Legends Are Made'.

Michael Manley has covered racing as a journalist for over 30 years at the Herald Sun, The Age and Geelong Advertiser and now with Mediality.

MAKING OF THE COX PLATE

A TROPHY LIKE NO OTHER IN WORLD RACING

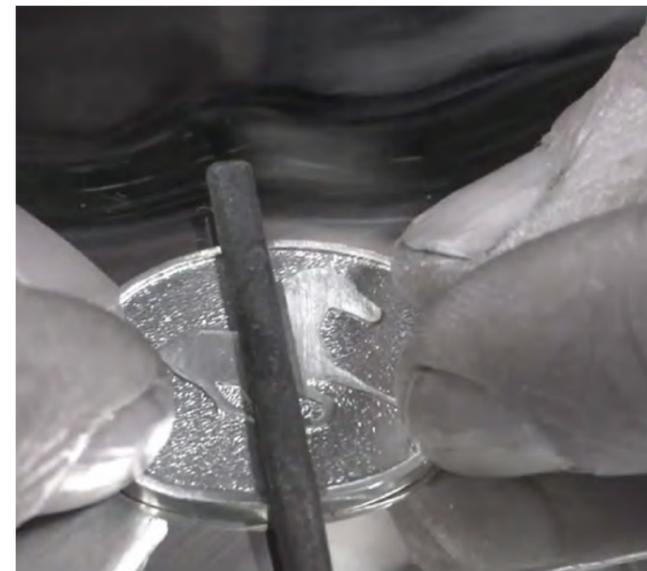
The W.S. Cox Plate is celebrating a significant milestone with the 100th running of the race on October 24, and that called for a special edition of the Cox Plate trophy to be struck by the Club's maker of the iconic piece of silverware since 1995.

The specially-made Ladbrokes Cox Plate 100 Trophy is manufactured by Renown Silverware from their warehouse in Northcote in Melbourne and features a 9ct Solid Yellow Gold Plate, including 9ct Yellow Gold feet with 9ct White Gold Rosemount edges and emblems. It has a total gold weight of approximately 1.6 kilograms and is valued at \$200,000.

We caught up with Renown Silverware owner John Hawke and his son Darren to find out more.

What were your first thoughts when you heard the Club was keen to make a gold version of the Plate?

Darren: I was blown away as I was expecting the request to be for 950 Sterling Silver and then Gold Plated. Immediately after the heart rate decreased, we jumped into planning mode to work out how to achieve the outstanding result that was required.



The making of the 100th W.S. Cox Plate trophy

Were there any challenges during the making of the Plate?

Darren: As can happen with materials that we have never pressed before, there were many challenges involved in manufacturing a solid gold Cox Plate.

We called on expert advice from Metallurgists, Gold and Silversmiths, Gold Refineries in Europe, and also our highly experienced staff.

The pressure is always high on the day of the initial pressing/forming of the Plate as this is when if anything can go wrong, it will. We pressed three or four in brass to check the alignment and pressure on the dies, which were all successful.

The gold was placed in the press, and the buttons were pressed to put the machine into motion and BANG!!! Our faces were in shock. The dies released, and a broken gold Cox Plate was removed from the press.

Replacement gold had to be ordered from Europe, and discussions began with the refinery over the hardness of the gold and inconsistencies in the overall sheet temper. Six weeks later, when the gold arrived, we double-checked to find the gold had similar inconsistencies to the previous piece.

We knew that what we needed was a piece of gold consistently soft enough over the whole surface to press the Cox Plate successfully. Nobody could assist us as there wasn't a Vacuum Furnace in the jewellery industry in Australia big enough to accommodate the gold disc, and the Industrial Vacuum Furnace Companies didn't give me any confidence that they could give the gold the delicate care it required. Not willing to gamble on another failure in the press and with timing pressure to deliver in time for the big reveal on Cox Plate Day last year, we met with a retired Albanian Goldsmith who explained how they had annealed gold sheet "in the old days". This advice, as with every other piece of advice we had received, came with a disclaimer "be very careful and good luck".

To cut a long story short, on the Wednesday of Cox Plate week, we delivered the most beautiful Cox Plate Renown Silverware has ever produced.



An iconic sporting trophy

You must be pretty proud to be the manufacturer of one of Australia's greatest races and most recognised trophies?

John: It is one of the best-known and most prestigious races, not only in Australia but worldwide. To know that Renown is a significant part of this race makes us very proud.

How long have you had an association with the Club through making the Cox Plate?

John: We were asked by Moonee Valley Racing Club to design a special Cox Plate Trophy in 1995. The result was the design that we now all know and love. The first trophy in this design was won by Octagonal, who was owned by Bob and Jack Ingham. Of course, Bob Ingham's daughter Debbie Kepitis is one of the owners of Winx who went on to win the Cox Plate a record-breaking four times.

Who is your favourite winner of the Cox Plate in its 99 runnings?

Darren: Kingston Towns' third win holds great memories for me, as it was my first ever Cox Plate I attended in 1982. More recently, Winx's journey to four consecutive wins has brought out more emotions than I ever knew I had.



WATCH: The making of the 100th W.S. Cox Plate trophy



Russian Camelot is looking to give Danny O'Brien his second W.S. Cox Plate victory

RUSSIAN CAMELOT DESTINED TO BE KING OF THE CASTLE

By Michael Lynch

Danny O'Brien has trained the winners of the Cox Plate, Caulfield Cup and Melbourne Cup, so he knows a good horse when he sees one.

