

# ***History of the Australian Greyhound Racing Association***

The Australian Greyhound Racing Association was formed in 1965, Sandown Greyhound Racing Club's Chairman the late Henry Harrison had taken the reins at that Melbourne Club in 1964 and made overtures to the national governing body the ANZGA for club membership.

The ANZGA had been the only national body since the introduction of greyhound racing and consisted of membership of the governing bodies of each state and territory. Their primary purpose was the racing registration of each greyhound whelped and keeper of the national Stud Book.

Also, the ANZGA oversaw the national rules, although each state raced under their own set. The ANZGA were certainly not interested in having the member clubs from the states at their table and rejected any such proposal. They had deep roots to coursing dating back to before the turn of the century. They saw no advantage whatsoever in racing clubs being part of their body.



Henry Harrison was not a man to take no for an answer and in a style, most become use to he went about forming his own national organisation. Together with his Sandown Secretary the legendry Jack McKenna they formed an alliance with their powerful Sydney city clubs the NCA and the GBOTA. With follow iconic administrators Neville Bailey, Jack Bell and Jack Fell from the NCA they drove the formation forward in New South Wales and they formed their own national body known at the time initially as the Commonwealth Greyhound Association from 1965 until 1983.

Initially, the Association has a pre-dominant Eastern States focus but gradually moved toward a true national focus, changing its name to the Australian Greyhound Racing Association in 1983.

The Association played a significant role in the progression of rules, sponsorship and the early co-ordination of Pay TV Rights negotiation.

The administration of the Commonwealth Greyhound Association which became the Australian Greyhound Racing Association has taken many changes over the years from 1965 until 1990 it was an elected committee with the senior positions rotating. The Victorian – New South Wales early power base was very much to the fore, however this did change as time went on and the body became a true representation of the National organisations that provided the racing of Greyhounds.

A typical committee of 1971 consisted of Chairman Henry Harrison (Sandown), Vice President Neville Bailey (NSW NCA) Treasurer Norm Smith (NSW GBOTA), Secretary Ken Carr (MGRA Victoria) Committee members Keith Bravo (Sandown), Ray Foley (Launceston), Harold Matthews (MGRA Victoria) and Jack Moloney (NSW NCA).

To illustrate how the committee rotated and were elected in 1972 the CGA decided to increase their numbers. The Chairman was Neville Bailey, Vice President Harold Matthews, Treasurer Norm Smith, Secretary Gerry Candrick (NSW NCA). Committee members Keith Bravo, Ray Foley, Jack Moloney, Russell Westerweller (NSW GBOTA), Ted Byrnes (MGRA), Howard Ashton (Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club) and Bert Brayne (Gabba Greyhound Racing Club).

Apart from the above-mentioned administrators some of the well-known and highly regarded men of the early days that served the Association as Chairmen were Bill Baker (NSW GBOTA), Jack Houston (Gabba Greyhound Racing Club), Geoff Dawson (Sandown Greyhound Racing Club) Brian Johnson (Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club) Plus some to come. Secretaries included Jack McKenna (Sandown), Jack Fell (NSW NCA), Ted Thompson (NSW GBOTA), John Hicks (Gabba Greyhound Racing Club), Howard Ashton

(Adelaide Greyhound Racing Club), Ken Norquay (WAGC), John Stephens (Sandown Greyhound Racing Club), Ron Snell (Sandown Greyhound Racing Club).

Some long-standing committee members of the last 20 years include Marg Long, Matt Corby, Dennis Obrien, Rick Stanford, Denis Fysh, Luke Gatehouse, David Simonette, Alan Henderson, Donna Summers, Adam Dobin, Neil Brown, Brenton Scott.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>CEO</b>
1965	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Jack McKenna
1966	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Jack McKenna
1967	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Jack Fell
1968	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Jack Fell
1969	Harold Matthews (MGRA)	Ken Carr
1970	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Ken Carr
1971	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Ken Carr
1972	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Gerry Candrick
1973	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Gerry Candrick
1974	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Ken Carr
1975	Harold Matthews (MGRA)	Ken Carr
1976	Harold Matthews (MGRA)	Ken Carr
1977	Rus Westerweller (GBOTA)	Ted Thompson
1978	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Ron Snell
1979	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Ron Snell
1980	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Ron Snell
1981	Jack Houston (GGRC)	John Hicks
1982	Jack Houston (GGRC)	John Hicks
1983	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Ken Norquay
1984	Neville Bailey (NCA)	Matt Ridley
1985	Brian Johnson (AGRC)	Howard Aston
1986	Brian Johnson (AGRC)	Howard Aston
1987	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Marg Scarlett
1988	Henry Harrison (SGRC)	Marg Scarlett
1989	Jim Neary (BGRC)	Mick Cox
1990	Jim Neary (BGRC)	Mick Cox
1991	Fred Abel (MGRA)	Hector Caruana
1992	Fred Abel (MGRA)	Hector Caruana – Peter Craig
1993	Bill Baker (GBOTA)	Brian Rowe
1994	Bill Baker (GBOTA)	Brian Rowe
1995	Geoff Dawson (SGRC)	John Stephens
1996	Geoff Dawson (SGRC)	John Stephens
1997	Michael Byrne (BGRC)	Bob Lambert
1998	Michael Byrne (BGRC)	Bob Lambert
1999	Mike Ahearn (NCA)	Ken Norquay
2000	Ted Karasek (WAGA)	Ken Norquay
2001	Mike Ahern (NCA)	Ken Norquay
2002	Michael Byrne (BGRC)	Ken Norquay
2003	Robert Kennedy (GRSA)	Ken Norquay
2004	Fred Maller (WAGA)	John McCabe
2005	Richard Zammitt (NCA)	Donna Summers

2006	Pam Cassidy (LGRC)	Donna Summers
2007	Geoff Dawson (SGRC)	Donna Summers
2008	Bill Mangafas (GBOTA)	Brenton Scott - Murray Nicol
2009	Pat Tassell (WAGA)	Brenton Scott
2010	Roseanne Healy (GRSA)	Brenton Scott
2011	Michael Byrne (BGRC)	Howard Ashton
2012	Denise Fysh (HGRC)	Howard Ashton
2013	Eddie Caruana (MGRA)	Howard Ashton
2014	Roy Rowe (WA)	Howard Ashton
2015	Geoff Rose (GBOTA)	Howard Ashton
2016	Michael Fabio (GRSA)	Howard Ashton

In 2017, the Australian Greyhound Racing Association comprises in its membership each of the principal racing bodies in Australia as follows:

*Brisbane Greyhound Racing Club (Albion Park, Queensland).*

*Darwin Greyhound Association of the Northern Territory (Winnellie Park, Northern Territory).*

*Greyhound Racing SA (Angle Park, South Australia).*

*Greyhounds WA (Cannington, Western Australia).*

*Hobart Greyhound Racing Club (Hobart, Tasmania).*

*Launceston Greyhound Racing Club (Tasman Park, Tasmania).*

*Melbourne Greyhound Racing Association (The Meadows, Victoria).*

*NSW Greyhound Breeders, Owners & Trainers' Association (Wentworth Park, Sydney).*

*NSW National Coursing Association (Wentworth Park, Sydney).*

*Sandown Greyhound Racing Club (Sandown Park, Victoria).*

The Australian Greyhound Racing Association and Commonwealth Greyhound Association for over 50 years met for annual conferences in late August early September of each year and always tried to promote and improve greyhound racing on a national basis. Major undertakings in any given year include the co-ordination of the Group Racing Calendar from 1990 until 2017, the promotion of the Australian Greyhound of the Year from 2002 and the staging of the National Sprint and Distance Championships.

Prior to 1990, the AGRA coordinated feature race dates on an annual basis via a meeting of the Principal Clubs.

However, the planning process did not take into account major events at provincial and country circuits and, as a result, some unfortunate race clashes occurred. In addition, whilst planning was being applied to scheduling, the arising calendar was considered to lack a promotional angle...hence the decision to categorize the Nation's finest events into "Groups of excellence".

Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3 events were developed as from January 1990 and the concept gradually gained momentum the original planning was conducted by the AGRA secretary of the time John Stephens with assistance from his PA Lorraine Dagg, both later to become a Sandown Life Members. In 1995, AGRA appointed Brenton Scott as Group Racing Co-Ordinator and the promotion of the calendar was for the first time formalized.

Since 1995, AGRA has produced an Annual Calendar outlining all Group races it also produced regular editions of Group Racing News have highlighted all results. Special certificates were prepared for all winners and sent to owners this practice continued until 2017. In addition, all Group races were 'branded' by the use of unique logos.

## CGA AND AGRA HISTORICAL TIMELINE

**1965** - Commonwealth Greyhound Association formed. / First National Sprint Championship held in Sydney at Harold Park won by Best Sun.

**1969** - First National Distance Championship held in Sydney at Wentworth Park won by Amerigo Lady.

**1971** - First National final held in another State other than Victoria or New South Wales. The Distance Championship held at Hobart Tasmania.

**1973** - First National Distance held at the Gabba in Queensland.

**1974** - South Australia host the National Distance Championship final for the first time at Angle Park.

**1975** - Wimbledon Tennis Champion Yvonne Goolagong presents the National Championship Trophy.

**1977** - First National Sprint final held in another State other than Victoria or New South Wales. Staged at the Gabba in Queensland.

**1978** - South Australia host the National Sprint Championship final for the first time at Angle Park.

**1979** - West Australia host the National Sprint Championship final for the first time at Cannington. / National Television coverage on the Seven Network. Neville Bailey honoured with MBE.

**1981** - Launceston Host the National Distance Championship for the first time at White City.

**1981** - Darwin Greyhound Association application accepted as member CGA

**1981** - The CGA launch an Australian wide campaign to induce new people to Greyhound Racing at Ownership level. The campaign included the distribution of a quarter of a million colour brochures.

**1983** - Commonwealth Greyhound Association changes its name to the Australian Greyhound Racing Association. / National Television coverage on the ABC of the National Distance Championship.

**1983** - First Northern Territory Greyhound finalist in the National Sprint Harold Park - Defiant Lee finished fourth she was formerly trained in New South Wales by Track design guru Brian Barrington. She was also the first dog to make consecutive finals making the final again in 84 also at Harold Park.

