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NEWS – JANUARY 2008

CHARMER LODGE FEATURE NEWS - JANUARY 2008

LAWVEK NEARLY DID NOT START

31 Jan, 2008.

PROMISING young galloper Lawvek almost did not start at Albion Park on Thursday night.

The son of **Hallucinate-Stargari Heiress** raced away to a two and a half length win in a 520m 5th Grade in 30.35.

He downed Bosanova Blue with a half length to Top Talker getting home well for third.

Lawvek, a half brother to multiple Group performer Buckingham Chuck, is raced by breeder Noel Noon and trained by his great mate Greg Cannon.

Cannon reported that after Lawvek had won at Albion Park on Monday night in 30.35 he had pulled up with water diabetes.

"It was only this morning that he has got right back to his best," said Cannon.

"It was only this morning that I decided to run him."

Lawvek, a recent finalist in a Young Guns at the Gold Coast behind Lucky Alive, took his record to seven wins from 15 starts with the victory.

He is one of only two dogs Cannon has in training, the other the littermate Ambit Claim.

Dam Stargari Heiress is due to whelp at the weekend to a second mating to Black Enforcer.

"She had one pup in her first mating to Black Enforcer and that is now about eight months old," said Noon.

"We got a free service back to Black Enforcer for having just the one pup and she is certainly having a few more than that at the weekend."

Noon works at Patricks Wharf and said a group of workmates had indicated they would buy one of the about to be born litter.

"A group of workmates own Ambit Claim and they are keen to get another dog," he said.

Cannon has always been impressed with Lawvek.

"He runs quick early sectionals and I always thought he would handle Albion Park," he said.

"He gave me a bit of a scare early in the week, but he's fine now as the win showed, in exactly the same time he ran on Monday night.

"He was down almost a kilo on his weight from Monday."

Cup A Walk In The Park For Miagi

SUPER stayer **Miagi** rightfully added the tag of **Group 1 winner** to his resume at Wentworth Park tonight.

The son of **Hallucinate** produced a consummate effort over the 720m trip to land the Association Cup final by a clear 5 1/4 lengths in 42.91.

In an unexpected early twist, rank outsider Brush Shiraz landed in the lead and raced Queenslander Technoman for the first 200m.

While the front runners cut at each other, Miagi was moving into third place and, with a lap of the famous track covered, he raced up the Technoman and went on by.

The chasing division, battling away much like blood hounds in pursuit of unseen quarry, were left lamenting and the only issue in doubt would be the minor placings.

Gold Slammer prevailed over Just Friends to fill second while the well supported Miss Brook could only manage fifth.

Miss Brook, as ever, got back in the early stages but was unable to get room to move in the middle stages and never threatened.

The win was Miagi's 14th from just 25 starts and he has had his colours lowered only once in seven starts at Wentworth Park at the 720m trip.

The likes of Zoom Top, Ragsie, Bold Tease, Whip Tip, Lease Of Life, Travel Rev and mighty producer Many Tricks have prevailed in an Association Cup.

Many of the aforementioned were out and out champions and while Zoom Top's deeds will never be matched, Miagi is up where he belongs.

Breeder Darren Willis had the Miagi reared at Clergate by Martin and Fiona Hallinan in yards previously occupied by the likes of Bond, Pure Octane, Run's House and his own sire, Hallucinate.

A clash with a stray dog outside a Newcastle veterinary clinic 8 months back put Miagi's racing career

in doubt but little has gone wrong since.

He is a credit to Warren and Jill Harper and the victory was as comfortable as it was impressive. Next event on the staying calendar is the Group 2 NCA Gold Cup at Wentworth Park on February 9 and there seems to be nothing waiting in the wings to test him in that.

ORCE BOUNCES BACK

24 Jan, 2008.

JOHN Field has been down in the dumps since Monday night.

He thought Intrepid Force (**Placard-Pallara Princess**) had the makings of a top grade middle distance galloper.

But when he failed to run down Black Maze at headquarters in a 600m 5th Grade heat on Monday night, John was disappointed.

"Shattered, is more like it," said John. "I've been shattered since Monday."

But come Thursday night and Intrepid Force was forgiven when he ran home too strongly to win a 520m 4th Grade in 30.69 beating Secret Bomber by a length and a quarter with the same margin to Splitting Hairs in third.

It was the winner's seventh win and he has been in fantastic form.

"We bred the litter from Tony Hoyland's bitch Pallara Princess and have kept the five," said John. "We bred a litter to Token Prince out of her and they could gallop as well so this time we went to another son of Malawi's Prince to get the same cross."

Field has been telling anyone who would listen since he first put Intrepid Force into training that he would make a top grade galloper.