That trio - Shamus Award, who made history when winning the Cox Plate as a maiden - Master O'Reilly, who triumphed in the Caulfield Cup and last year's Flemington hero Vow and Declare - are all now indelibly etched in the record books as victors in Australia's greatest races.

But O'Brien believes that one horse in his care right now, Russian Camelot, can eclipse them all.

The northern hemisphere bred son of Camelot has

already scored twice at Group 1 level in just seven starts (in the SA Derby and the Underwood Stakes) and he is now aiming to pull off the Cox Plate - Melbourne Cup double last achieved by the great Makybe Diva in 2005.

O'Brien made his view of the current Ladbrokes Cox Plate favourite's talents crystal clear late last month after the Underwood triumph.

"I think he's the best horse I've had anything to do with, particularly to do so much so early in his career," O'Brien said.

"He's a magnificent colt and we're thrilled that he's got this done.

"It's really exciting to see him produce performances like this so early in his career.

"There's been a lot of hype around him, people are expecting things like this so it's really exciting to see him go out there and get it done."

What makes Russian Camelot's achievements even more special is his age.

He will be scored as a four-year-old in the racebook at The Valley when he contests the Ladbrokes Cox Plate.

But the reality is that he is six months younger than his Australasian counterparts because he was bred and initially raised in the northern hemisphere, meaning that up to now he has been racing his own age cohort at level weights when he was significantly younger.

So how did he come to be in this country at all? How did the son of Camelot, who won the English 2000 Guineas and Irish and English Derbies during his own three-year-old career, wind up with O'Brien at his Barwon Heads base rather than with someone like John Gosden or Roger Varian at Newmarket?

Step forward owner John Wheeler, an adventurous 70-year-old retired businessman who likes to dream big and is not afraid to think outside the square.

He has owned horses for the past 25 years and enjoyed some success but was not sure that the tried and tested recipe employed by most Australian owners looking for Cup horses these days was the right way to go.

"I have owned horses for a long time, and in that period I bought two tried stayers from overseas. Both won races, but both broke down for different reasons.

"They were already halfway or more through their racing life, usually aged about five before they get here, so there is a limited period in which you can see them run and hope for them to perform for you.

"I have a couple of trainers (O'Brien and Jason Warren at Mornington) and I spoke to each of them, just sounded them out and said there has to be a better way than this.

"Danny O'Brien was the one who said he had been thinking about it - going to Europe to source horses at a younger age - as well. The staying stock in Australia and NZ is not as good as it used to be, or perhaps putting it slightly more diplomatically, the competition is better because we have these imports.

RUSSIAN CAMELOT DESTINED TO BE KING OF THE CASTLE

"Another important consideration was that the tried horses were getting dearer. The Europeans were not stupid and realised they were in good demand in Australia if they were not top class in Europe.

"Danny said to me why don't we go to Newmarket and see if we can't get staying types but bring them straight out as yearlings."

The plot was hatched, and UK bloodstock agent Jeremy Brummitt was also seconded to be part of the raiding party.

"I underwrote Danny's idea for 200,000 guineas and said we either buy one horse or two.

"We bought two. One was by Camelot, another was by Champs Elysees. It turned out that one can gallop and the other can't.

"I wouldn't be making any claim to being extra smart. In fact, our agent Jeremy Brummitt selected the horses for us."

Not that it is as straightforward as it sounds.

"In selecting horses, you always face the same dilemma. They can all look good - they wouldn't be at the premium sale if they didn't have that potential.

"Jeremy has a good eye. We told him two things; he had the budget, we said it's not 207,000 guineas, it's anything up to 200,000, that's the limit.

"He recommended three, two of which we bid up and bought, one of which we bid on but didn't get because it went for significantly more than the budget.

"Danny is a very disciplined buyer. He buys many horses which are in price brackets for different types of buyers.

"The trainers have to have that discipline, and it doesn't do me any harm because I tend to be a little bit undisciplined. My hand starts to get St Vitus Dance.

"It was relatively straightforward. Jeremy bid on both, he had them wind tested, they lunge them and give them a good wind test beside doing all the usual vet things, then they are on a plane, land, into quarantine and into the stable.

"Russian Camelot has turned out to be exceptional, and pretty much from the time Danny did anything with him he said this is a really, really good horse."

RUSSIAN CAMELOT DESTINED TO BE KING OF THE CASTLE

Wheeler says that while it is cheaper to buy yearlings instead of well credentialed tried horses, it is still an expensive enough proposition.

"We saved a bit of money (compared to buying a well performed older horse) but it costs \$30,000 for the air ticket and you have a bit of cost beforehand with GST and quarantine at both ends.

"He's landed at 120,000 guineas, which sounds okay when you kick off, but by the time you land him here he costs \$305,000 (with all the extras added on) as he is walking into the stable.

"In the normal run of things that's not regarded as a cheap horse in Australia."

Wheeler has been back to Europe again, repeating the exercise, while other Australians have picked up on the idea in a bid to get good stock to race here at an earlier age and at cheaper prices.

"What I like about it is that the horses acclimatise when they are younger.

"Almost all the imported horses take at least a season if not a year to acclimatise.