**1984** - West Australia host the National Distance Championship final for the first time at Cannington.

**1987** - Hobart host the National Sprint Championship for the first time at the Showgrounds.

**1986** - WGRF Conference held conjunction with the National Championships in Adelaide September 21-27. Trophies presented by Prime Minister Bob Hawke and his wife Hazel.

**1987** - First and only New Zealand greyhound that contested a National Final, Our Little One a 23 kilo Brindle bitch finished seventh behind Mystic Hope in the Distance final held at Olympic Park.

**1988** - New constitution of AGRA adopted March 1988

**1989** - AGRA in a bold call propose to major National Championship Sponsor Arnott - Harper an increase of at least \$25,000. They were contributing \$50,000 at the time they agreed but only for another two years.

**1990-1991** - Prizemoney for the Championships at an all-time high the Sprint final was worth \$85,000 to the winner and in a massive increase the Distance final \$50,000 to the winner. Both races the richest in the Nation at the time.

**1990** - AGRA resolved to withdraw membership from the WGRF of which they had held membership since the late 60's.

**1990-1995** - Formulation of Group racing structure ground work done at the Sandown Club office.

**1992** - Arnott - Harper after 13 years as the name Sponsor of the National Championships sever ties with AGRA.

**1994** - National Championships held at the same time of the year. Distance went from March to August - September joining the Sprint and hosted by the same Club and State.

**1995** - Appointment of Brenton Scott as the Group Race Co-Ordinator. Calendar produced for the first time. Scott performs the role with unbroken service from 1995 until 2017.

**1995** - First Group Racing Calendar Booklet published. Still produced in similar form in 2017.

**1995** - New constitution of AGRA adopted first update since March 1988.

**1998** - Hall of Fame was introduced to further promote the importance of Group Racing and to enhance its reputation as the benchmark of excellence. Tenthill Doll and Flying Amy were the first Inductees.

**2000** - Launceston host the National Sprint for the first time and last time at White City. / AGRA agree to inducting Champions of the past as honorary inductees into the AGRA Hall of Fame. Immortals Chief Havoc, Zoom Top and Highly Blessed were the first honorary inductees.

**2001** - National Sprint held for the first time at the MGRA new home the Meadows.

**2002** - AGRA introduces the Australian Greyhound of the Year award. / The Northern Territory cease to provide a finalist for National Championships. Victoria and New South Wales alternate to provide an extra finalist to fill the gap left by NT.

**2004** - The AGRA website was introduced it lifted the Associations profile and contributes to the progression of Group Racing.

**2005** - AGRA appointed Neil Brown as its Publicity Officer. He stayed in the role with unbroken service 2005 until 2017. / Rankings of greyhounds, Sires and Dams reintroduced.

**2006** - AGRA introduce the other awards to be presented in conjunction with the Greyhound of the Year. The Trainer of the Year, Sire and Brood Bitch of the Year and the Run of the Year.

**2007** - National Championship held in conjunction with the World Greyhound Federation conference in Melbourne.

**2007** - At the 2007 Annual General Meeting of the Australian Greyhound Racing Association it was agreed that the 2007 Greyhound Of The Year award would also include a presentation of a Trainer Hall of Fame inductee and various other levels of induction could also be added to the Hall of Fame. The criteria for these awards was further refined and endorsed at the August 2008 AGM. They include Male Greyhound based on Breeding Performance, Female Greyhound based on Breeding Performance, Breeders, Administrators, and Associates.

**2008** - Wildcard concept wins the vote at the AGM; the result came as a shock. It is in later years well received as a worthy and fair entry to the spare position in the finals.

**2009** - Jarvis Bale wins the National Distance Championship via the Wildcard.

**2010** - AGRA Website in updated for the first time since 2004. The fresh look and extra features is well received.

**2012** - Hobart Greyhound Racing Club host the National Sprint Championships for the first time since 1987 and Distance Championship 1983.

**2015** - Sweet It Is becomes the first Championship winner to be stripped of the title after swabbing positive in the State final at the Meadows. Lady Toy elevated to winner she had finished second in both events to Sweet It Is.

**2016** - AGRA Website is updated and added with new features including access to the Ranker Website as its partner for the first time.



**2016** – All AGRA member clubs support GBOTA New South Wales in overturning a State Government decision to ban Greyhound Racing

### **AGRA Greyhound of the Year**

In 2002, AGRA introduced the Australian Greyhound of the Year Award. Greyhounds qualifying for consideration largely based on Group Race performances.

The inaugural Australian Greyhound of the Year was Boomeroo. His success was followed by Bombastic Shiraz 2003, Whisky Assassin 2004, Pure Octane 2005, Betty's Angel 2006, Flashing Floods 2007, El Galo in 2008, Cindeen Shelby 2009, El Grand Senor 2010, Dyna Tron 2011, Miata 2012, Miata 2012-2013, Xylia Allen 2013-2014, Fernando Bale 2014-2015, Dyna Double One 2015-2016.

**Details of the past winners of the AGRA Greyhound of the Year are listed below.**

**2002** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Boomeroo**, (World Title x Pali Gap), Whelped October 1999  
Owner-Trainer: Michael Edwards. Group wins: National Distance Championship (1), McKenna Memorial (2), Dandenong Dry Cleaners (2), Gold Collar (2).

**2003** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Bombastic Shiraz**, (Black Shiraz x Bombastic Blonde), Whelped April 2000, Owner-Trainer: Darren Cairns. Group wins: Australian Cup (1), Melbourne Cup (1), TOPGUN (1).

**2004** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Whisky Assassin**, (Awesome Assassin x Princess Whisky), Whelped January 2002, Owner: Terrence Hines, Trainer: Jason Thompson. Group Race wins: Topgun (1), Geelong Cup (2), Shepparton Cup (2), Ballarat Cup (2), Shoutout (3).

**2005** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Pure Octane**, (Token Prince x Elusive Rebel), Whelped January 2003, Owners: Dare To Dream Syndicate, Trainer: Darren McDonald. Group Race wins: 2005 National Sprint Championship (1), Paws of Thunder (1), Australian Cup (1).

**2006** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Betty's Angel**, (Brett Lee-Leprechaun Yap), Whelped November 2004, Race starts: 17 - 12 wins, 1 second, 1 third. Owner: Diane Bartolo, Trainer: Paul Bartolo, Group Race wins: Group 1 Melbourne Cup; Group 1 Sapphire Crown Classic, Finalist: Group 2 South Australian Oaks (7th), Prizemoney 2006: \$250,050.

**2007** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Flashing Floods**, (Bombastic Shiraz x Floodfawn), Whelped April 2004, Race starts: 36 - 21 wins, 7 seconds, 3 thirds. Owner-Trainer: Gerry Cunnold. Group Race wins: Group 1 - Gleeson & Tonta, National Distance Championship, Perth Galaxy. Group 3 - New Year's Cup, Easter Chase, Chairman's Cup. Total Career Prizemoney: \$354,190

**2008** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **El Galo**, (Where's Pedro x Roxy Reason), Whelped November 2005. Race Starts: 34 - 23 wins, 6 seconds, 2 thirds. Owner: Seona Hood, Trainer: Jason Thompson. Group Race Wins: Group 1: Brisbane Cup. Group 2: Bendigo Cup, Warnambool Cup, Gold Coast Cup. Group 3: Bulli Cup. Total Career Prizemoney (at time of nomination) \$386,095.

**2009** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **Cindeen Shelby**, (Bombastic Shiraz x Proper Shelby), Whelped August 2006. Race Starts (at the time of nomination): 46 - 27 wins - 8 seconds, 2 thirds. Owner: Ray Parkinson, Trainer: Kel Greenough. Group Race Wins: Group 1: Paws of Thunder, Crown Classic, Top Gun. Group 2: Black Top. Total Career Prizemoney (at the time of nomination) \$383,250.

**2010** Australian Greyhound of the Year - **El Grand Senor**, April 2008 Black Dog Where's Pedro- Elgrando Gold), Race starts: 31 - 24 wins, 3 seconds, 1 third. Owner-Trainer-Breeder: Carolyn Jones (Sale, Victoria). Winner: Group 1 Maturity Classic; Group 1 Topgun; Group 1 Melbourne Cup; Finalist: Group 2 Ballarat Cup (3rd). Total Career Prizemoney: \$581,335.

**2011** Australian Greyhound Of the Year - **Dyna Tron**, February 2009 Red Brindle Dog Collision - Gold Rush Bale), Race starts 2011: 46 - 25 wins, 5 seconds, 4 thirds. Owner: Brendan Wheeler (Boorowa, New South

Wales),Trainer: Andrea Dailly (Anakie, Victoria). Winner: Group 1 Melbourne Cup; Group 1 Hobart 1000; Group 2 Geelong Cup. Finalist: Group 1 Brisbane Cup (2nd); Group 2 Warrnambool Cup (8th); Group 2 WA Derby (5th). Total Career Prizemoney: \$519,753.

**2012 Australian Greyhound Of the Year - Miata**, October 2009 Red Fawn Bitch Bombastic Shiraz - Winsome Bluebird, Race starts 2012: 26 - 22 wins, 1 second, 1 third. Owner: Paul Stuart & Nicole Wheeler-Whye. Trainer: Paul Stuart (Oakford, Western Australia) Winner: Group 1 Galaxy; Group 1 Association Cup; Group 1 National Distance Championship; Group 1 Bold Trease; Group 2 Zoom Top. Finalist: Group 1 Sandown Cup (3rd); Group 1 Albion Park Gold Cup (5th).T2012-2013 Australian Greyhound Of the Year

**2012-2013 Australian Greyhound Of the Year - Miata** October 2009 Red Fawn Bitch Bombastic Shiraz - Winsome Bluebird. Race starts 2012-2013: 22 - 18 wins, 1 second, 2 third. Owner: Paul Stuart & Nicole Wheeler-Whye. Trainer: Paul Stuart (Oakford, Western Australia) Winner: Group 1 Galaxy; Group 1 Bold Trease; Group 1 National Distance Championship; Group 3 Topcat Video Cup. Finalist: Group 1 Sandown Cup (3rd); Group 1 Zoom Top Classic (3rd).Total Career Prizemoney: \$715,508.