"I thought he had the makings of a big race winner, but I always thought it would be over 600 metres," he said.

Intrepid Force gets his chance to atone when he runs in the 600m final on Monday night and then will be freshened up for a tilt at the Young Guns series at headquarters.

"But his trouble is he can never break six seconds to the first mark at Albion Park and for that reason he has to give too much start to the very good dogs," said Field.

"He has been a very good dog to us so far and that bring his prizemoney up to \$20,000."

Field also races Pickett's Charge, Intrepid Spirit, Cartello (Italian for Placard) and Billboard Bluey from the Placard-Pallara Princess litter.

"We've had great success with the Pallara Princess progeny," he said. "She's been very good to us." Pallara Princess now lives a life of luxury as a house pet with her owner Tony Hoyland.

BLAZE OF GLORY

17 Jan, 2008.

LIKE all good solicitors and barristers, the 10 members of the Squeeze Box Syndicate did their homework before making their first greyhound purchase.

And when Blazing Rico led throughout to win his Albion Park debut on Thursday night and remain unbeaten in two starts, all 10 cheered as though they had already won a Group 1.

Blazing Rico (**Hallucinate-She's Adams**) scored by three and three-quarter lengths in 30.45.

He downed Bogie Blue with a length and a quarter to dead-heaters Wild Sentence and Nimbastic in third.

The winner is trained by Adam Hines who trained the dam to 14 wins, eight of them at Albion Park with six over 600m.

Rick Green, a member of the syndicate, knows Adam's sister Megan and through that connection, he and nine friends decided to buy a greyhound.

"I went out to Adam's and had a look at the pups," said Rick. "I liked the look of this dog."

Rick and fellow syndicate members Shane Crew, Michael Crew, Michael Callow, Broc Wright, Lisa Schultz, Mark Bray, Ash Dowie, Jeremy Jones and Michael Ryan all put their heads into form guides and pedigree websites and decided they were on the right track.

Ryan is a doctor, Michael Crew in finance and Wright is a plasterer. The rest are solicitors and barristers on the Sunshine Coast, in Brisbane and one in Melbourne.

"We decided it was the right time to buy and we picked this black dog," said Shane Crew the syndicate spokesman.

Michael Callow came up with the syndicate name of "Squeeze Box Syndicate".

"I think it was a play on luck, reverse psychology that if we called it the squeeze box syndicate, he would not get the squeeze box," said Shane.

Unfortunately, Blazing Rico came up with box four for his debut when a winner at the Gold Coast on January 8.

Adam believes the dog has much to learn but is highly promising.

"I'll take him back to the Gold Coast for a fifth grade series and then he can come back for the Young Guns series at Albion Park," he said.

"He's very promising."

The "Squeeze Box" members also race thoroughbreds ("they are no good") but Blazing Rico holds pride of place after his two wins from as many starts.

He flew through a 5.77 first section and then a 11.69 middle before getting tired at his 520m debut in the final section.

NO REST FOR BELLE

13 Jan, 2008.

MUCH improved bitch Camara Belle will not rest on her laurels.

The daughter of **Hallucinate-Kathie's Memory** landed a maiden victory at Townsville last Thursday night and then back up to win a Maiden 1000 (410m) in Cairns on Saturday night.

Laurie Hogg's black bitch will now start in the heats of the 380m Young Guns at Townsville this Thursday night.

Camara Belle scored by a length and three-quarters in 24.62 in the Maiden 1000 final,

She downed Saltwater Rose with two and a half lengths to Del Amitri in third.

Hogg bought Camara Belle and her litter brother Camara Beau from Brisbane breeder, trainer Margaret Quarrell.

"I picked them up in October, and actually came home with 10 dogs for myself and a couple of other trainers," said Laurie.

"They have really improved in recent weeks and this bitch is particularly strong at the finish of her races."

Hogg may have been lucky to even get to the boxes with his Maiden 1000 winner.

A severe thunderstorm hit Cairns early in the night.

"There was lots of lightning and the rain bucketed down just before the race," said Hogg. "We were pretty lucky to have the race run."

Several of the races on the Cairns program were abandoned.

"Camara Belle would have gone out and raced again," said Laurie. "She loved it."

DREAMING OF THE FUTURE

10 Jan, 2008.

AS Miss Ex raced to her 13th victory around Albion Park on Thursday night, trainer Dean Turley found it hard to wipe the smile from his face.

But it wasn't only Miss Ex's victory that had Dean on cloud nine.

It was the fact he had Fast Dream engaged two races later in a 600m 5th Grade and he knew Fast Dream had been trialling with Miss Ex and "giving her a cold" in recent weeks.

