

Inter-Dominion Tradition

By Harry Pearce

They have been racing down in what old-timers call the "Glebe Hollow" for more than 100 years. First known as Lillie Bridge, then Forest Lodge and Epping before being renamed Harold Park in 1929, the place is steeped in history and it is perhaps timely to recall the track's proud record in Inter-Dominion competition.

1960 - CADUCEUS

And what better place to start than in 1960 when arguably the greatest of them all was run and won by New Zealand's 'Mighty Atom' Caduceus!

It was Harold Park's third Inter-Dominion series and the attendance records set then have not been threatened in Australia or New Zealand since, nor are they ever likely to be.

The total crowd for the four nights was 126,570, an average of 31,642. But it was the mammoth attendance of 50,346 on Grand Final night that set the scene for the sensations that were to follow.

Harold Park practically burst at the seams as the biggest crowd to attend a trotting meeting in the Southern Hemisphere, fought and struggled for vantage points to watch the race.

Talk about drama. Today it sounds more like the scenario for a movie blockbuster, but back in 1960 it was real life drama as Caduceus took out the championship at his sixth attempt.

Not only did the pony-sized Kiwi star have to overcome a 36-yard handicap, but before being crowned the winner, he had to survive a protest lodged on behalf of the runner-up, Apmat.

The drama did not end there, however. In a sensational sequel a few years later, Jack Litten, the trainer and driver of Caduceus, revealed he was offered a bribe to "pull up" the pacer in the final.

From the time the gates opened on Grand Final night, February 13, 1960, it was evident all attendance records would be broken. Reserve grandstand tickets were sold out within an hour as thousands of early fans invaded the course. There were no deluxe grandstands in those days.

To cope with the overflow of people, the infield of Harold Park (now the centre-course car park) was thrown open, complete with a mobile tote and bookmakers, to cater for punters. The crowd poured in. For the first, and only time at Harold Park, the 'House Full' sign was posted as police ordered the gates closed before the running of the Grand Final.

So dense was the throng, many on course missed seeing the big race, while others only managed to do so by tearing down part of the over-crowded main grandstand. Pushed on by a seething mass of people, a section of the crowd battered and smashed fibro partitions at the back of the stand to catch a glimpse of the race action.

Fittingly, most of the top contenders made their way through the qualifying

heats. The line-up in barrier order was: First Kiss (NSW), Kiwi Dillon (WA), Maestro's Melody (Vic), Brilliant Moon (NSW), Rosslawn (NSW), Meadowlands (NSW) on scratch; Apmat (NSW) on 12 yards, with Caduceus (NZ) and False Step (NZ) sharing the back mark of 36 yards.

Although a nine-year-old with a difficult handicap to overcome, Caduceus went out 3-1 favourite. The gallant 14.3 hands Kiwi champ, which had won a total of six heats in five previous Inter-Dominion attempts, had stretched this to seven with victory in a heat over 15 furlongs and 92 yards in the 1960 series, and if ever a championship favourite was deserving of success it was Caduceus that year. But at the same time, backers of the Sydney star, Apmat, could be counted as unlucky.

In an action-packed final in which Brilliant Moon fell going into the back straight the last time, there was further interference involving Caduceus and Apmat soon afterwards.

Caduceus, however, lost no momentum. Thunderous applause erupted as he moved up to challenge Fettle, which led around the home turn. The cheering continued all the way down the straight, reaching a crescendo as Caduceus held off Apmat's determined finishing bid to score by a half-length on the line.

Then came the announcement that Apmat's driver, Bert Alley, had lodged a protest against the winner. The crowd's cheers turned to boos. Although Caduceus was a New Zealander, he was a regular tripper to Australia, and Sydneysiders had taken him to their hearts. To many, it was unthinkable a protest should be lodged against their idol.

Alley's objection had them in an angry mood. The situation, in fact, was so tense authorities could have had a riot on their hands had the protest been upheld. Although Alley had grounds for complaint, no blame was attached to Litten. Alley's objection was dismissed after a hearing lasting only a few minutes.

For Caduceus, which rated 2:05.2 for the 13 furlongs and 98 yards journey, the win over Apmat and Maestro's Melody (Frank Shinn), with Fettle fourth, was his 46th and took his earnings to 68,204 pounds (\$136,408), making him then Australasia's second richest racehorse behind New Zealand galloper Redcraze, the winner of 71,481 pounds (\$142,962).

A few years later, Litten told the story of how a mystery man offered him a bribe to stop Caduceus in the final. "I was staying with my wife in a private hotel in Sydney when there was a knock on the door of our room the night before the race," Litten said.

"A well-dressed man, who I had never seen before, was there. He came straight to the point saying it would be worth the first prizemoney to me if I would pull up Caduceus. When I refused, he didn't cause any trouble. He left immediately and I never clapped eyes on him again."