**2013-2014 Australian Greyhound Of the Year - Xylia Allen**, (April 2011 Black Bitch (Turanza Bale - Tayah Bale), Race starts: 2013-2014: 37 - 18 wins, 3 seconds, 8 thirds. Owner: Paul Wheeler. Trainer: Jenny Hunt (Lara, Victoria) Winner: Group 1 National Sprint Championship; Group 1 Albion Park Gold Cup. Finalist: Group 1 Winter Cup (3rd); Group 1 Top Gun (3rd); Group 1 Brisbane Cup(4th); Group 1 Rookie Rebel (5th); Group 2 Bob Payne (2nd); Group 2 Geelong Cup (4th); Group 3 SA Oaks (3rd).Total Career Prizemoney: \$701,375.

**2015-2016 Australian Greyhound Of the Year - Fernando Bale**, (March 2013 White & Brindle (Kelsos Fusileer - Chloe Bale). Race starts: 2013-2014: 26 - 21 wins, 1 seconds, 1 thirds. Owner: Paul, Jan and Brendan Wheeler. Trainer: Andrea Dailly (Anakie, Victoria). Winner: Group 1 National Derby; Group 1 Harrison-Dawson, Group 1 Peter Mosman Classic, Group 1 Easter Egg, and Group 3 Bill Collins Memorial. Total Career Prizemoney: \$1,288,110.

**2015-2016 Australian Greyhound Of the Year - Dyna Double One**, (March 2013 Black Dog (Barcia Bale - Crystin Bale). Race starts: 2015-2016: 30 - 18 wins, 4 seconds, 3 thirds. Owner: Brendan Wheeler. Trainer: Andrea Dailly (Anakie, Victoria) Winner: Group 1 Melbourne Cup; Group 1 Brisbane Cup, Group 1 Australian Cup, Group 1 Rookie Rebel. Finalist: Group 1 Maturity Classic (2nd), Group 1 Top Gun (3rd), Group 1 Winter Cup (2nd), Group 1 Hobart 1000 (6th). Total Career Prizemoney: \$1,160,316.

### **Trainer-Stud Dog-Brood Bitch and Run of the Year Awards**

Other Awards presented in conjunction with the Greyhound of the Year are the Sire of the Year, Brood Bitch of the Year and Trainer of the year. Listed are the winners.

**BROOD BITCH YEAR:** 2006 Sheza Swifty, 2007 Flood Fawn, 2008 Chinatown Babe, 2009 Thai Again, 2010 Rosemary Bale, 2011 Abbadale Gold, 2012 Winsome Bluebird, 2013 It's A She, 2014 Tahah Bale, 2015 Maple Bale and 2016 Chloe Bale.

**STUD DOG OF THE YEAR:** 2006 Brett Lee, 2007 Token Prince & Brett Lee (Joint Winners) 2008 Bombastic Shiraz and Token Prince (Joint Winners), 2009 Bombastic Shiraz, 2010 Surf Lorian, 2011 Collision, 2012 Bombastic Shiraz, 2013 Bombastic Shiraz, 2014 Where's Pedro, 2015 Bekim Bale and 2016 Kinloch Brae.

**RUN OF THE YEAR:** 2006 Elektra, 2007 Miss Grub, 2008 Chinatown Lad, 2009 Turanza Bale, 2010 Satanic Cash, 2011 He Knows Uno, 2012 Bizarre Barbie, 2013 Xylia Allen, 2014 Sweet It Is, 2015 Fernando Bale and 2016 Bourbski Fever.

**TRAINER OF THE YEAR:** 2006 Darren Murray, 2007 Jason Thompson, 2008 Reg Kay, 2009 Graeme Bate, 2010 Darren McDonald, 2011 Graeme Bate, 2012 Jason Thompson, 2013 Graeme Bate, 2014 Darren McDonald, 2015 Andrea Dailly and 2016 Anthony Azzopardi.

## RANKINGS

The ranking of Greyhounds was first used by CEO Ken Norquay in 2000 for a couple of years. It wasn't revived until 2005 when Neil Brown reintroduced them. A points system was determined by Group racing, higher and lower depending on the Group race status. Points were allocated first to last for each Group race and published at the end of each month. Brown together with Sandown CEO at the time Matt Corby worked on the numbers until they were satisfied they were right and the system has stood the test of time. Scott Brown a high school student in Year 8 developed the software packaged that automatically placed the dogs in order.

Also, there was a list of the top sire and dam with the end of year score determined the award winners in that category for the year. Scott Brown continued to enhance what he called the Ranker through his University studies and on to his work life in the Melbourne IT industry where he is today a Senior developer. The Ranker is currently at number 6.2 and has been turned into a Website of which the Public can use.

It's most important function is determining the Wild Card entry for both finals of the Championships. During his University days Brown worked for the Sandown club as a race night contributor and was the Starting Steward for the infamous Sandown Cup no race.

## AGRA National Championships

When first run in 1965 only the Sprint Championship existed and only between Victoria and New South Wales the finalists in those days were determined by a points system however this was short lived and finalists qualified in their home states by way of heats and a state final.

The Australian Greyhound Racing Association have conducted the National Sprint and Distance Championships annually since 1965. The events are now marketed as "The Nationals" and feature finals over the distances in the vicinity of 500m and 700m. Heats and Finals are staged in each State with the Grand Final rotating from State to State each year.

Both the National Sprint Championship and the National Distance Championship carry a current first prize of \$75,000 and both events are classified as Group 1 events. Prizemoney has gone up and down over the years at one period when sponsored by pet food company Arnott Harper the events were the richest on the racing calendar. Since their inception in 1965 the championships have always been held in high regard being a unique event where dogs represent their state the title has always been highly sought after with state parochialism very much to the fore. Regardless of prizemoney levels "The Nationals" will remain a race most owners and trainers aspire to win.

Listed on the below table is the Prizemoney List for both events.

YEAR	SPRINT WINNER'S PRIZEMONEY	SPONSOR	DISTANCE WINNER'S PRIZEMONEY	SPONSOR	MAJOR RACE PRIZEMONEY
1965	2000 Pounds	CGA	NOT RUN	CGA	Aust Cup 2000 Pounds
1966	\$4,000	CGA	NOT RUN	CGA	National Derby \$4000
1967	\$4,000	CGA	NOT RUN	CGA	National Derby \$4000
1968	\$4,000	CGA	NOT RUN	CGA	National Derby \$5000
1969	\$6,000	CGA	\$3,000	CGA	Australian Cup \$6,250
1970	\$4,000	CGA	\$3,000	CGA	Australian Cup \$10,000
1971	\$6,000	CGA	\$3,000	CGA	Australian Cup \$12,500
1972	\$6,000	CGA	\$4,000	CGA	Australian Cup \$12,500
1973	\$8,000	CGA	\$4,400	CGA	Australian Cup \$12,500
1974	\$7,500	CGA	\$4,400	CGA	Australian Cup \$20,000
1975	\$8,000	CGA	\$4,400	CGA	Australian Cup \$25,000
1976	\$10,000	CGA	\$6,500	CGA	Australian Cup \$25,000
1977	\$20,000	CGA	\$15,000	CGA	Australian Cup \$25,000

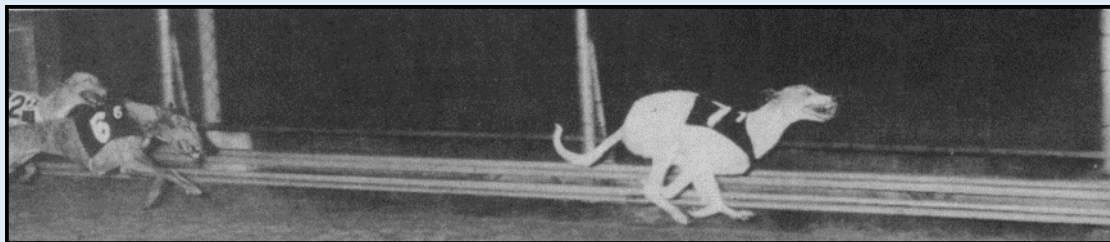


1978	\$20,000	CGA	\$15,000	CGA	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1979	\$20,000	Arnott-Harper	\$20,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1980	\$20,000	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1981	\$24,000	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1982	\$24,000	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1983	\$24,000	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1984	\$27,000	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1985	\$27,500	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1986	\$27,500	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1987	\$27,500	Arnott-Harper	\$15,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1988	\$35,000	Arnott-Harper	\$25,000	Arnott-Harper	Melbourne Cup \$35,000
1989	\$27,500	Arnott-Harper	\$27,500	Arnott-Harper	Australian Cup \$50,000
1990	\$85,000	Arnott-Harper	\$50,000	Arnott-Harper	Easter Egg \$80,000
1991	\$85,000	Arnott-Harper	\$50,000	Arnott-Harper	Easter Egg \$80,000
1992	\$35,000	AGRA	\$20,000	AGRA	Easter Egg \$80,000
1993	\$35,000	AGRA	\$20,000	AGRA	Easter Egg \$80,000
1994	\$35,000	AWA	\$20,000	AGRA	Easter Egg \$100,000
1995	\$35,000	AGRA	\$20,000	AGRA	Melbourne Cup \$80,000
1996	\$40,000	AGRA	\$20,000	AGRA	Easter Egg \$100,000
1997	\$40,000	Nutripet	\$20,000	Nutripet-Eukanuba	Easter Egg \$120,000
1998	\$40,000	Nutripet	\$20,000	Nutripet-Eukanuba	Melbourne Cup \$100,000
1999	\$40,000	Nutripet	\$20,000	Nutripet-Eukanuba	Australian Cup \$100,000
2000	\$40,000	Nutrice	\$20,000	Nutrice	Australian Cup \$100,001
2001	\$40,000	Sky Channel	\$40,000	Sky Channel	Top Gun \$105,000
2002	\$40,000	AGRA	\$40,000	AGRA	Melbourne Cup \$140,000
2003	\$40,000	AGRA	\$40,000	AGRA	Melbourne Cup \$150,000
2004	\$40,000	Choice One	\$40,000	Choice One	Melbourne Cup \$140,001
2005	\$50,000	Firefly Boy	\$50,000	Firefly Boy	Easter Egg \$130,000
2006	\$50,000	Country Club	\$50,000	Country Club	Melbourne Cup \$150,000
2007	\$50,000	Rapidvite	\$50,000	Rapidvite	Melbourne Cup \$150,000
2008	\$50,000	Rapidvite	\$50,000	Rapidvite	Melbourne Cup \$175,000
2009	\$50,000	Schweppes	\$50,000	Schweppes	Melbourne Cup \$175,000
2010	\$50,000	Tattsbet	\$50,000	Tattsbet	Easter Egg \$250,000
2011	\$75,000	Macro Meats	\$75,000	Macro Meats	Easter Egg \$250,000
2012	\$75,000	AGRA	\$75,000	AGRA	Melbourne Cup \$350,000
2013	\$75,000	AGRA	\$75,000	AGRA	Melbourne Cup \$350,000
2014	\$75,000	TabTouch	\$75,000	TabTouch	Melbourne Cup \$420,000
2015	\$75,000	Ladbroke's	\$75,000	Ladbroke's	Melbourne Cup \$420,000
2016	\$75,000	Ubet	\$75,000	Ubet	Melbourne Cup \$420,000
2017	\$75,000	Ubet	\$75,000	Ubet	Melbourne Cup \$420,000