"So if you are buying them as tried horses you are maybe sacrificing two to three years of their racing careers and most horses do most of their money earning in their two and three year old years. Not all, but most.



Camelot is one of Europe's most in demand stallions

RUSSIAN CAMELOT DESTINED TO BE KING OF THE CASTLE



Russian Camelot wins his maiden Group 1 in the South Australian Derby

"Our view was that if we got them as yearlings they could develop bone and everything that suits Australian conditions, and they could learn to race the Australian way, which is not the same as the European racing style.

"And crucially, the trainer will know the horse earlier and get them into their training system.

"It didn't stop me buying horses here of course... I bought more here in Australia and NZ than I did in the UK, but I still like to look for stayers there.

"The Europeans by weight of evidence deliver more winners than what we do locally."

However, if things go according to plan, Russian Camelot could be making the journey back one day: if he can prove himself the champion Wheeler and O'Brien think and hope he is, a European campaign could be on the cards in future years.

But first, there is the matter of the Ladbrokes Cox Plate ...and wouldn't it be fitting in this, the 100th running of the legendary race.

Michael Lynch is a senior sportswriter at The Age and Sydney Morning Herald



Damien Oliver has eyes on a third W.S. Cox Plate



Russian Camelot after his debut win in October 2019

HUMIDOR RISES FROM THE ASHES

By Mick Sharkie



Humidor gave Winx a fright in the 2017 Ladbrokes Cox Plate

Horses have a habit of saying “I told you so” in the Cox Plate.

Pinker Pinker didn’t have the class, Fields Of Omagh was too old, Super Impose was past his best and Kingston Town couldn’t win; but they all did win, and in the most memorable of circumstances.

On the score of vindication then, surely Humidor is the horse with the point to prove in 2020. Humidor, the New Zealand warhorse pensioned off for retirement by the Twitterati, his paper’s stamped – until a single spark lit a most unexpected flame.

“There’s always a special story in the Cox Plate, every year there is – and this year it’s us,” said Brae Sokolski part-owner of Humidor.

“We didn’t plan for him to be here again, after last year I didn’t think he’d ever get back to this race, but horses have a strange habit of proving us wrong.”

The 2019 Cox Plate barrier draw was a tough moment for Sokolski and Humidor’s swag of owners as they were left out of the final field at the discretion of the Committee, the most public of cuts at the peak of the Spring Carnival.

“We knew it was line ball, the drums were beating that morning from the Committee that there were

three horses fighting for two places – it was a game of musical chairs and one of us was going to miss out,” said Sokolski.

“We just had to accept the jury’s verdict and move on, but it didn’t make the race any easier to watch.”

The expert view was that Humidor had not returned to his best after a suspensory ligament injury suffered in 2018 and after seven unplaced runs in 2019 the weight-for-age regular was considered to be well past his use by date. The horse’s owners made the decision to try a different path and relocated the horse from Ciaron Maher and Dave Eustace to Lindsey Smith.

“It was a lateral option but ultimately it didn’t work out and that is with no disrespect to Lindsey Smith as a great trainer or a person; by his own admission his training method didn’t work for Humidor,” said Sokolski.

Humidor was ridden “upside down” at his first run for Smith in the Group 3 Belmont Sprint and that was the point at which the West Australian experiment fell apart as far as the horses’ owners were concerned.

“Things can go wrong in a run and that’s fine – and not every horse responds to every trainer, but it was unsuccessful and glaringly so and for whatever reason the horse didn’t fire. We found ourselves at the fork of the road – do we retire him, or do we try once more?”

HUMIDOR RISES FROM THE ASHES

As the connections mulled over their next move that question became the topic of social debate, sports fans with a passing interest in racing weighing in with their opinions, the bulk of which decided that greed was to the fore if the owners decided to push on.

Sokolski and major part-owners, Mark and John Carter, discussed the merits of the decision long and hard but could not better a 50 – 50 split when it came time to vote.

“The most important priority to the ownership group was protecting the horse and his legacy. He had given us so much and the onus was on us to make the right call and the horse’s performance and the public would judge that decision accordingly.

“We asked the opinion of a couple of very close confidants and they encouraged us to try again with Chris Waller, the idea was that Chris races them into fitness and that the horse would appreciate that.”

But Waller needed time to think. Sokolski made the initial approach “and probably expected a bit more enthusiasm,” but Waller was guarded and asked for some time to think it through.

“After two days he called and said ‘OK, I’m up for it – under the proviso that the moment the horse was uncompetitive in work we would stop’. We were more than happy with that,” Sokolski said.

The decision to push on was never about squeezing blood from a stone, far from it. For Sokolski and many of his fellow owners, there was a great emotional tie to Humidor and a deep pride in the horse’s performance and legacy – they wanted to give their champion the chance to go out on top, to at least have the chance to.

Humidor surprised them all by starting out on top on his return in the Group 2 Feehan Stakes, the only ballot exempt race into the 2020 Ladbrokes Cox Plate.

“It was a phoenix-like resurrection and none of us, least of all Chris Waller, expected it,” said Sokolski.

“He is the first proper horse that I’ve owned, to see him do that, to come back and win when everyone had written him off, it was an incredibly special moment. He wasn’t even supposed to run there – Chris had him booked for the Chelmsford, but COVID meant that he couldn’t travel so we changed focus to The Valley, it was meant to be.”