Fast Dream (**Hallucinate-Rapid Midnight**) lived right up to Dean's expectations by wearing down early leader Berella Diva to win by a length in a fast 35.17.

A length and a quarter away was Calypso Slayer in third.

Fast Dream took her record to three wins from 13 starts but Turley says the bitch is all class and little should be read into what appears a moderate race record to date.

"She is raced by Mick O'Reilly of Casino," said Turley. "Mick bought her as a pup from Charlie Northfield and I got her about 10 months and broke her in."

Turley says Fast Dream was easily the quickest greyhound he has broken in.

"She ran 27.40 around Casino and I got someone to trial her at Albion Park and she went 30.50 at her first look there," he said. "So we backed her in a maiden out of the two box."

Unfortunately for connections, Fast Dream was fought all the way from the starting boxes to the first turn and eventually fell.

"Well, that really shattered her confidence and I had to start all over again with her," said Turley.

"For month after month I kept going with her and there was a lot of pressure on me to switch her back to tracks around home. But I pleaded with Mick to let me do my own thing with the bitch."

Part of that plan was to step her up to 600m to give her the opportunity to lead in her races and gain that much needed confidence. Her first run over the journey saw her win in 35.23.

"It flattened her and she was a bit flat for a few runs after that, but with 10 days since her last run until tonight, she was cherry ripe for this race," he said.

Now Turley faces a problem.

"I wanted to drop her back to 520m because I know the ability she has and I wanted to win sprints with her first, but already she's telling me she wants to run 710m," he said.

Turley raves about the potential of Fast Dream.

Berella Diva flew out and led clearly, but Fast Dream gathered her in quickly in the straight.

Of Miss Ex, Turley hopes she comes on season.

The bitch ran 30.31 to win a 520m 5th Grade on Thursday night with her 13th Albion Park victory and 14th overall.

She scored by a length and a quarter over Ruby Lavelle with two and a half lengths to Shady Blue Bell in third.

"She's done enough," said Turley. "I hope she comes on season tomorrow."

JIM AND HIS MATE

10 Jan, 2007.

JIMMY Conlon has long been one of Queensland's best greyhound trainers and he is well aware of that age old adage that when on a good thing, stick to it.

And that landed him an Albion Park winner on Thursday night when Sleek And Smart scored in a 520m 5th Grade.

The son of **History Lesson-Sleek Model** scored by two and a half lengths utilizing his rails box draw to perfection to beat early leader Sneaky Shiraz with two lengths to Tsunami Surf rattling home late to get third.

The winner ran 30.47 for his 10th race victory and his fourth at Albion Park in 22 starts.

Conlon has been great friends with leading Brisbane thoroughbred vet Lester Walters who lived "just down the road" from Jim some years ago.

Walters at one time was track vet at the Gabba.

These days Walters runs a huge vet clinic at Hendra in the middle of thoroughbred training in Brisbane but he still has time to help out his old mate Jim Conlon.

"He only does it as a favour to me because we have been friends for so many years," said Jim.

And Walters recently found a problem with a bone in Sleek And Smart's shoulder.

"He told me to give the dog a good break from racing or he would break down," said Jim.

Sleek And Smart has had four runs from that spell and Thursday night's victory was his first since his return to racing.

"He was well suited off the rails tonight," said Conlon. "The wide boxes have been no help to him in his first three runs back."

Walters and Conlon have been a great partnership over many years. "Lester was looking after my dogs right back to the days of Gowrie Kid, Eddy's Risk and Somerset Sal," said Jim.

All three were top class performers for Conlon back in the 1970s and 80s.

Sleek And Smart now races with both his wrist strapped as a precautionary measure.

"He is back at the wrist and I spoke to Lester about it when I put him back into work for this campaign," said Jim.

"He and I decided to strap the dog just to make sure."

Conlon was a little disappointed with his dog's 30.47 winning time. "I'll probably put him up to 600m soon. He will find it tough against the top grade sprinters from here on," he said.

"I'll play it by ear and show he goes."

SERIOUS FUTURE

6 Jan, 2007.

WHILE he's faced with a difficult task on Wednesday in the final of the Young Guns (457m) at the Gold Coast, Serious Dreams has a huge future according to his trainer Barry Morris.

The **Hallucinate-She's Adams** dog surprised even Morris and owner Col Bell with his 25.99 win in his heat of the Young Guns last week beating Group placegetter Disorderly.

Serious Dreams takes on a high class field of young dogs in the final and Morris believes Tony Brett's two runners Silk Moon and Candy Tiger are the hardest to beat.

"Probably the one dog because of his box," said Morris of his toughest danger Silk Moon.