### **"A HISTORY ALL OF ITS OWN"**

Certainly, one of the most exciting times of the year for Greyhound Racing in Australia is in August-September. It's Nationals time and for many different reasons they represent a very unique series of racing. It not only brings together several class performers over both the Sprint and Distance courses in the National Finals. It is also a time when many yearly friendships are re-kindled as the greyhound fraternity from each state assembly for almost a week of conferences', socialising and of course outstanding greyhound racing.

The National Championships have been conducted in many forms with the National Sprint first being staged at Harold Park in 1965 when won by Best Sun for New South Wales. They alternated around the four city tracks in Melbourne and Sydney until 1977 when the sprint final was staged for the first time in another state at the Gabba in Queensland.



**Best Sun**

The Distance Championship for some reason followed a different path and it was first run in 1969 when won by Victorian Amerigo Lady at Wentworth Park, the race then went to Sandown the following year. Then in 1971 was staged in Hobart and alternated around the states from that time on.

The two championships were staged differently and at different times of the year until costs probably governed the change in 1994 and we saw both championships run concurrently in the same state decided on two nights of racing. Since the establishment of the Australian Greyhound Racing Association in 1983, formerly the Commonwealth Greyhound Association, the national body made up of member clubs from each state now oversee the Championships, Group racing and a number of national issues including the Australian Greyhound Racing Association Hall of Fame.

The championships in both Sprint and Distance has always been a most sought-after title and the nature of representing one's state is most important with followers very precocious about flying the flag for the part of Australia were they happening to live. In the Sprint, all states have produced a winner, while over the Distance only Tasmania is yet to strike a blow.

The states have had a few different ways of finding their representative over the years but over the last 25 years or so they have conducted heats then a state final to determine which dog will be their representative. In the sprint and distance, the home state has two finalists and the reserves, the Northern Territory had representatives for quite a long period of time but have not been represented since 2002.

From 2002 until 2009 due to the breeding numbers in Victoria and New South Wales they alternated each year, filling the spare spot in both finals. In 2008 a controversial vote was passed at the AGRA Annual meeting on a motion put forward by the Brisbane Greyhound Racing Club. It was passed that the spare position in both finals would be filled by the highest ranked sprinter and stayer in the AGRA Rankings as posted at the end of July and only if that top ranked greyhound competed in their state final and didn't win. Called the "Wildcard" it has proved a popular innovation to the series, the Rankings are determined by a points system awarded to finalists in each group race decided throughout the year. Rankings were introduced in the late 90's by the then AGRA CEO West Australian Ken Norquay, they disappeared and I reintroduced them in a different form in 2005 when I became the AGRA Publicity Officer. The very first year at Cannington in 2009 Jarvis Bale won the Distance Championship after gaining entry to the final via a Wildcard.

## **HE SIXTIES**

Going back to the inaugural National Sprint in 65 as mentioned above the winner Best Sun clocked 26.6/10ths for the 500 yards at Harold Park. He was owned and trained by Ed Batiste and he defeated Satyr Rocket and Chariot Charm with the other finalists Black Tess, He's Lighting, Billy Vee, Triple Speed and Lady Sonice. At Olympic Park in 66 Victorian Kinta's Son beat Sydney pair Trapper Joe and Mickey Joe in 30.9/16ths. The Bob Bowman trained sprinter had previously won the Melbourne Cup in 1965.

In 1967 for the first time at Wentworth Park the host state provided the winner by way of Meteor Paso (box one) and runner up in Swan Opal with Victorian Munich Boy third in 31.8/16ths for the 580 yards. Back in

Victoria in 1968 for the first time at Sandown Park brilliant Warrnambool sprinter Princess Kerry begun quickly from box eight and lead all the way to beat Victorian Palatinus and New South Wales' Second Stage in 31 2/16ths over the 555 yards.

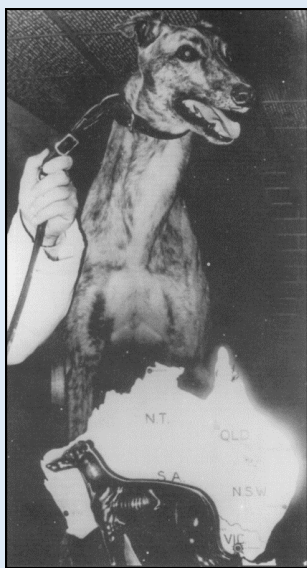
1969 saw the first staging of the Distance title at Wentworth Park it was won by very smart Victorian Amerigo Lady. Raced by industry icon the late Buck Buchanan and trained in New South Wales by Neville Ballinger she beat a crack field with Holding second and all-time distance superstar Zoom Top third in 43 7/10ths over the 790 yards.

The sprint was held at Harold Park over the 500 yards and was won by the home states Red Zero at 4/7 winning by eight lengths he beat Zoom Top's sister Busy's Charm and the brilliant Queenslander Pied Rebel third in 26 7/10ths.

## THE SEVENTIES

The Sprint Championship during the seventies produced some of the great winners commencing at Olympic Park in 1970 the Victorian Regal Hermes (box 4) won for master trainer Ned Bryant, he defeated Pied Rebel. At the same venue in 1974 a greyhound that was to become a phenomenon at stud the mighty Temlee won on his favourite track in 29.71 for the 511 metres. The previous year Melbourne Cup winner New Mariner journeyed to Harold Park and beat arch rival Half Your Luck in 26.28 for the 457m. New South Wales claimed back to back winners in 71 and 72, firstly King Miller won at Wentworth Park defeating Milo's Charm and Top Saba in 31 1/16ths. While Lord Galaxy repeated the dose at Sandown in 30 9/16ths when he beat Saucy Princess (Vic) and Sharp Tak (NSW).

The first Queenslander to win the title was in 1975 when Cooparoo Flyer (box five) won at Wentworth Park he was to finished third the following year at Sandown Park behind Clover Duke (NSW) who recorded 30.65 and beat the brilliant Odious.



Over the distance in 1970 legendary owner-trainer-breeder Rod Deakin's Sargood won the event at Sandown recording 44.00. The title went to Hobart in 71 and Victoria's Saki Dasher won over the 737 yards for former Australian Rules legend Bob Pratt. In 72 at Harold Park Bubbles Luck kept the Victorian bandwagon going when she saluted for astute Melbourne Bay side trainer Joe Hull. Off to the Gabba in Brisbane for the first time in 73 and the brilliant Victorian He's Some Boy won the title over the 704m in 43.09. The same venue staged the sprint title in 1977 and for the first time the event was run in another state other than Victoria or New South Wales. Victorian Bowetzel was too good for Camden Glider and Just Biddy recording 32.70. Angle Park in South Australia hosted the event in 78 and it was to be the first West Australian winner by way of Mr. Toewhyte the black and white sprinter recorded 30.69. While over the distance at Angle Park in 74 Victorian Corcoran became Rod Deakin's second winner clocking 44.56 over the 731m. Breaking the Vic's strangle hold in 75 at the Gabba was outstanding NSW stayer Dotie Wilson she beat Alan Wheeler's Tintawin from box one in 41.66. Victoria was back again at Angle Park in 76 when Billy Van Polen's Bolta's Gift was too smart for Swedish Mink in 44.66.

New South Wales scored back to back wins in 77 and 78 when Wooley Wong won at Harold Park Coven Vista was runner up and Mia Wella third in 43.58. Then Dusty Jenny won the championship in Hobart defeating Mandaquita and Butch Again in 43.30 a track record.

The 70's finished with the Sprint final at Cannington WA in 79 and super sprinter Acclaim Star won for Billy Fletcher, the black and white dog smashed the track record running 30.95. He won the Melbourne Cup the same year, while over the distance in 1979 at Olympic Park yet another Victorian got the money in Mary Marella. In an easy eight-length victory she was too classy for Queenslander Katie's Disco and W.A.'s Lively Red. Owned and trained by Terry McDonald and starting 5/1 she recorded a winning time of 44.09.

## THE EIGHTIES

The Sprint title in 1980 was held at Harold Park and it was won by a specialist on that circuit Fast Sapphire, he beat fellow New South Wales powerhouse General Jeff in a quick 26.72. At Olympic Park in 81 South Australia's Kate's A Scandal created an Australian record for consecutive wins, it was her 15 victory in a row. Using box one to full advantage she beat star all distance performer Picture This, raced by former North Melbourne Kangaroo's boss Greg Miller, now Sandown CEO.

Up at the Gabba in 82 and track specialist, the brilliant Madonna Lee brought up a home town win defeating Victorian's Tempix Image and Kid Campbell in 32.73.