Humidor has found a new home at the Chris Waller stable

“We really just hoped that he would be competitive. But when he was tracking on the home turn, he let down like the Humidor of old – it was validation and vindication for the horse, we did cop it, but for the horse it was his moment to stand up and he did like a true warrior.”

Just as a steely battle-hardened centre-half back stands and waits for the first bounce on Grand Final day, so stands Humidor, ready to race and ready to fight around those all too familiar contours of The Valley.

He won’t be the prettiest horse in the field on Ladbrokes Cox Plate Day, but few will have a resume that runs as deep, and few will have earned the stripes that the eight-year-old son of Teofilo has during his career.

“He’s got such an affinity for the track, it is really hard to see him missing the top four given the form he’s in,” said Sokolski.

“He’s in the race up to his ears and twelve months ago I wouldn’t have thought I’d say those words again.”

Write him off at your own peril.

Mick Sharkie can be heard on Racing Pulse on RSN927 every Friday morning.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Moonee Valley Racing Club has been monitoring the advice of government and health authorities regarding the ongoing risks from the COVID-19 pandemic. In light of the social distancing requirements of the Australian and Victorian governments currently in place, the Committee has decided in the interests of health and safety to hold this year's Annual General Meeting (AGM) virtually. Unfortunately, members will not be able to physically attend the meeting.

The AGM of Members of the Moonee Valley Racing Club Inc. will take place on Tuesday, 17 November 2020 at 6.00pm (AEDT) as a virtual meeting online and you will be required to pre-register [click here to register](#). Online registration will commence at 5.00pm (AEDT). Committee members will attend the meeting from Moonee Valley's Racing Club Offices on Level 4, at the Committee Room.

The items of business AGM will include:

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the last AGM, held 19 November 2019;
2. Consideration of the Financial Report and the Auditor's Report of the Club for the financial year ended 31 July 2020; Election of committee members (if required)*;
3. Election of auditors;
4. Any general business; and
5. Any special business of which notice has been given in accordance with the Club rules.

Per Club Rule 8.8, three Committee Members are required to retire at each election and are eligible to seek re-election. Any Member holding voting rights is also eligible to stand for election. Nominations for Committee closed at 5.00pm on Friday 2 October 2020.

M. Browell

Michael Browell
Chief Executive

COMMUNITY UPDATE



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE CHARITIES VIC/TAS ANNOUNCED AS COX PLATE CARNIVAL CHARITY PIN

The Moonee Valley Racing Club is delighted to announce that the Club will again partner with Ronald McDonald House Charities Victoria & Tasmania in raising much-needed funds through the sale of our 2020 Cox Plate Carnival Charity Pins.

The 2020 Cox Plate Charity Pins are now available to purchase online for \$5, with \$2 postage, all the way through to the Ladbrokes Cox Plate Carnival on October 23-24 or until sold out.

The Cox Plate Charity Pin this year will reflect the special 100th Cox Plate Trophy, which for the 100th running of the legendary race is a 9ct solid yellow gold plate. The pin will become a collector's item in time given the significance of this year's race and even more so given the absence of crowd's trackside.

"We are delighted to again partner with Ronald McDonald House Charities Victoria & Tasmania through our Cox Plate Charity Pin partnership," said Michael Browell, MVRC CEO.

"This year, more than ever, we are asking people to dig deep to help raise as much as we possibly can in what is a tough time for many Victorians, especially those who are caring for a seriously ill child at this time."

All proceeds from the sale of the 2020 Cox Plate Charity Pins will be going to RMHC VIC & TAS, and the MVRC will

also be launching other fundraising initiatives throughout the Ladbrokes Cox Plate Carnival to help us reach our target of \$35,000. The MVRC & RMHC are also excited to announce Jacqueline Felgate as the 2020 Cox Plate Charity Ambassador, allowing the Club to raise as much awareness as possible for this fantastic cause.

RMHC VIC & TAS works to enhance the quality of life for families with sick children by providing a home-away-from-home that is welcoming, caring, and supportive. There are four Ronald McDonald Houses across Victoria & Tasmania, located at Monash, North Fitzroy, Parkville, and Hobart. The Houses are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and accommodate up to 102 families every night. Their goal is to ensure that we never have to turn away eligible families who need their services.

"RMHC VIC & TAS is proud to again partner with the MVRC at this year's Cox Plate Carnival, especially given the significance of the 100th running. The funds raised from the sale of pins will help provide safe and comfortable home-away-from-home at Ronald McDonald House for families caring for seriously ill children," said Peter Bishop, CEO, Ronald McDonald House Charities Victoria & Tasmania.

Click below to view the Cox Plate Carnival Charity Pin and to purchase OR to donate text COXPLATE TO 0400 622 622.



Funds from the sales of the pins will help RMHC VIC & TAS support

PETERS PREPARES FOR WA ASSAULT

By Jay Rooney

In more than 40 years in racing, leading WA owner and breeder Bob Peters has achieved more than most can dream of in a lifetime.

But if you ask the astute man which race he wants to win the most, it is the \$5 million Group 1 Ladbrokes Cox Plate.

In 2020, that dream could well become a reality, with Peters sending his biggest equine star, Arcadia Queen, to Victoria for the spring.

"Anyone involved in racing would want to win a Cox Plate," Peters says.

"It's probably the truest test, being weight-for-age at that distance, and the best race in Australia."

Arcadia Queen headlines Peters and his wife Sandra's incredible assault on the Melbourne spring carnival this year.