"But our bloke likes to use a bit of the track and his six in the final is a good draw for him."

Morris believes Serious Dreams will continue to improve with more racing.

He was luckless during the Renzo Park Future Stars series at Lismore before coming to the Gold Coast for the Young Guns.

Evil Adams, a litter sister to Serious Dreams, was third in that final to Bargero.

And Morris has huge wraps on that bitch.

"She's eight lengths faster than Serious Dreams but he is improving all the time," said Morris of Evil Adams.

"She's the fastest dog I've ever had up a straight track. She can go to Nigel Rugg's straight track and run two-tenths faster than Free For All dogs any day you take her there."

For Morris to train Evil Adams and Serious Dreams it is like a homecoming.

"I bred their mother She's Adams and sold her as a pup to Adam Hines who won 14 races with her including a couple over 520m and 600m at Albion Park," he said.

Col Bell bought the bitch back after her racing career was over and the Hallucinate litter is her first. She is to be mated to Surf Lorian now.

"Adam has a pup out of this Hallucinate litter that has heaps of ability and I've got another one who has had a few problems but looks like he will be very handy," said Barry.

The litter is just 19 months old.

Melbourne Trip Postponed

JEFF Hand's (**History Lesson x Gypsy Lee Lass**) brilliant win in a personal best Wentworth Park time of 30.18sec on Monday has forced a postponement of the dog's planned trip to Melbourne.

Trainer Richard Dean was set to send Jeff Hand for a stint with his son Dennis until the dog recorded the most impressive of his eight WP wins on Monday night.

Jeff Hand will now stay in Sydney for the heats of the Triple Crown Lodge National Derby at WP on

Saturday week.

As an August, 2005 whelping, Jeff Hand will be among the oldest Derby runners.

And as a veteran of 27 WP races there will be few more experienced campaigners at the sport's headquarters.

JEFF COLLERSON

Miagi Sets Cup Standard

TRACK record holder Miagi returned from an injury-enforced break to win the opening heat of tonight's Group 1 Association Cup (720m) series at Wentworth Park.

The son of **Hallucinate** was outpaced by Cannington 715m record holder Rapala Boy and Queenslander Gem King (25/1) in the early stages but, with a lap to run, the bold striding black dog passed Gem King and set off after Rapala Boy.

Before the home turn, Miagi (4/6) swept to the lead and raced away to score by 6 1/2 lengths in 42.75 secs.

The time was some 11 lengths outside his track record (42.03) set on October 6 but, given his lack of recent racing, the effort cannot be faulted.

Rapala Boy (5/1) held on gamely to finish second and secure a place in next Saturday's \$50,000 to the winner final but the winning margin underscores the cast class difference between the two track record holders.

Just Friends (11/2) finished third but was more than 12 lengths in arrears of Miagi at the finish.

Heat two proved to be more combative but class again prevailed.

Leading Australian Greyhound of the Year contender Miss Brook overcame difficulties to land the prize in 42.78.

She raced in fourth place to the middle stages after 7/1 chance Ready To Star and Technoman had made all the running.

Technoman (12/1) held sway to the home turn but, some 50m previously when looking to make her move, Miss Brook was checked off his heels and lost valuable momentum.

With 50m to run, however, Miss Brook re-emerged and finished with her usual gusto to score by 1 1/2 lengths from Technoman while the classy Victorian Sky Hazzard (7/2) made ground to finish third, three lengths from the winner.

Ready To Star was relegated to fourth but, at her 720m debut, performed very creditably.

Miss Fancy (9/4) was gazumped for favoritism in betting by Fancy Penny (7/4) but she was never a winning chance and could only finish a distant sixth.

Dour stayer Gold Slammer (6/1) produced a career best performance to take heat three in 43.16.

Race favourite Money Magnet (4/5) had the advantage of box 1 but raced many lengths her best and finished a poor fifth and failed to raise her supporter's hopes at any stage.

Tiny Goddess, at her first test at 720m, made all the running but Gold Slammer loomed large before the run home and sailed away to score by six lengths from the Brush Shiraz (7/1) which was doing her best work late.

The same can be said of minor placegetter Laloola (20/1) which collared Tiny Goddess (9/1) in the final bound to finalize the trifecta combination yet was just on eight lengths from the winner.

Of the minor placegetters, Laloola, with a calculated time of 43.71, missed a start in the final and will act as first reserve while Ready To Star, as the fastest fourth placegetter, will be the second reserve.

JEFF COLLERSON

Miagi Back Next Week

MIAGI (**Hallucinate x Deloris**) will make his eagerly awaited return to Wentworth Park in next Saturday night's Greyhound Leader Association Cup heats.