Caduceus later raced successfully in America, then returned home to New Zealand where he died in 1964. At the time of his retirement two years earlier, he was Australasia's richest harness horse with earnings of 116,000 pounds (\$US329,937).

It is interesting to note that prizemoney for Caduceus' Inter Dominion final back in 1960 was comparable with the Melbourne Cup won by Macdougall three months earlier. The Inter-Dominion final was worth 15,000 pounds (\$30,000) and a gold cup valued at 600 pounds (\$1200), while the Melbourne Cup carried 15,000 pounds (\$30,000), plus a 500 pounds (\$1000) trophy.

How good would it be if harness racing could boast a similar prizemoney comparison today!

1952 - AVIAN DERBY

Turning back the clock to Sydney's first Inter-Dominion at Harold Park in 1952, we find it was indeed a year to remember as local sporting stars made world headlines.

In boxing, bantamweight champ Jimmy Carruthers knocked out Vic Toweel in South Africa to give Australia its first world boxing title.

In tennis, Frank Sedgeman beat self-exiled Czech, Jan Drobný in four sets to become Australia's first post-war Wimbledon winner. Sedgeman also starred in Australia's 4-1 Davis Cup win over the US in Adelaide.

At the Olympic Games in Helsinki, Marjorie Jackson, the 'Lithgow Flash', won two of Australia's six gold medals in the 100 metres and 200 metres athletics sprints. Champion cyclist Russell Mockridge also won two (1000-metre sprint and the 2000-metre tandem with Lionel Cox) while Shirley Strickland took gold in the 80-metre hurdles and John Davies won the 200-metre breaststroke.

However, it was trotting, as harness racing was called then, that was NSW's fastest growing sport. With the introduction of night trotting only three-and-a-half years earlier, crowds of more than 20,000 were regularly flocking to Harold Park meetings.

Overall, more than 116,000 attended the four nights of the 1952 Inter-Dominion carnival, more than double the total crowd for a whole year of meetings at Harold Park in the day trot era.

Prizemoney, too, underwent a dramatic increase with the advent of night trotting and fittingly the stake for Sydney's first Inter-Dominion final -- 10,000 pounds (\$20,000) -- compared favourably with the Melbourne Cup that year, which carried prizemoney of £12,500 (\$25,000) and was won by Dalray.

The evergreen Recovered, after winning two qualifying heats, was rated the best hope of providing a local victory in the 1952 final, but found the Victorian-owned Avian Derby a bit too strong at the finish.

The result vindicated the decision of the then NSW Trotting Club handicapper, Bert Creagh, who had been roundly criticised for handicapping Avian Derby on 24 yards behind. It was claimed the Victorian had been harshly treated in comparison with many others, mainly the more tightly assessed South Australian champion Minor Derby on the scratch mark.

The critics said Avian Derby would be hard pressed to make the final, let alone win it. But handicappers have a habit of being proved right and Creagh had the last laugh when Avian Derby not only won the only two heats he contested, but took out the final in record time.

A seven-year-old by Lawn Derby from Avian Lass, Avian Derby was owned in Victoria by Melbourne bookmaker Fred Hanlon, a brother of legendary Victorian thoroughbred trainer, George Hanlon, but was trained at Temora by Sylvester Bray.

Bray was the regular driver of Avian Derby but was suspended just before the Inter-Dominion which resulted in Dave 'Darkie' Wilson -- later to be crippled in a race at the Melbourne Showgrounds in the early 1970s -- gaining the drive.

There was a sensation when Avian Derby was scratched from the third round of qualifying heats after scoring convincing wins in his first two heats. The pacer suffered a colic attack on the day of the race and for a time looked in danger of being ruled out of the final because he hadn't contested all three qualifying heats.

In the end though, he was allowed to start, and before a then record crowd of 38,090, was sent out 4-6 favourite. It is history now how he went on to land the money. Overcoming difficulties that would have stopped a lesser horse, Avian Derby managed to get clear in time and finished too well for the opposition.

Coming away at the finish, he scored by a length from Recovered, with Floodlight a similar margin away third. The winner, later to become Harold Park's first two-minute performer, paced the 13 furlongs trip at a record 2:07.2 mile rate.



Hondo Grattan and Tony Turnbull victorious in 1973.

1956 - GENTLEMAN JOHN

Four years later, in 1956, another Victorian-owned pacer, Gentleman John, carved his name on the Inter-Dominion roll by winning Sydney's second championship series. Driven by his trainer, Eric Rothacker, who at 26 was at that time the youngest reinsman to win the race, Gentleman John came off 12 yards and got up in the last stride to score by a head, rating 2:08.8 for 13 1/2 furlongs.

The 1956 carnival was marred by atrocious weather conditions which caused four postponements. As a result, the series ran nine days longer than the fortnight originally scheduled.