Their rising stars Superstorm and Windstorm, two potential Cox Plate contenders of the future, and quality mare Perfect Jewel were also sent over with co-trainer Grant Williams and champion jockey William Pike.

Arcadia Queen, and All-Star Mile winner Regal Power, are prime examples of why Peters is considered one of the best breeders in Australia.



Local star Arcadia Queen



William Pike and Grant Williams celebrate the All-Star Mile

Regal Power was destined to have a big impact on this year's Melbourne Spring Carnival before succumbing to a lung infection and has since returned to Western Australia to recover.

Peters' success on the track has been driven by developing families over decades with regally-bred fillies and mares.

"Arcadia Queen and Regal Power are sister and brother in blood," Peters says.

"We raced their grandmother, Antique, and we raced their dams, Arcadia and Broadway Belle, who are sisters.

Arcadia Queen burst on the scene in 2018 with five brilliant victories in her home state – none better than her breathtaking win in the Group 1 Kingston Town Classic at Ascot, when she thrashed the older horses as an inexperienced three-year-old.

The outstanding daughter of Pierro was the talk of Australian racing again the following year when she won the Group 2 Theo Marks Stakes at Rosehill under the guidance of new trainer Chris Waller.

PETERS PREPARES FOR WA ASSAULT



The Cerise and White dominated the All-Star Mile

However, she was a beaten favourite at her next start in The Everest and suffered injuries when copping severe interference in the Golden Eagle.

It's been a long road back to racing since then, but there are positive signs as she builds towards The Valley's iconic race on October 24, after her Caulfield Stakes win.

"It took a long time to get her back," Peters says.

"The Golden Eagle was on November 2, and she wasn't sound again until the following May.

"We were working on her just about every day during that time, then she had three or four weeks in the paddock and was ready to go again."

While Arcadia Queen was recovering from her injuries, Regal Power stepped up to prove himself on the big stage.

The brilliant WATC Derby and Railway Stakes winner, gave Peters one of his biggest thrills in racing when he won the \$5 million All-Star Mile at Caulfield in March.

Peters landed a famous quinella when Superstorm flashed home for second.

"That was his biggest win," Peters says.

"He beat nine other Group 1 winners at weight-for-age over the mile.

"His Derby win was good, too, because of the sectionals he ran to win from last."

Despite all his success in racing, Peters hasn't had a Cox Plate starter, and he has only attended the iconic race once.

His famous cerise and white silks have been carried in big wins, including a record nine Perth Cups, 11 Derbies, 14 Oaks, five Kingston Town Classics, three Railway Stakes, two Goodwood Handicaps, an Australian Cup, and an Emirates Stakes.

"I've had horses run in the Caulfield Cup, but haven't had horses aimed at the Cox Plate," Peters said.

"They've got to be genuine weight-for-age horses to do it.

"Arcadia Queen is a weight-for-age Group 1 winner and Group 1 weight-for-age winners don't come around that often.



Bob Peters – An icon of Western Australian racing

“I had Old Comrade who won two Kingston Towns and an Australian Cup. Arcadia Queen is probably the closest I’ve had to him.”

Peters, who also served 18 years on the WA Turf Club committee, including two years as chairman and two as vice-chairman, was inducted into the WA Racing Hall of Fame in 2019.

He was influential as an administrator, helping the TAB merge betting pools with the eastern states and convincing the WA Government to lower turnover tax on the industry.

Outside of racing, Peters was a savvy businessman, climbing the car retailing ranks to run BMW dealership Auto Classic in Burswood.

A Cox Plate win would rate highly on his list of racing achievements, and West Australians have a proud history in the race.

The most famous winner is none other than Northerly, the horse dubbed ‘The Fighting Tiger’ for his incredible toughness and will to win.

Northerly not only etched his name into the record books with consecutive Cox Plate victories in 2001 and 2002, but he also rejuvenated the WA racing industry at a time when it was struggling.

Another champion galloper, Aquanita, started his career in WA before a transfer to Victoria led to his Cox Plate victory in 1962 when ridden by legendary WA jockey, Frank ‘Tiger’ Moore.

Easingwold was the first West Australian horse to win the Cox Plate in 1923, a potential omen for WA racing followers given it was just the second running of the Cox Plate in this a milestone year of the 100th running.

For the army of followers who support the Cerise and White silks and the wizard rider named William Pike on board, a victory for Arcadia Queen would be celebrated with great enthusiasm and would be the cherry on top of the Peters’ ice cream and Western Australian racing.

Jay Rooney heads The West Australian’s racing reporting team.