The dog broke down in a race in Melbourne on November 29 but trainer Warren Harper says he is ready to go again.

`` Miagi came back from Melbourne with problems with his pelvis, back and hock," Warren said on Sunday.

`` I trialled him over 600 metres at Gosford on Friday and he got under the 35.20sec mark," Warren said on Sunday.

`` Miagi got very tired and as the record is 34.61 I was happy with his run.

`` The dog will be under-done for the 720m Cup heats but we've got to start somewhere.

`` `` And he is such a great stayer that in the past he has been able to overcome a light preparation and still win."

Miagi set the WP 720m record of 42.03 on October 6.

JEFF COLLERSON

Bartrim Bale Unlikely For Derby

WHILE the experts were raving about Bartrim Bale's amazing win in last Wednesday night's Rooty Hill RSL Gold Plate final at Bulli, trained Brendan Wheeler was coping with a serious injury sustained by his dog during the race.

Bartrim Bale, early favourite for the Triple Crown Lodge National Derby heats at WP on January 26,

injured a sesamoid bone during the Bulli win.

The dog is expected to be out of action for a month so is almost certain to miss the Derby.

JEFF COLLERSON

Owen's "New" Over Flo On Target

FROM the moment Owen Langley began training his new acquisition Jim's Mate (**Hallucinate x Classic Deb**) he was confident the dog had the potential to be his ``new Over Flo."

Langley trained **Over Flo**, now at stud, to win the group two Bob Payne Winter and Peter Mosman Classic double at Wentworth Park where the dog broke 30sec four times and won 13 of his 26 starts. On New Year's Eve Jim's Mate, who Langley is setting for the Triple Crown Lodge National Derby heats at WP on January 26, made a stunning WP debut.

Having only his third start for Langley _ the first two resulted in sizzling wins at Bulli _ Jim's Mate led throughout to upset \$1.20 favorite Kumar Bale.

Jim's Mate covered the 520m in 30.31sec, remarkable time for a WP rookie on a track that was in poor condition and deemed between .20 and .30sec slow.

On Saturday night Jim's Mate proved that win no fluke when he led throughout to beat an even tougher field.

After the race owner Tim Robinson revealed Jim's Mate was produced by a half-sister to Over Flo.

``How ironic is that?" offered Tim.

``Jim's Mate is out of a bitch called Classic Deb and was bred by Joe Corte.

``I bought Jim's Mate as a nine month old puppy, along with two other youngsters, for \$2500 in a package deal from Joe in December, 2006.

``I trained Jim's Mate for a win at Canberra and a loss at Maitland before handing him over to Owen.

``Being a truck driver I don't really have sufficient time to devote to training greyhounds, especially one as good as Jim's Mate."

JEFF COLLERSON

Bartim Lands Bulli Gold Plate

BULLI 472m record holder Bartrim Bale has overcome a slow start from box six to secure tonight's Rooty Hill RSL Gold Plate at Bulli.

The son of **Hallucinate** was only fifth before the first turn and, despite bumping with rivals on his inside, set after the Spring Smile at the top of the straight and powered away to score by 2-1/2 lengths in a smart 26.38.

In what was a patchy start, Spring Smile flew out of box two and was untroubled to lead.

As conspicuous was the poor start of Tucklan Rebel (box four) Mountain Of Love's (eight) yet Bartrim Bale was only marginally better served.

After 100m, Spring Smile led from Mahogany Blade and My Awesome Boy while track specialist Awesome Hustler was making ground, along with Bartrim Bale.

At the home turn, Bartrim Bale worked to third (wide on the track) and favourite backers had every reason to get excited.

His winning margin was all the more impressive given he only headed Spring Smile in the final 50m.

Awesome Hustler battled away to finish third, a half length from the runner-up.

Bartrim Bale is unbeaten in four NSW starts (after falling in the SA Derby Final at Angle Park) and has not really been tested at the finish of his races since coming from Victoria.

Brendan Wheeler will now head Bartrim Bale towards the NCA National Derby at Wentworth Park and, on latest results, rival trainers will not be looking to clash with him until absolutely necessary ... in the Derby Final.

Ruby Red Cheeks A Big Improver

TRAINER Andrew Bayliss walked off Wentworth Park disappointed recently when his bitch Ruby Red Cheeks (**Hallucinate x Ruby Red Lips**) failed to break the 31sec mark in a 520m trial.

But that bafflement was erased on Saturday night when Ruby Red Cheeks led throughout to win at her WP race debut by nearly six lengths, clocking 30.76.

``When she trialled 31.05 I could not believe it, though I was told the track was slow," Andrew said on Saturday night.