Over the same years the Distance title was run at Sandown Park in 1980 and the in form All Promise won for Sandown club director Ray Bryon scoring in a slick 43.92. In 1981 the title was staged at Launceston for the first time and Shamrock Jewel purchased for \$3000 from a Sporting Globe add by John Stephens and Jeff Davies brought home a memorable victory for the boys when starting 2/1 favourite she beat Calruin in 44.87.

Finally after 13 years of domination between Victoria and New South Wales in 82 a winner came from another state. In her home town at Angle Park Bay Road Queen broke the sequence with a well-dissevered win by a neck in 44.03 for Merv Pedler she beat Rawpack and was later to become an outstanding brood bitch.

But back in Hobart in 1983 and the Vic's hit back with a win to Ten Guitars in 43.91 starting favourite at 5/4 he beat local star Lygon Leader and Tony Zammit's Pewter Frost.

In an unusual turn of events for the distance title the South Australian's produced back to back winners in 84 and 85. Princess Baden saluted at Cannington defeating Supreme Carmen and Tashla in 44.32. While Melmade Gazza won at Launceston, trained by leading mentor Colin Wachtel he proved too good for Supreme Carmen, runner up again and Level Charm in 44.06.



**Kate's A Scandal**

In the sprint during the middle 80's we witness the mighty Winifred Bale at Harold Park in 83 beat Queenslander Lord Tegimi in 26.13. It was only one of many feature race wins that saw her retire as the first greyhound to win \$100,000 in stakes. 84 again at Harold Park and Busy Vintage became the first and only Tasmanian to win the title. Trained by David Crosswell he gave his charge ever chance arriving in Sydney early and preparing the black speedster for a memorable win. Eaglehawk Star was runner up in 26.38.

As mentioned earlier South Australian's won the next two at Sandown and at home at Angle Park. Both trained by Petar Jovanoic Scenic Spa from box six beat Storm Glade in 30.70 and Stetson recorded a brilliant 29.98 to hold out two fantastic sprinters in Shining Chariot and Camden's Ghost. In 87 it was another first this time for the West Aussies at Hobart over the 457m. Fremantle Echo caused a boil over by defeating local superstar True Vintage probably the best sprinter to ever race on the Apple Isle. The local champ lead, but was hauled in by the Sandgroper recording 26.39 in a sensational victory.

In 88 at the Gabba it was again home track advantage when track specialist Dancing Gamble beat fellow Queenslander Daring Coup and See Yah in 32.89.



89 rounded out the 80's and produced one of the great champions of all time. West Australian Sandi's Me Mum inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2002, not only did she win the Title on her home track at Cannington. But is the only greyhound in history to win it twice following up the next year at Sandown. At home she beat her sister Sand Pebble and Victorian Davey 31.78. While in 1990 she clashed with an equally brilliant bitch of the time Victorian and fellow Hall of Famer Highly Blessed. At Sandown "Sandi's" flew the boxes from seven and was never in danger, defeating Pharspan with Highly Blessed third in 30.70.

The distance title's of the late 80's again found some smart winners, in 86 on her home track at the tricky Gabba Kirsty's First became the first Queenslander to win the event. From box two the 8/11 fav won easily by five lengths from superstar National Lass and Cool Linen. It was a star-studded field as both Truly Lightning and the mighty Bold Trease finished unplaced. Back at Olympic Park in 87 and Len Ketelaar's Mystic Hope a superbly bred stayer that was born for the caper, always raced handy to the lead. She won the prize as a 4/6 fav from box four in 44.29. At Wentworth Park in 88 Joe Hili the former pigeon fancier come top greyhound trainer won the title with the brilliant front runner High Intensity. Later that year the dog was lucky to be alive after a fight with talented kennel mate Rich Return. However, on Distance final night he was as fit as a trout and at 4/1 beat the favourite Dennis Reid's wonderful stayer Whip Tip in 42.93.

In 89 back at Angle Park it was a home town victory for Julep the tiny stayer who went into the final under a cloud, gave nothing else a chance recording 43.79 just 0.2 outside Truly Lightning's record. It was justice for trainer Brian Arthur as she missed the previous year's final suffering an injury after brilliantly winning to qualify.

## THE NINETIES

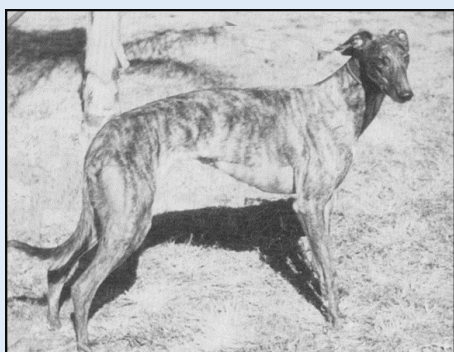
The 1990 distance final at Olympic Park saw a win to locally trained Clean Machine, the greyhound's first start over 700 was in the state heat. Finishing second he then won the final and proved too good in the National decider a week later. He beat the outstanding NSW star Kirsty's Charity by a neck, with Toinette third in 44.00. Even more surprising was the fact that Clean Machine only ever won one more staying race in his career over 716 at Sandown Park. Toinette was raced and trained by long time Victorian administrator Marg Long.

At the Gabba in 91 and again that track's home ground advantage was to the fore when Just A Charm beat Gem Supreme and Travelling Short in 41.45. Surprisingly the first prize was a whopping \$50,000 as it had been in 1990.

92 at Wentworth Park and brilliant front running Victorian Pace Galore proved too good for the favourite Tony Zammitt's Elusive Odie and Fire Cape. Charlie Mallia's stayer was later crowned Victorian Greyhound of the Year. Prizemoney for the race took a dive to \$20,000 to the winner and remained that until the 2001 titles when it went back to a respectable \$40,000 and group one status.

93 and the championship was conducted in Perth, it resulted in a win to New South Wales stayer Billy's Blondie. Raced by leviathan owner Ray Richards and trained by Greg Wynn, Richards was later to race the mighty Hall of Famer Tenthill Doll. "Billy's" started even money favourite and beat local Shady Nitro in 44.89.

Again, at Wentworth Park in 94 and NSW made it back to back when the favourite Miss Cruise staged one of the biggest runs ever seen on a dog track, she got up to win in the shadows of the post after being last for almost a lap. Winning by a half-length she beat Tilka Lass and Nikemos at 8/11 in 43.59.



Sprint finals went the way of some more brilliant greyhounds in 91 at Wentworth Park one of the darlings of Sydney's sprinters was Jessica Casey she proved too good for Racing Hawk and Just Brilliant in 30.66. Starting 6/4 favourite it was one of many big race wins for the pin up girl raced by the Finns. At Olympic Park in 92 and central Victorian middle-distance performer Mr Slick was too strong in the run home for Sea Mission and Major Fleet in a fast 30.02. Starting at 7/1 it was a night owner-trainer John Gould will never forget.

Over to Angle Park in 93 and a home town win by way of the very talented Casino Tom. "Tom" was South Australia's fourth winner



when the Peter McAvaney trained speedster, started 14/10 favourite, beat Victorian Amy's Doll with Ben's Image (NSW) third in 29.98.

Wentworth Park was again the scene for the 1994 Sprint title and it resulted in an easy win to the Victorian owned New South Wales trained Gallant Ruler. Exploding from the boxes he was never in danger winning by 12 lengths in 30.38.

Starting favourite at 13/8 from box four he beat Victorian Kyasha and South Australia's Fear None. The Nationals in 1996 moved to Queensland and were staged by the Brisbane Greyhound Racing Club at Albion Park. Victorian Shayne's Champ won the sprint in 30.23. Trained by Petar Jovanovic it was his third title, he also won in 1985 and 1986 with Scenic Spa and Stetson. Shayne's Champ defeating Queenslander Ultra Dreams and South Australian Monsieur Zac.

Over the distance it was a home town win for leading trainer Ron Ball with Boronia Blossom proving to good Glider Line (NSW) and Victorian Northern Legend third in 42.43.

Ball's champion stayer created distance championship history becoming the first greyhound to win the series twice after winning the previous year at Olympic Park.



1995 was certainly a unique year for Ball, he became the first trainer to prepare both National winners when his other superstar Flying Amy won the sprint at Sandown Park. "Amy" jumping from box five was awesome in defeating Tap Dance (NSW) and Ginger Magee (VIC) in 30.08. At Olympic Park Boronia Blossom 7/1 accounted for Wide Receiver (NSW) and odds on favourite Keon Star (VIC) in 43.72.

1997 the championships moving to Angle Park, terrible weather marred both nights of racing, but in the sprint a young champion emerged in the form of Prince of Tigers. Trained in West Australian by Jim Robinson the big black sprinter beat Chicago Blue the Victorian who later won the Top Gun and local star Larikin McLaren, he ran a sizzling 29.68. Many at the track felt the Victorian was desperately unlucky in the run. Unfortunately, injury cost Prince of Tigers a long career but he did become a successful sire. In the Distance, final rank outsider Ibrox Park starting at 14/1 found the bunny in the wet and held off challenges from Queenslander Shape Shifter and local sprinter/stayer Tribute To Dad too win in 43.17 for New South Wales owner-trainer Billy Dance.

Off to the West in 1998 and the big crowd in attendance was treated to a mighty performance from all time super star Rapid Journey. Standing the field, a huge margin, when at one stage he was back last, he stormed home to win the title running down the bolter Bula Boy 33/1 and Queenslander Faithful Hawk who later won an Easter Egg, the time was 31.22. Cannington's distance final went the way of local star Paradise Street, trained by leading

mentor Linda Britton, the favourite at 6/4 proved too strong for Cape Drina and Shar Den in 41.75.

With Sydney hosting the 2000 Olympic Games, New South Wales swapped with Tasmania and Wentworth Park was the venue for the 1999 series finals. On an excellent night of racing both finals were held on the same night for the first time. Sydney sprinter Harry Hand begun well to hold the lead and made the race his own when he beat fellow Sydneysider Woy Woy Boy and WA's Billy The Duck in 30.31. Raced by Richie and Pat Dean it was yet another big race triumph for the successful kennel. A few notable unplaced finalists were Top

Shiraz, Legs Ahoy and Faithful Hawk. The Distance final went to front running Queensland stayer Kobble Creek, a brilliant effort of sustained pace saw the brindle bitch trained by Helen Ivers defeat the 99 winner Paradise Street and Sydney star Dalalla in a fast 42.55.