SUN STUD

2020 STALLION ROSTER



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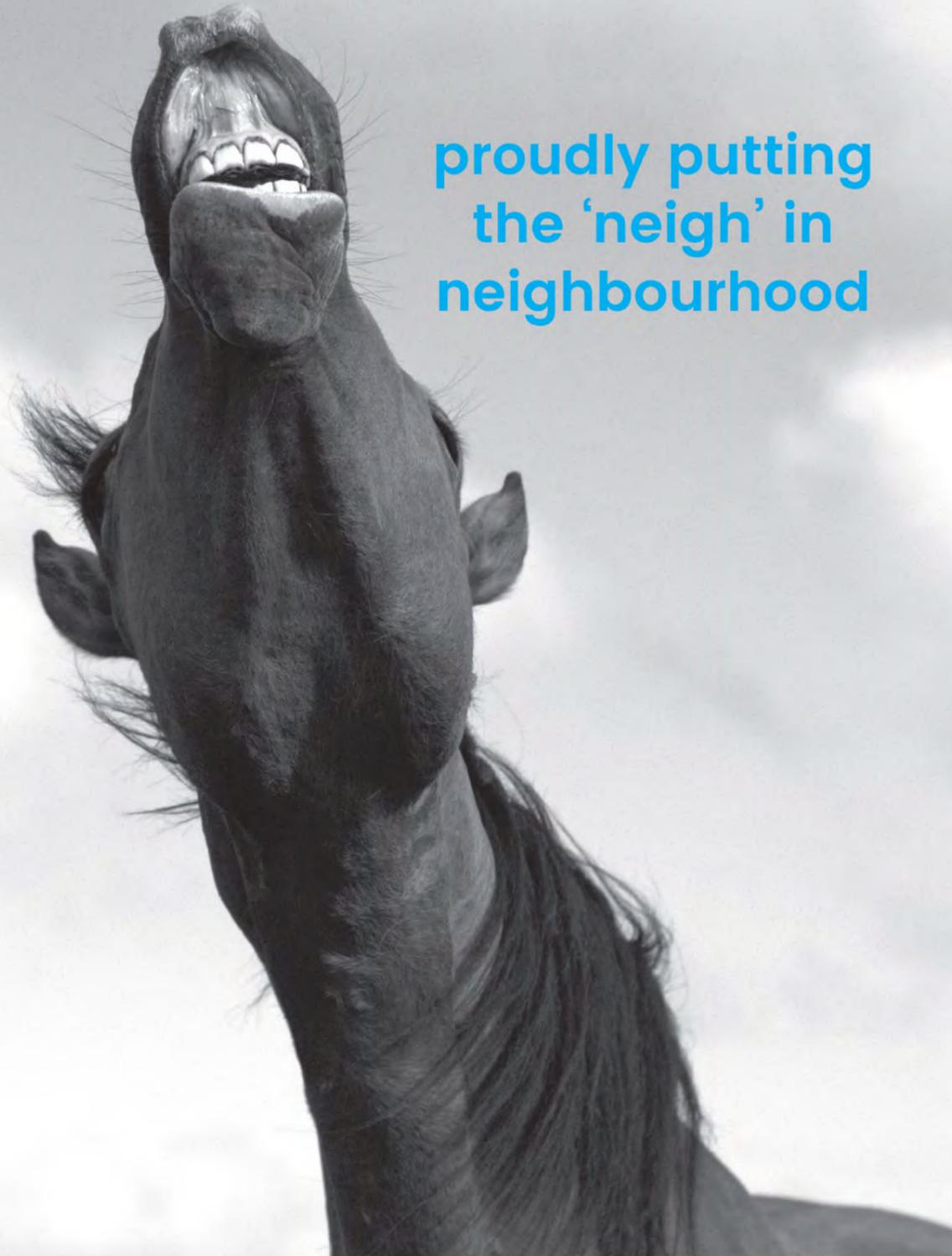


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An artist's impression of Tote – Bar & Dining

MASTER PLAN UPDATE THE VALLEY OF TOMORROW

The MVRC is thrilled to see delivery activity now happening on-site after an extensive masterplan process.

The Development Agreement, which was entered into in 2017 with Australia's leading superannuation fund Hostplus and developer Hamton, is now becoming a reality for the MVRC. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity over the next 15 years will deliver a new world-class racing facility that is supported by an amazing residential, retail, commercial, and lifestyle precinct. We are excited to now see progress on delivering the vision of transforming the 98 acre Valley Racecourse site.

TOTE PARK

The new 5,000m² civic park is remarkably taking shape with final delivery in early November. Tote Park is one of the cornerstones of the vision for Moonee Valley Park, a new neighbourhood set within a grand botanical park. Tote Park will include the planting of 67 new mature trees, 315 shrubs, and around 4,000 groundcover plants. Tote Park has been meticulously designed by Tract Landscape Architects and will feature open grassy lawns with serpentine gardens, a nature-inspired playground for families, and stunning flower beds, where visitors can relax in the sun or the shade, unwind and get active. Works are also well underway on the life-size Winx Statue, which will take pride of place as one of the centrepieces of the new Tote Park. Acclaimed Melbourne sculptor Louis Laumen has immortalised many Australian sporting greats and he is the most appropriate person to commemorate Winx in bronze.



Tote Park taking shape

MASTER PLAN UPDATE THE VALLEY OF TOMORROW



Tote – Bar & Dining is to be retained and managed by the MVRC

TOTE – BAR & DINING

Concurrently, renovations have been underway on the original Tote building, initially built in 1931 and situated within the Tote Park. The Tote building is significant to the history of the MVRC. It is being restored to its former glory as it is transformed into an all-day dining and bar experience that will be retained and managed by the MVRC.

The Tote building's original historic features are being respectfully restored and will feature prominently along the McPherson Street façade. This includes prominent windows, which will provide spectacular vantage points for diners. The design response unites the creative expertise of Samantha Eades Design and Field Office Architecture to deliver a design that shows reverence to the site's proud racing history, while seamlessly delivering an extension to appeal to modern audiences.

The MVRC is set to announce its operational program for Tote – Bar & Dining early in 2021.