``And although she had box three tonight she is much better suited when drawn wide."

Andrew, who has been training a small team ``on and off" at Braemar, near Mittagong, for 18 years, dreams of becoming a professional trainer.

``At present I'm working for the post office but would love to go full time with the greyhounds," he said.

Ruby Red Cheeks and her litter sister and kennelmate All Your Antics were purchased as pups from their breeders, Francis Dufty and Anne and Owen Makin.

JEFF COLLERSON

WENTY WINNER JUST LIKE HER MUM

GOOD Odds Judy (**Hallucinate x Rush Of Gold**), who "came out running" for an all-the-way win at Wentworth Park on Saturday night, is a real "chip off the old block."

Her dam Rush Of Gold was a brilliant front runner who starred at provincial tracks, winning the Dapto Oaks.

Rush Of Gold took time to produce her best form at Wentworth Park, with trainer Frank Hurst once joking: "Rush Of Gold hates tracks where you get \$3200 for a win."

Until Saturday night Frank and his wife Tracey were concerned Good Odds Judy might have inherited her mum's initial dislike of Wenty.

Good Odds Judy, who won the prestige non-TAB Lithgow Golden Muzzle on December 16, clocked 30.56 on a dead track on Saturday.

"That's a relief because while she has always run smart times on other tracks, when we first brought her to Wenty she only trialed 30.80," Frank said later.

"And what was more disturbing was she wasn't even running quick sectional times there."

That's all history now as Good Odds Judy recorded sizzling splits of 5.42 and 14.04 on Saturday.

Good Odds Judy will now tackle the heats of the Woy Woy Poultry Young Guns at The Gardens on January 9.

"All my girlfriends at work have been telling me they're off on holidays, on a cruise or an overseas trip," said Tracey on Saturday. "I tell them I'm going to Newcastle, to The Gardens to be precise," she quipped.

JEFF COLLERSON

You'll find him on one of those windy little roads out near Auckland's west coast beaches.

And Aussie-born Gerry Darcy reckons he wouldn't swap 112 Te Henga Rd for anywhere else in the world.

Here, on just a couple of hectares, amid a menagerie of sheep, pigs, goats and ducks, the man who turned greyhound racing on its head is in seventh heaven.

It's been a week since his unheralded dog Dream Trip scored the upset of the season, bashing the country's top trainers and their headline acts in the \$40,000 Waikato Classic at Cambridge.

But Darcy, 40, his wife Sandra and children Jessica, 10, Josh, 8, and Sasha, 6, haven't stopped playing the videotape of Rosie's big night.

The Darcys, you see, aren't used to winning big, winning much of anything come to that. They're more into lifestyle.

When Darcy and his wife chuck their two dogs in the back of the van, pick up the kids from the bus stop after school, and go for a run down to Bethells Beach, it's more about their own daily exercise.

While the kids play, Darcy attacks a huge 300m sand dune, a regime he took up when he gave up the booze a few years ago.

A couple of minutes later, after running through the soft sand, he's made it to the top.

But it's what happens next that has led to his newfound fame.

Waiting at the bottom is Sandra, looking for the signal which will tell her it's time to unleash the dogs.

And then the chase is on, as Darcy, at the top, frantically swings his homemade fluffy sheepskin lure.

It takes just 22 seconds for the greyhounds to reach him, where they snare the prize with gusto.

"I do that three times a week and the dogs absolutely love it," says Darcy who, on first seeing the place, recalled the scene in the Phar Lap movie where the champion worked up sand dunes. "And it's such a relaxed environment."

A minute later the dogs cool off, enjoying a splash and drink in a nearby freshwater stream.

"A couple of other trainers have seen what I do and they've been horrified. They tell me I've got to be kidding, and that it's too tough.

"It's a hard workout but there's no jarring and the sand looks after their feet. Racedays are like a walk in the park after what they do."

Darcy first tried the sand dune routine in the early 90s.

It was soon after he and his work mates gave up losing on Lotto tickets every week and decided to race a greyhound instead.

"I saw an advert in the newspaper and ended up talking to [respected trainer] Bob van Meeuwen about how to become an owner.

"He said why don't I give it a go training them myself. He basically said it's the dogs who win and anyone could get them fit if they knew what to do."

But Darcy started with only a small team of pluggers and the regime nearly killed him.

In the habit of lumping a battery and starter motor to the top of the dunes to run a traditional lure, he didn't need much excuse to stop when the two dogs he had simply couldn't cut it.

"One was a fighter and the other an out-and-out turtle. Even though it won a race it ran the slowest time ever recorded at Manukau [including hurdlers]."