## THE NEW MILLENNIUM

In the year of Australia's Olympic Games, it was Launceston's turn to host the Nationals and I must say the series was no doubt one of the most enjoyable that I have attended. The history and charm of the Tasmanian City, that hasn't seemed to have changed at all since I first went there in the early 70's. The track and stands were also testimony to how long the sport has been held with importance on the Apple Isle. The Distance final held on the Thursday night recorded a win for one of Australia's most popular stayers Osti's Joker. Starting all the rage at 9/10 favourite, the result was never in doubt as the champion raced away to beat Classic Xena and Blue Emmalisa in 45.05. In the sprint on the Saturday again the odds on favourite New South Wales Placard proved way too good for Kialdu D'or and Coultas Bandit, his time was 30.76 for 522m. Raced by popular Rugby League star Terry Hill and trained by Ray and Ruth King. Hill sent his friend, veteran top trainer Jim Coleman to Tasmania with Placard earlier than normal to acclimatise and the move paid dividends.

It was back in Melbourne in 2001 with the distance being staged at Sandown Park and a quinella to Moe trainer Peter Giles. His inform stayer Tip Top Tears blitzed her run on kennel mate Gate Way in a flying display of 42.46. At the Meadows for the sprint and it was another heart-breaking feature second for Carlisle Jack when he led everywhere except the post and was run down for the third week in a row by the Graham Bate trained Henerik Bale. It was a deserved win in the title to Australia's leading trainer, his first after having many finalists and a few placings over the years. Consistent South Australian Silver Saul was third in a brilliant 29.82.

2002 and the Nationals were staged in beautiful Brisbane with both finals at Albion Park on the Thursday night. It was a night to remember for the Victorians when they won both finals. The Sprint went to the talented In The Frame starting 8/1 she got to the front early from box two and was never headed recording 30.26 she beat local Edward's Affair and fellow Victorian the odds on favourite at 8/11 Modern Assassin. Raced by Sandown director David Gleeson it was his biggest thrill after almost a 40-year involvement in the sport. In the Distance, final star stayer of his year Boomeroo was awesome when he gave his rivals a galloping lesson bolting in by seven lengths and posting a new track record of 41.61. The record stood until it was broken by Queenslander Lucy's Light in July 2006. Starting short at 6/4 he beat two local stars McDeebie the 5/4 fav and Dooley's Mist.

Off to Adelaide for the Championships in 2003 and the sprint was taken out by brilliant Queenslander Elite State starting \$2.25 favourite he showed his absolute class coming from mid field to take the lead at the home turn and win by five lengths in a brilliant 29.33 from local pair Lion Hearted and Fitzroy Jim. Trained by Reg Kay he was retired early to stand at stud in New South Wales. The Distance final was a one act affair for Victorian Champion Arvo's Junior he stormed home to beat New South Wales star Irinka Barbie and West Australian Bella's Angel. Bred and raced by George Arvanitis the National Distance Championship was one of many major wins for the superstar stayer who won over \$300,000 in stake money.

In 2004 the Championships returned to one of the country's most popular venues Perth and at Cannington it was a night for New South Wales when that state produced the winner of both finals. In For Life trained by Jodie Gilbert hung on by a neck in 30.78 to defeat South Australian Give Me Dosh and Victorian Sun Hero who later returned to win the Perth Cup. In a shorten career we never saw much of In For Life after his win in sprint final. Jason Mackay's very smart stayer Classy Customer was very impressive in winning the Distance final in a fast 42.31 defeating Toss O'Reilly and Away Out Blue. Raced by veteran Melbourne trainer Bob Douglas he had been given to Douglas as a pup in return for a good will gesture from New South Wales friend and trainer Glen Withers, the "Customer" went on to win over \$200,000.

In 2005 the Championships were back to their original home of Sydney and Wentworth Park; premier Victorian sprinter Pure Octane was an outstanding winner in the sprint final he recorded a fast 29.91 defeating fellow Victorian Junior's Gipsy and local Buddy Rich. In a stellar year, he won three group ones and was later judged Victorian and Australian Greyhound Of The Year. The Distance final went to the inform New South Wales stayer Texas Gold trained by Jason MacKay he made it back to back titles for the trainer. "Texas" was in a race of his own winning by 10 lengths from fellow New South Wales stayer Resigned and Victorian Mixed Up

Mary the time was 42.07. Bred and raced by Queenslander Helen Ivers Texas Gold was another quality performer Ivers had bred from her brilliant dam line.

In 2006 talented NSW trainer Jason Mackay was dubbed the undisputed "Nationals King" after his dog Immortal Love powered his way to an impressive win in the \$73,000 Group 1 Country Club Tasmania National Sprint Championship final over 515 metres at Tasman Park in Launceston. It was Mackay's third successive triumph in the annual series, having won the past two National Distance championships with Classy Customer in 2004 in WA and 2005 with Texas Gold in Sydney. But this latest taste of national glory was arguably the sweetest because the dog was considered one of the outsiders by most pundits and he had to recover from a set-back only days before the big race. Immortal Love made the most of his box one draw to lead at the first turn and when he put three lengths on his rivals heading down the back the race was all over bar the shouting. Queenslander Buckingham Chuck tried valiantly to run the leader down but fell 5-1/2 lengths short with the favourite Fenceline a closing third but over two lengths astern in track record time of 29.52.

Quality South Australian-trained stayer Bothing lived up to her big reputation with a brilliant victory in the National Distance Championship over 720 metres at Tasman Park. Bothing sat outside of the leader Ronray Dancer for most of the journey before bursting clear on the home turn. Although there was an anxious moment on the home turn when the leader shifted up the track slightly and caught Bothing's hind leg just as she was about to draw clear. But Bothing kept her balance and went on to score by over five lengths from Victorian Itza Bee with Ronray Dancer (WA) hanging on for third, just in advance of the heavily backed Queenslander Miss Brook. The Carlisle Jack-Which Wire bitch set a track record of 42.49, which easily eclipsed the previous best of 42.65 set by Atomic Jet in June of that year. Bothing was owned and raced by Andrew Lee, Brett Smith and Alex Calabria all of whom live in Sydney. Lee bred the bitch and it was clearly his biggest thrill in over two decades of racing greyhounds.

Back in Melbourne in 2007 for the Nationals, Victoria also hosted a highly successful International Conference for the WGRF. New South Wales swooper Bit Chili (\$8.20) scored a sensational last gasp victory in the Group 1 rapidvite.com National Sprint Championship at Sandown Park. Local hope Pure Burst (\$5.50) began brilliantly in the frantic dash to the first turn before Western Australian Back Tonight (\$10.50) took full advantage of his favourable box one draw to rail through and lead into the back straight.

Bit Chili meanwhile dropped out to a conspicuous last before tacking onto the back of the field. Despite being forced wide down the back straight, Bit Chili showed tremendous field sense to weave his way through the field and get within striking distance on the home turn. Pure Burst swept to the lead around the final turn and appeared to have established a race-winning break. However, Bit Chili had forced his way between fellow New South Wales sprinter Mandagery Man and the improving Scull Murphy, and in a dramatic dash to the line, caught the dual Group 1 winning bitch to win by a head in 29.88 seconds. The win was just reward for trainer Ruth Matic and owner John Tyrell, who took the unconventional step of sending the chaser to master Victorian trainer Kel Greenough in July in anticipation of contesting the Group 1 feature.

Flashing Floods led all the way over a star-studded field to win the Group 1 rapidvite.com National Distance Championship at The Meadows. Sent out a \$3.60 favourite following her impressive win in the Victorian final the previous week, greyhound racing's 'Supermum' began brilliantly to lead all the way to win the \$50,000 to the winner feature by 2.75 lengths in 42.95 seconds. Flashing Floods was pressured by New South Wales stayer Spiral Magic in the early stages of the race, but drew clear turning for home to defeat fast-finishing Queenslander Miss Brook (\$3.90). Victoria's second representative Kippy Kya (\$8.80), who replaced the injured Cash Express, flashed home for third a further 2.5 lengths adrift. Flashing Floods continued Victoria's illustrious history in the National Distance Championship, notching the state's 19th victory from 38 distance titles contested, including six on home soil.

The win also completed a Championship double for boom sire Bombastic Shiraz after Bit Chili sensationally came from last to take out the rapidvite.com National Sprint Championship at Sandown Park. The Gerald Cunnold trained bitch took her earnings beyond \$325,000 and improved her race record to 31 wins from 52 starts. Remarkably, 25 of those wins have come at a time when injury looked to have ended her career, prompting connections to send her to the breeding barn.

In 2008 the championships were back in Sydney, over the distance Victorian Mantra Lad (\$4.20) began safely and, as expected, soon took the lead and when his supporters looked for Miagi to make a move forward, the black dog was languishing towards the tail of the field, quite wide on the track.

Such was Mantra Lad's acceleration, he posted 16.01secs for the first 280m, just .03 outside Ballerina Dancer's quite brilliant track record. The section stunned a number of the crusty, hard-nosed Wentworth Park regulars.

In the middle stages, Mantra Lad held four lengths break over fellow Victorian Rebel Angel (\$15.00) but the leader was within reach and a stirring battle was imminent. Before the home turn Rebel Angel drew to the hindquarters of Mantra Lad and, some 30 metres before the line, looked set for victory but he failed by a mere neck in a smart 42.30. Chinatown Lad's sister Fallen Zorro (\$5.00) worked home gamely to finish third and, after running off the track at the end of the home straight, did a remarkable job to be beaten only 1 1/2 lengths.