New look Administration Building

NEW ADMINISTRATION OFFICE FOR MVRC

To allow for the construction of Tote Park and to enable significant demolition activities for phase 1 of the redevelopment, the Club relocated its administration function. Our new home is on Level 3 of the Grandstand with the Membership & Customer Service team now residing at the top of the tunnel in the Celebrity Foyer. All staff transitioned to their new working environments in December 2019, while assisting with significant archiving activities.

The MVRC is pleased to report that the move was a great success and has provided a newly energised collaborative working environment for staff while signifying an essential first step in the MVRC's transformation journey.

STAGE A: FEEHAN ROW TOWNHOUSES & THOMAS STREET APARTMENTS

Early works have been completed to make way for the first stage of terraces and townhomes at Moonee Valley Park's 'Feehan Row.' The MVRC is excited to report that the construction commencement milestone has been achieved, with the first Moonee Valley Park residents due to move in early 2022.

The Thomas Street Apartments, the first apartment building, located in the Legends Car Park fronting onto Thomas Street, is programmed to commence construction in the first half of 2021. This apartment building will comprise 69 apartments with the sales campaign set to launch in late 2020.



Feehan Row

RACECOURSE WORKS MASTERPLAN

The MVRC has continued to progress the design and planning of the new Valley Racecourse with the consultant team. Unfortunately, due to the COVID 19 pandemic, we are slightly behind the program; however, the necessary consultation and engagement with critical stakeholders on the draft masterplan in accordance with the planning controls will take place late in 2020. Once the masterplan is endorsed, the detailed design phase will progress, including the refinement of both the racecourse design response and the new state of the art grandstand.

WINX TO STAND FOR ETERNITY IN NEW TOTE PARK

The impending launch of the new Tote Park, located on McPherson Street that will encapsulate the newly-built TOTE – Bar and Dining venue, will soon have an iconic statue of Winx installed that will see many admirers come from near and far to catch a glimpse of the four-time W.S. Cox Plate winning champion.

The Winx Statue will be the welcome centrepiece of the new Tote Park entrance to the Valley, with Tote Park designed as a contemporary, fully activated public park, a place for the community, particularly families, to gather and enjoy new opportunities for social recreation.

After an extensive evaluation process, highly acclaimed local Melbourne sculptor Louis Laumen was selected to complete the work.

The Winx Statue is due to be unveiled on Ladbrokes Cox Plate Day on October 24, and we caught up with its creator to find out how he went about making such a historical monument that will take pride of place at The Valley for generations to come.



Louis Laumen



WATCH: The Winx Statue taking shape



Under construction – the statue will be a feature of Tote Park

How long have you been a sculptor and what are some of the most recognised sculptures you have created in the past?

I have been making my way in the world as a sculptor since graduating from art school in 1985.

I created my first major public commission, the 'Weary Dunlop Memorial' in Benalla in 1996, which I consider to be my professional debut. Other major commissions include the 'Parade of Champions' statues at the MCG; the Major Gen. 'Pompey' Elliott memorial statue in Ballarat; the National Boer War Memorial in Anzac Parade, Canberra; recently, the Nicky Winmar 'Black and Proud' statue at Optus Stadium, Perth.

What are some of the measurements of the Winx sculpture?

The statue's overall dimensions are 4.14 metres long, 2.63 metres high, and 88 centimetres wide. The statue is cast bronze.

Tell us how long the process is from start to finish with making the Winx sculpture?

The project began in April 2019 when I travelled to NSW to meet and measure Winx. Sculpting work started in September 2019 when I started by making a half life-size study of the Winx statue. This was completed by December 2019, and I began work on the full-scale (1 and 1/4 times life-size) Winx shortly after that.

The full-size clay statue was completed in April 2020, moulding and bronze casting began shortly after, and it is currently in process at the foundry. Work is scheduled for completion in October 2020.

What has been the biggest challenge with making the Winx sculpture?

The big challenge, apart from the disciplines of anatomy and proportion, is to convincingly portray a sense of the character of both horse and rider, and even more than this, movement.

Did you know much about Winx's story before being asked to make the sculpture?

Only what I had read in the papers!

How did Hugh Bowman go in the measuring process for the sculpture?

Hugh came to my studio with his silks, saddle, and whip and very kindly agreed to model for me, taking the pose upon a life-size fibreglass horse model that I borrowed for the occasion. I took a large number of photos, so I would have an accurate reference to work from. He was good humoured throughout the session, where I measured him from top to toe to get his proportions. He also gave me excellent advice about the proper grip of the reins.

The Winx statue will take pride of place in the newly created Tote Park at The Valley. That must give you great pleasure to know that your work will live on in such a beautiful space for generations to come?

Well, I always try to do my best. I only hope that I have been able to capture something of Winx's spirit. Soon, her bronze likeness will take its place in the world, and I hope, be appreciated by lovers of racing, thoroughbreds, and art.

SPEEDSTER BELLA VELLA

SEEKING VALLEY GROUP 1

By Ben Sporle

When Jamie Kah left South Australia in 2019 to make her mark in Victoria's riding ranks, she could not have imagined how a brief encounter with an unknown mare would have such a big impact on her career.

Dark in colour, the mare arrived into the Will Clarken barn with little fanfare and even smaller expectations. While Kah was about to depart her hometown of 23 years for the bright city lights of Melbourne, Bella Vella was just arriving at what was her third home in just five short years.