Though he took a 10-year break from training, while busy with his young family, Darcy never lost faith in his regime.

He's since seen the Warriors and All Blacks training up the same slopes.

When he found he had plenty of time on his hands after giving up drinking three years ago, he got back into the game, wiser for all the mistakes he'd made first time around.

Sent a dog called Miss Macsteele by a friend, he scored a first-up win - "even though it took her 40 races to win her next one".

Further success with Take The Mickey (three wins) and Ash's Assassin (six wins), who had little form before being tried on the beach - and used to chase everything from their chooks to their cats but not the lure - and Darcy was convinced his system had merit.

But it was only when Christchurch owners Peter and Karen Hopping sent him Dream Trip - accompanied by the prediction that being out of the talented bitch Bankside Dream (13 wins) she had to be a big winner - that he hit the jackpot.

"She's special. She has a different persona to any other greyhound I've had.

"She's smart, forgets nothing, has a great attitude, and is perfectly suited to our lifestyle."

Darcy said he was in shock when Rosie won the Classic, her seventh win from only 14 starts.

He'd been stoked just to get her into the final but, as the slowest qualifier and youngest dog in the field - "she's not two until February" - he had no great expectations.

"Winning was the highlight of my life," Darcy says.

"My little daughter was crying, and Bob and Delys [van Meeuwen] were crying. I don't think there was one person on the course who didn't congratulate me.

"And when the other owners said they wanted me to have the trophy it was better than the prizemoney."

He didn't even care when Rosie's dress rug kept slipping off after the ceremony - as a greenhorn to the top of the dais he had no experience in fitting them correctly.

"The biggest final I'd been in before was for \$5000.

"We even made sure we took lots of photos before the race - with me in a bow tie - because we figured we might never get another chance at a race like it.

"We live a simple, but fantastic, life - we shop at The Warehouse."

The \$21,900 entry in Rosie's log book, of which they get half, will certainly help keep the dogs on Vogels bread, more expensive than the loaves the family feeds on.

There's a new vacuum cleaner in the cupboard already and a family trip to Fiji in the planning.

"And we might get either a new dining room table or punch a hole in the wall to the kitchen," Darcy says.

But top of the list is a new van, which will make the 12-hour hauls to Cambridge more affordable and more comfortable for the dogs who share the family people mover at the moment.

Darcy said when his only other greyhound Bethells Babe won her first race at Manukau only two days after his Cambridge triumph, he was on the highest high you could imagine.

"One of my friends said to me: 'Now you're just being greedy'."

Darcy admits there have been times when battling the rain, hail or wind on a boisterous morning on the sand dunes he's thought: 'This is madness'.

"But this game's a rollercoaster ride isn't it?"

Dream Trip's next assignment is the Futurity at Addington in February.

For Darcy, it's back to the real world tomorrow, where, as a three-day-a-week offset print finisher he could even find a story about himself in one of the magazines to which he puts the finishing touches.

Waikato Classic...When Dream Came True

When Trainer Gerry Darcy began his trek to Cambridge last Friday with pride and joy DREAM TRIP his only runner...I imagine his thoughts of returning home with a winner on board were just dreams!!

His dog had only qualified by finishing third in the decidedly slowest heat, and holding a C3 Grading, was up against C5 Runners from the Heavyweight Kennels of Fahey/Adcock/Walsh/Cleeve.

Ranked seventh favourite by Tab Bookies and Punters alike...Dream Trip found the early lead from Trap 8, and never relinquished her advantage, comfortably holding the trailing favourite Aussie Opawa and all others in her wake.

Dream Trip is by **Hallucinate**, who's progeny are making a real impact on NZ Tracks, out of Bankside Dream, a quality racebitch. She had a career cut short by injury, but amassed 13 wins/5 places from only 20 starts...including victory in the 2004 Canterbury Futurity.

Her wonderful consistency has been passed on, with Dream Trip's Record now 7 wins/5 places from 14 starts.

Gerry Darcy has been a regular sight on Manukau/Cambridge Tracks these past two seasons with his small team of Ash's Assassin(6wins)-Miss Macsteele(5wins)-Take The Mickey(3wins)...yet this latest victory has all but exceeded prizemonies earned during that time.

I observed that before the dogs had reached the lure...the first person to rush across and congratulate Gerry was Dave Fahey...who had just watched his hot favourite play second fiddle/plus another runner fall with injury unknown!

Great to see such sportsmanship, and I think everyone who offered congrats were genuinely happy to see such a Nice Guy reap such a successful reward.

Super well done Gerry/Connections and Dream Trip.

Thrilled for you, Pilli.

SAM BEAU HITS BACK

3 Jan, 2008.

HE'S been a superstar in waiting almost all his life.