The National Sprint was secured by Queenslander Knocka Norris. The multiple track record holder had posted a cracking 29.82 in a solo trial at the track seven days earlier and all-but replicated the offering when he led from the first turn to score by a clear 7 1/2 lengths in 29.83 (5.50, 13.98). After a clean start, Knocka Norris (\$2.70) made his own luck. He drove to the rails just before the first turn, 'cleaned up' Snozz (box two), tightened All Caution (four) and, only a fraction of a second later, Tasmanian Light Ice Lad failed to handle the first turn and put paid to the rest of the field. The incident saw Knocka Norris skip clear and it also allowed Mountain Of Love (\$13.00) to come along the rails (after being slow to begin from box six) and be second at the half-way mark. As desperate as he was, Mountain Of Love made no impression on the Reg Kay-trained brindle dog and the winner's margin - and the time - told the story. All Caution (\$3.60) managed third, a clear 10 1/2 lengths from the winner and the run was full of merit.

In 2009, we were back in Perth and the results of the Grand Finals at Cannington were what the National series is all about. On the one hand, we had the might of Australia's largest breeders, Paul Wheeler and Hall Of Fame trainer Graeme Bate winning the Distance Title with Jarvis Bale, and on the other we had Dwyer and Desley Lennon victorious with Dashing Corsair in the Sprint Championship, new comers to the sport with six dogs in their kennel.

It was by far the Lennon's biggest win in the sport, with a chaser that has lived in the shadow of fellow Queenslander High Earner, he had beaten Dashing Corsair in two Derby Finals Dashing Corsair (\$9.00) was owned by Josephine 'Paddy' Fitch, who at 83 years of age at the time had over 50 greyhounds, mostly pups. The son of Malfoy and Rose Flamenco began fast from box six and stalked the leader and race favourite, Dyna Lachlan (\$1.90) until the home turn, where he railed underneath and stole the lead, scoring by a neck from Dyna Lachlan, with Silk Moon (\$9.20) a length away in third. In a twist of fate, Lennon was going to step Dashing Corsair up into the staying trip and set him for the National Distance Championship, but after a slight injury he was kept sprinting.

While it was the first Group One victory for the Lennon's and they were understandably beside themselves with the occasion, you would think connections of Jarvis Bale should be getting used to wins at the highest level, and it was another day at the office. However, it was a first in that it was Wheeler and Bate's maiden National Distance Title. Jarvis Bale (\$8.50) drove through on the first turn and opened up a big break by the winning post with a lap out, an advantage he held for the entire race, scoring by six lengths from Red Shilling (\$3.70) which made up many lengths to run second and race favourite Vintage Octane (\$2.30) a neck away in third.

In 2010, we were back again to the city of Church's Adelaide. For the first time since 2004 NSW greyhounds secured both the National Sprint and Distance Championships at Angle Park. Against the odds and facing genuine stars in both events, Blue Lorian (Distance) and Smooth Fancy produced stellar performances to break into the Group One club in particularly fast times.

Before the gruelling 731m contest, Blue Lorian's owner-trainer Peter Whye was adrenalin-charged. Minutes before the race, he was standing with Joanne Monelli's owner Mike Quinsee, Reign Over Me's owner Mike Cope and the three knew there would be no room for error.





**Dashing Corsair only dog in history to win both Sprint and Distance titles**

And it was Blue Lorian (\$5.50) which did not 'blink'. Tasmanian Sitka (\$17.00) went straight to the lead while local star Satanic Cash (\$2.50) and 2009 National Sprint Champion Dashing Corsair were slow to begin from boxes four and one respectively. Mid-race, Blue Lorian, which had begun smartly from box five, drew to the Tasmanian's outside and swept clear. He went away to score by 3 3/4 lengths from a late-closing Satanic Cash while Sitka battled into third, a little more than five lengths from the winner in a fast 43.01 seconds.

Just over 40 minutes later, the race of the year went the way of Anthony Azzopardi's Smooth Fancy. The powerhouse finisher was shunned by punters and, when race favourite Cosmic Chief drew past leader Pedrosa in the middle stages, this sprint title looked to be Victoria's. But just as Cosmic Chief (\$3.10) looked all over a winner, he moved a little away from the rails and Smooth Fancy (\$10.00) took full toll. Only a head separated the pair at the finish in a slashing 29.49 seconds. A stirring finish to say the least and the effort of minor placegetter Tombstone Jack (\$18.00) was remarkable. The result came as some relief as during the days prior to the final Cosmic Chief's popular Victorian owner Brian Parkinson had a large group of his friends including this writer agree to a victory tattoo should his much-loved sprinter win the final. As much as I wanted a Victorian result the pain of the impending tattoo had not rested easy on my mind for a couple of days in Adelaide.

In 2011 the Championships were back at Albion Park in Queensland with delays to possible new venues the Championships hadn't been in Queensland since 2002. It was certainly a night for the Queenslanders winning both the Distance and Sprint titles. Dashing Corsair Queensland's most popular chaser became the first Greyhound in history to win both the Sprint and Distance titles in a fairy tale end to his outstanding career.

Dashing Corsair retired at Albion Park that Thursday night and he went out a champion. No one was ever in doubt of that status for the home-grown Queenslanders but on the National stage he proved it once again. And how he proved it Dashing Corsair (\$6.60) (Malfoy-Rose Flamenco), written off by just about everyone, showed he had a heart "as big as Phar Lap" as his trainer Dwyer Lennon said, by leading virtually throughout to win the Group 1 National Distance (710m) in 41.93. He defied everything the nation could throw at him and held off Lady Arko's (\$4.00) flashing finish to win by a neck with two lengths to a gallant Kalden Mayhem (\$19.90) in third.

Dashing Corsair, a Red Fawn dog whelped April 2007 by Malfoy from Rose Flamenco was raced by Paddy Fitch and trained by Dwyer & Desley Lennon at Churchable in Queensland. He won 57 races and was placed on 32 occasions from his 125 starts. His overall prizemoney stood at \$463,045.

Two days before the Sprint final Metz Magic wasn't even in the field but the veteran of just seven race starts, and still a fifth grader, Metz Magic (Bombastic Shiraz-Witheren's Girl) landed the National final in 30.04 for owner Bill Crooks and trainer Ron Ball.

It is a partnership that has already tasted Group 1 success with Mr Metz two years ago in the Brisbane Cup. Metz Magic (\$10) scored by a length and a half over the fast-finishing Cold Fusion (\$2.80) with a length to early



leader Allen Hertz (\$5.60) in third. It was his fifth win in just eight starts Metz Magic got a start in the final only after two scratching's. Originally, he had come up with box one but an hour later that was changed to box five when a RQL mistake had been rectified It was an omen.

Mr Metz had won the Brisbane Cup from box five. Ron Ball's other National Sprint winner, champion Flying Amy, also drew box five when she won. Bill Crooks names his dogs "Metz" after the Metz Café in Canungra owned and run by his wife Diane.

But Bill heaped praise on his 84-year-old father Jim after the victory. "Dad does so much of the work at home with the pups," said Bill. "He is upstairs in the dining room crying. He's very emotional."

In 2012 for the first time since 1987 the Championships returned to Hobart. Lightly raced Victorian sprinter Fabregas delivered the knockout blow to his rivals when he took out the Tattsbet National Sprint Championship and established himself as a potential superstar but it also signalled the emergence of a highly promising young trainer in David Hirst. Fabregas was having only his 13th start but it was his 12th win and he made some of the best sprinters in Australia look ordinary. The son of Bombastic Shiraz-Wicked Witch began brilliantly from box seven and after a stoush with Uno Reltub (2) and Exclusive One (8) he found the rail and sped clear. Fabregas extended his lead in the home straight to hit the line three lengths clear of Queensland's Glen Gallon with Exclusive One a game third almost a length away. Hirst was ecstatic after the win.

"What the dog did here in Hobart tonight hasn't really sunk in yet but I'm sure the enormity of it will hit me in a day or two," Hirst said as he led his rising star back to the presentation area. No long after the win connections retired the young star to stud were he attracted plenty of attention.



Champion West Australian greyhound Miata confirmed her status as Australia's best stayer when she led all the way to win the Wrest Point National Distance Championship over 709 metres.

Miata began brilliantly from box six and had the rail when the field hit the first turn and while hotly pressed all the way by the Graeme Bate-trained Irma Bale the

gallant little West Australian bitch refused to wilt at the business end of proceedings. Miata hung on to score by three-quarters-of-a-length from Irma Bale with Tasmanian litter siblings Jethro and Bell Haven close up in third and fourth places respectively.

Miata's owner-trainer Paul Stuart was thrilled with the win and rated it arguably her best triumph. "She was tested all the way to win this race and that long home straight is a real test of courage and stamina and she stood up to the test," Stuart said.

"There's no place to hide in that home straight and I think my heart stopped beating once or twice before she finally hit the line," he said. Miata stopped the clock at 41.24 top establish a new track record on what was a very slow track that was bombarded by heavy rain during both the National Distance and the Sprint events

In 2013 back at the Meadows in Melbourne the brilliant Xylia Allen recorded her third Group 1 success to take out an action-packed National Sprint Championship at The Meadows, giving Victoria consecutive wins in the time-honoured classic.

Jumping safely from box one, Xylia Allen sat in a forward position behind Tomac Bale (\$3.70) and Paw Licking before unleashing an amazing finishing burst, outgunning Tomac Bale in a sizzling 29.62 – just 0.01 outside the former track record held by her sire Turanza Bale.



**At the time Australia's highest stake earner Xylia Allen winning the National Sprint**

Early leader Tomac Bale was gallant in defeat, finishing almost two lengths behind Xylia Allen (\$3.60), while New South Wales' representative Zulu Zeus (\$3.90) finished third after a slow getaway. The result gave the Wheeler clan a first and second finish in the Group 1 event, continuing a sensational 2013 season for the family-run operation.

In the distance final, New South Wales stayer Smart Valentino strode to a fantastic victory over 725 metres at The Meadows.

Starting as the \$2.80 favourite, Smart Valentino began slowly off box one, with West Australian Magpie Bob (\$7.50) and four-time Group 1 winner Destini Fireball setting the early pace. The race looked to be heading west as outsider Magpie Bob continued to hold Destini Fireball at bay, with Smart Valentino slowly reeling in the leader before the final turn.

As they raced up the home straight, Smart Valentino showed his superior staying prowess, finally getting to pacesetter Magpie Bob to score by less than half a length in 42.83, giving trainer Mark Swift his biggest thrill in greyhound racing. Tasmanian chaser Lashing Jill (\$35.90) finished powerfully for third, while Destini Fireball looked a fair way off his best to finish fourth.