"She arrived not long before I was leaving and I rode 'Bella' at trackwork a few times, but she had a few breathing issues and Will (Clarken) was tinkering with her gear," Kah recalled of her early encounter with Bella Vella.

Those little issues did not take long for Clarken to sort out and by her second start for the new stable at her home track at Morphettville, she romped in as a three-length winner, recouping her purchase price and more. Quite the feat given her backstory, yet this was just the beginning of her new chapter.

So, let's uncover that back story...

Originally a \$100,000 purchase at the Magic Millions yearling sales in 2016 for breeder Graham Watson, Bella Vella won four sprint races on country tracks under three different trainers, all the while earning \$74,145 in prizemoney.

After 17 career starts and in the spring of 2018, Bella Vella was officially retired to begin her life as a broodmare and was sent off to commence her new role by being served by Sebring stallion Criterion. An excellent runner as a multiple Group 1 winner, including a Cox Plate placing behind Winx in 2015, Criterion hasn't delivered in his stud career through a poor fertility rating and Bella Vella failed to get in foal.

With this news in hand, owners sent Bella Vella to the Inglis Digital online sale in April 2019 and it was there Will Clarken's client John Kelton forked out a mere \$22,500 for the daughter of Commands.

The Inglis advertisement read – "Bella Vella has the looks, race record, sire and pedigree to add value to any commercial broodmare band" – what it would fail to mention was that she was ready to head back to



Bella Vella in full flight

the racetrack and display a toughness that Clarken has seen many times since. She was officially out of retirement and heading back to the races to restart her career as a five-year-old.

Bella Vella started to create some chatter in her home state of Adelaide when stable jockey Todd Pannell rode her to two city victories, but it wasn't until October that year, when Kah was reunited with the mare since their brief meeting at trackwork, that people stood up and took notice of the speedster.

It was Ladbrokes Manikato Stakes Night at The Valley no less and a Ladbrokes 55 Second Challenge Heat, a mad dash over 955 metres that sees the crowd on course hold their breath as jockeys ride hell for leather.

Kah insists Clarken's instructions on every horse are the same, rinse and repeat, "good luck, don't push, don't pull".



Bella Vella wins the Ladbrokes 55 Second Challenge



"Two crazy fillies" - Jamie Kah and Bella Vella have taken The Valley by storm

With no pushing and no pulling, Bella Vella clocked a series leading time of 55.10 in the heat in front of a packed house heaving at the cauldron that is night racing at The Valley. A new holy trinity was born – Bella Vella, Jamie Kah and The Valley. It just worked.

"She just pings the barriers and puts herself on speed, nice and positive with her head to the ground, that's why I think she takes to The Valley," Kah says.

When asked to explain her own bond with Bella Vella.

"We're just both two crazy fillies," Kah laughs.

Those two crazy fillies have since conquered all before them and now boast a hat-trick of wins when it comes to teaming up at The Valley. That time of 55.10 would eventually be beaten in March by Bella Vella herself in the final heat, leaving Clarken \$55,000 better off thanks to Ladbrokes' winning prize. The cheque was handed over to Kah in Clarken's absence, where Kah recalls she 'tried to run off with it' before finding its way to the rightful owner.

In a blow for Kah, Bella Vella claimed her biggest scalp to date by the winning the Group 1 Sangster at Morphettville. Sadly, due to COVID-19 restrictions, Kah watched the race on a television screen from Caulfield as Todd Pannell held on for victory.

"I was so happy for not only the horse, but also Todd Pannell who rode her, and my friend Ruby rides her trackwork, and obviously Will who has done such a great job with her"

"I'm very happy she's in Melbourne and nobody can kick me off her now though"

That's because Bella Vella now has the Melbourne Spring Carnival in her sights and it's off to the perfect start with the six-year-old mare taking out the Group 2 Mittys McEwen Stakes first-up at The Valley on September 5 over 1000 metres.

She followed that up with a brilliant third in the Group 1 Charter Keck Cramer Moir Stakes.

"She was just so tough... she was always going to win in my mind", Kah said post the McEwen Stakes.

"She is getting better every time I get on her," Kah said in an ominous warning for her rivals.

Clarken too has a real soft spot for his stable star who just gives her all every time she races.

"I'm a bit emotional after that, she's a horse to fall in love with," said Clarken post-race after the win.

"She has heaps of ability, but I just admire how tough she is and how hard she tries"

"She delivers ten-fold."

Each time Bella Vella and Kah have returned to The Valley they have reached new heights and that bodes well for her upcoming campaign where she will target the Group 1 Ladbrokes Manikato Stakes at the track.

Kah has ridden three Group 1 wins of her own, both coming at Flemington, but she is hoping the bright lights of The Valley's night racing season can deliver her a fourth as Bella Vella tackles the \$1 million Ladbrokes Manikato Stakes on October 23.

"I'm hoping Bella Vella can deliver me a Group 1 at The Valley where I've enjoyed some luck"

"She isn't just a 955 metre horse and I think the 1200 metres of a Manikato Stakes won't be a worry, with less challenges up on the speed"

"If I got a Group 1 for Will it would be one hell of a party," Kah professed.

One thing you can count on this spring is that these 'two crazy fillies' are every chance to conquer the Group 1 mountain at The Valley and celebrate in style.

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