That's Sam Beau Stanley (**Hallucinate-Dooley's Mist**) who led virtually throughout to win a 520m 5th Grade at Albion Park on Thursday night.

But unfortunately for owner Lynne Ivanovic and trainer Shayne Parker, Sam Beau Stanley has also run into more than his fair share of bad luck, niggling injuries and a habit of missing the start ever so slightly has not helped.

Sam Beau Stanley scored by a half length over Ziptye with one and three-quarter lengths to Heza Menagerie in third.

The winner ran 31.19 on the wet track for his sixth win in 21 placings.

"He's always been a high class dog and looked spectacular as a baby," said Parker.

"But things have conspired against him since then."

Sam Beau Stanley will stick to racing at Albion Park now he has regained full fitness and his best form.

"He's back in on Monday night in heats of a fifth grade and the heats are tougher than tonight's race," said Parker.

Sam Beau Stanley is the only dog in training in the Parker kennel.

He and wife Melanie have been busy with their rearing complex at Coominya which is full with 100 pups.

"But this dog is so good, I have kept my hand in training him," said Shayne.

"His biggest problem these days is that he is a bit of a slow beginner. But he is maturing this time in work and that's helped."

A SHOCK FOR TRAVIS

3 Jan, 2008.

WHEN Tejay's Assassin dashed to the front turning for home and went on to win a 520m 5th Grade at Albion Park on Thursday night, the most surprised person on course was his owner-trainer Travis Elson.

Elson has been tearing his hair out trying to fathom what has been wrong in recent weeks with his dog, the son of **Royal Assassin-Capishe's Figlia**.

Tejay's Assassin scored by a length over fast finishing Intrepid Force with a length and a half to early leader Archie Kane in third in 31.03.

It was a complete turnaround in form for the winner who only last Monday night had been a disappointing sixth in a 600m 5th Grade behind Fantastique.

"He had to run a place tonight or I would have pulled him up immediately and tried to find the

problem," said Travis.

"I have been at wits end trying to find out the reason for his ordinary form."

Tejay's Assassin has won at Albion Park in a flying 30.19 in September last year.

Elson said the dog had been up in weight in recent weeks and he had dropped him from 33.9 to 33.2kgs for Thursday night's race.

The dog pulled up with badly stripped hind pads and Elson said he would not nominate Tejay's Assassin until he had him checked over and he was certain he was right again.

"He has always been great in the wet and maybe it was that which got him home tonight," said Elson.

"I knew when he began well and settled into second early that he would run Archie Kane down. Archie was never going to run out a strong 520m in the wet."

Tejay's Assassin has now won 14 races for Elson and eight of those have been at Albion Park.

"After Monday night's run, I was checking him over myself and manipulated his front legs," said Elson.

"His near side shoulder cracked back into place.

"Maybe that's been behind his improved run as well

BATTLE FOR TITLE

27 Dec, 2007.

MONDAY night's Albion Park race meeting will decide the Brisbane Club's points champion for 2007.

Technoman leads by just two points on 172 after Thursday night's meeting, over both Witheren's Girl (**Placard x Berrella Shantal**) and Angel Flight on 170.

Angel Flight tossed her hat into the ring with an all-the-way victory in Thursday night's Best 8 (520m) beating Witheren's Girl by a length and a quarter in 30.05.

Technoman and Gozo Tess dead heated for third three and a quarter lengths away.

The trio now head to Albion Park on Monday night where Technoman and Angel Flight clash in another top grade race, while Witheren's Girl steps up to 600m racing for the first time.

A win on a Monday night is worth six points for the award.

Angel Flight took her record to 30 wins in 93 race starts with her victory on Thursday night.

She has now won 20 races at Albion Park for owner Maureen Allison and trainer Tom Noble.

HIGHLAND HI LOST

26 Dec, 2007.

TOP class Albion Park galloper Highland Hi has had to be put down.

Bob Thompson was devastated that his son of **Hallucinate-My Girl Zani** had broken a hock at Albion Park last week.

He had won 12 races and Thompson says he is easily the best dog he has bred.

"It could not be repaired and unfortunately we had to put him down," said Bob.

Highland Hi had made a number of top grade finals including the Qld Derby.

"The litter has been a great one with four of them winning over 600m another running a track record at Casino and one running a class record in WA," said Bob.

Thompson is in a dilemma with six broodbitches and a big number of young pups on his Lismore property at the moment.

"I've got two bitches in pup now, another just come on season and I'll need to cut down soon," he said.

He is even considering selling his grand race performer Primrose Bride (by Awesome Assassin) who has been a proven broodbitch from her three litters to race.