2014 and a swap with New South Wales due to track upgrade to Cannington saw the Championships staged in the West instead of at Wentworth Park where they will be in 2015. New South Wales sprinter Chica Destacada (\$4.20) showed tons of courage to win the National Sprint Championship final at Cannington on Saturday night. Drawn perfectly in box two she found the front early holding the lead out of the straight the first time with a first section of 5.59. Under extreme pressure off the back from a number of dogs running on, in particular Victorian Crackerjack Dak she toughed it out holding the fast-finishing local sprinters Star Recall (\$3.90) and Zelemar Fever (\$10.10) to claim the coveted Group 1 glory. Chica Destacada took the title back NSW for the first time since Smooth Fancy won in Adelaide in 2010.

In the distance final Sweet It Is continued the impressive Perth strike rate for Darren McDonald, with three WA group races for three wins, being the Group One Perth Cup with Keybow, the Group Two Cannington Derby with Tiggerlong Annigo and adding the Group One National Distance Final.

The win capped off an outstanding couple of days for the Devon Meadows trainer, who was named AGRA trainer of the year 2013-2014 on Friday night at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle, per medium of the above success.

Painted Dotty jumped first and led Bingle Monelli and Wag Tail to the first turn. Xylia Allen (\$3.40) and Sweet It Is (\$1.80) settled midfield. Leaving the back straight Xylia Allen railed to the lead and put a few lengths on the field. Sweet It Is switched to the outside in pursuit of the leaders, she had never gotten back worse than fifth in

running, a close-up position for a finishing burst stayer like she is. It was again a classic race finish involving this mighty little chaser claimed Superstar Xylia Allen in the shadows of the post.

Queenslander Wag Tail (\$7.50) battled on to take third but as expected it was the final that was always going to be fought out by the two-star Victorians.

2015 Fernando Bale (\$1.50) proved himself the greatest sprinter of all time by making a one act affair of the Group 1 Ladbrokes National Sprint Championship. In the final the Andrea Dailly-trained, Paul Wheeler-owned greyhound gave another flawless exhibition to lead from the first turn and win by five-and-a-half lengths from NSW warrior Bessy Boo (\$6.20), with Queensland-trained, Hunter Valley-owned Keybow (\$5.80) just under two lengths away third.

It was Fernando Bale's sixth Group 1 victory and his 10th in succession at Wentworth Park, with the champ stopping the clock at a personal best 29.26 after equalling his third split sectional record of 17.56.

"I said before tonight's race that I was happy with box five because for some reason it is one of the better draws at Wentworth Park.

"And Wenty is a track Fernando Bale absolutely loves."



**The mighty Fernando Bale**

In the distance final, the Victorian's made it a double when Sweet It Is (\$1.50) took out the Group 1 Ladbrokes National Distance Championship with a new track record.

Sweet It Is, trained in Victoria by her owner Braden Finn, has now earned \$976,806 and was always going to win on Saturday night when she was fourth away and settled down in third place.

Sweet It Is having rarely been so close to the pacemakers and after being second leaving the back straight she hit the front on the home bend to win by nearly nine lengths in 41.52.

That took 0.01 off the 720m WP record set by Xylia Allen in April, 2014 while Lady Toy (\$4.30) completed a Victorian quinella when she finished a great second after completely bungling the start. With West Aussie Deadly Boy (\$31.20) third.

Sweet It Is was later stripped of the National title after she was found to have swabbed positive in the state final at the Meadows. The finding was determined after the National final had been run and meant she should have been disqualified from the event. Lady Toy the wildcard entry had finished second in the state final was elevated to the winner of the National final where she had finished second to Sweet It Is again.

2016 and exciting local sprinting star Worm Burner (\$5.50) broke a 23-year drought for South Australia when he took out the Sprint Final of the UBET AGRA National Championships held at Angle Park on Saturday night in brilliant fashion.

In front of a large parochial crowd the Cameron Butcher trained South Aussie exploded from box 6 to surprisingly cross long odds on favourite Zambora Brockie (\$1.45) from Victoria to the cheers of his supporters. He ran his first split in a flying 4.37 with Zambora Brockie for Anthony Azzopardi in hot pursuit with Times Square (\$31.00) for WA trainer Chris Halse moving to third from his wide draw. Down the back straight it seemed the louder the crowd cheered the further Worm Burner was able to extend his lead over his rivals running a sick 16.66 of the back straight. Finding himself in front for the first time in his career saw Worm Burner blister through his final section in a sizzling run home of 12.51 to record an unbelievable 29.17 for the 515m journey leaving his challengers in his wake by almost 6 lengths to the delight of the on-course patrons. He defeated Zambora Brockie, Times Square and Dundee Osprey who claimed fourth, all gallant in defeat breaking 30 seconds themselves but were no match for the son of Oaks Road and Little Looper. The crowd continued to cheer the local champion as he returned to the dais for the presentation. In what was a high-quality Group 1 Final, Worm Burner stamped himself as not only the local star but a star on the National scene.

South Australian greyhounds were to the fore earlier in the night with Parsec Bale (\$51) for Wendy Matcott and Springvale Bryne (\$12) for Gavin Harris running out of their skin to fill the placings in the Group 1 UBET AGRA National Distance Final behind Victorian staying star Ring The Bell (\$2.50) for Gerry O'Keeffe.

As the lids flew open Queenslander Big Easy Red and NSW stayer Cardiology matched their motors running blistering first sectionals as they reached the winning post on the first occasion. Ring The Bell and Springvale Bryne sat just off the pace getting a cosy run while Parsec Bale settled near the tail of the field. Down the back straight Cardiology sped to the clear lead running of the back straight in a blistering 29.25 just .03 outside of Proven Imapla's third split record with the chasing pack in hot pursuit. As heads turned for home Cardiology was beginning to paddle with the high-quality field charging home. Spearing to the lead in the final straight was Ring The Bell who showed his class and stamina over the gruelling 731m journey to go on and record a brilliant victory for Victoria. The son of Kinloch Brae and Absolute Stunna won by 2 lengths in a flying 43.22 with South Aussie Parsec Bale sprouting wings over the concluding stages to grab second from fellow local Springvale Bryne in third. Taking nothing away from Ring The Bell who was absolutely brilliant in his victory but the performances of both local stayers to claim the minor money on their home track set the big crowd alight in anticipation of what was to come later in the evening.

Having seen my first National final at Sandown Park in 1968 when Princess Kerry jumped brilliantly from box eight to lead all the way, I have been fascinated with the history and the many champions that have won the events over the years.

## **Group Racing Hall of Fame**

**In 1998** the Group Racing Hall of Fame was introduced to further promote the importance of Group Racing and to enhance its reputation as the benchmark of excellence.

The Australian Greyhound Racing Association introduced its Group Racing Hall of Fame in 1998. Tenthill Doll and Flying Amy two modern day superstars of the Australian Greyhound Racing Scene were the inaugural inductees.

Nominations for the Hall of Fame status are considered at Annual General Meetings of the AGRA. To be eligible for nomination, greyhounds must have won at least four Group races, at least two of which must have been at Group 1 level. Greyhounds must have officially completed their racing career prior to nomination.

In 2000 Neil Brown a Victorian journalist and historian who was later to be appointed AGRA Publicity Officer lobbied the AGRA committee to expand the Hall of Fame to include the stars of the past. The AGRA committee agreed and a number of past champions were included as Honorary inductees, it was a welcome provision to the Hall of Fame



With Agra choosing to broaden its criteria for the Hall of Fame entry by providing for honorary access for greyhounds which raced prior to 1990 (the starting point of AGRA's Group racing format). Greyhounds inducted via the honorary route are also subject to prior nomination to the AGRA Annual General Meeting and are required to have a race winning record of the highest order. Immortals Chief Havoc, Zoom Top and Highly Blessed were the first honorary inductees in 2000.

Many great stars of the past followed in subsequent years the like of Black Top, Macareena, Rookie Rebel, Temlee, Lizrene, Bold Trease and Winifred Bale to name a few.

Up until 2008, Hall of Fame induction was only afforded to greyhounds based on racing performances. At the August 2007 Annual General Meeting of the Australian Greyhound Racing Association it was agreed that the 2007 Greyhound Of The Year award would also include a presentation of a Trainer Hall of Fame inductee and various other levels of induction could also be added to the Hall of Fame. The criteria for these awards was further refined and endorsed at the August 2008 AGM. They include Male Greyhound based on Breeding Performance, Female Greyhound based on Breeding Performance, Breeders, Administrators and Associates.

The full list of Inductees for the Hall of Fame is as follows: Tenthill Doll, Flying Amy, Rapid Journey, Highly Blessed, Chief Havoc, Zoom Top, Macareena, Rookie Rebel, Sandi's Me Mum, Brett Lee, Bold Trease, National Lass, Winifred Bale, Temlee, Black Top, Bogie Leigh, Lizrene, Paua To Burn, Sam Bladon (Trainer), M.A. "Arthur" Morgan (Administrator), William (Bill) Pearson (Associate), Henry Harrison (Administrator), Ray Herbert (Trainer), Rod Deakin (Breeder), Paul Ambrosoli (Associate), Howard Ashton (Administrator), Roy Maidment (Administrator), Osti Too, Allen Wheeler (Breeder), Jim Coleman (Trainer), Dr. James (Jim) Gannon (Associate), J.G. "Jack" Nelson (Administrator), Wee Sal, Ned Bryant (Trainer), Stan Cleverley (Trainer), Victor Peters (Administrator), Frank Kennedy (Associate), Vivian James Berresford (Trainer), Noel Banks (Administrator), Doug Payne (Trainer), Brian Johnstone (Administrator), Ken Carr (Administrator), Paul Cauchi (Trainer), Dr. John Murray (Associate), Albert Bunny Hewton (Administrator), Tony Zammit (Trainer), Ray Foley (Administrator), Brother Fox, Byamee, Tell You Why, George Schofield (Associate), Tumble Bug, Miata and Paul Wheeler (Breeder).