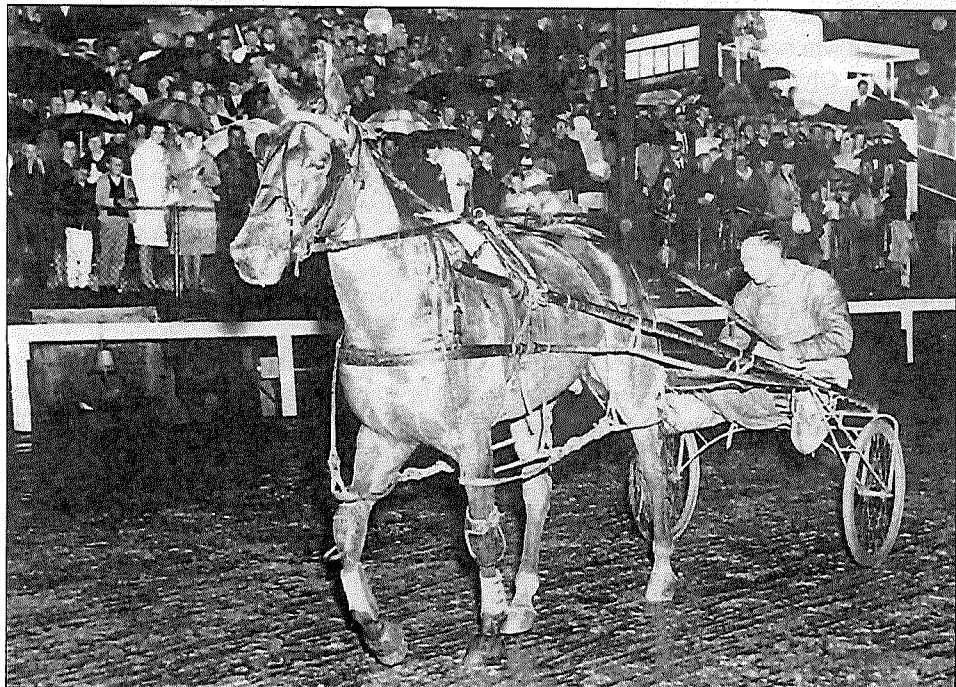
The final, run on a Monday night because of the postponements, drew 34,020 spectators, who cheered the house down as Gentleman John and Mineral Spring fought out a nailbiting finish.

Approaching the home turn, local hope Mineral Spring looked set for a hometown

victory, but Gentleman John, handily placed throughout, was not to be denied. He grabbed the lion's share of the 12,500 pounds (\$25,000) purse right on the line. Caduceus, which won the title four years later, ran a great race off the back mark of 36 yards to gain third, a length-and-a-quarter away.

This was also another big year for sport in Australia. The highlight of 1956, apart from the Harold Park Inter-Dominion final, was Melbourne hosting the Olympic Games. It was the first time the Games had been held in the Southern Hemisphere and Australia won 35 medals -- 13 Gold, eight Silver and 14 Bronze.

The year 1956 also featured the famous triple dead-heat between Fighting Force (Jack Purtell), Ark Royal (Reg Heather) and Pandie Sun (Bill Williamson) in the Hotham Handicap at Flemington. That year also marked the introduction of Television in Australia.



Chamfer's Star and Brian Foster after the 1966 Inter Dominion Final.

1966 - CHAMFER'S STAR

Following the victory of Caduceus in 1960, it was six years before the Inter returned to Harold Park. This time victory went to the Tasmanian-owned Chamfer's Star, which completed a clean sweep of the series when he led throughout to win the Grand Final.

Once again, rain hit Sydney at carnival time. Although no postponements were necessary, the final was run on a quagmire track, but attracted a crowd of 24,467. The heavy going, however, did not worry the front-running Chamfer's Star.

He ploughed through the mud at a 2:13.2 rate for 13 furlongs and 98 yards, the slowest time since Single Direct scored at a 2:14.5 rate at Adelaide's Wayville circuit 17 years earlier. It was a dashing drive by the then 25-year-old Brian Forrester on Chamfer's Star, as well as a training triumph for Max Treuer, who was always confident of winning with the Tassie pacer.

Treuer, the man after whom a Grand Circuit race is named, freely tipped the horse on the eve of every heat, as well as the final. Those who listened, profited handsomely. Chamfer's Star, rated a 200-1 chance when nominations closed, won his three qualifying heats so well, he wound up 3-1 favourite for the final.

Taken straight to the front by Forrester, Chamfer's Star revelled in the wet conditions and lasted long enough to beat gallant New Zealand mare Robin Dundee by a head, with Dale's Gift six yards away third.

1973 - HONDO GRATTAN

Sydney's fifth Inter-Dominion, run at Harold Park in 1973, still ranks as the most successful conducted in New South Wales. The quality of entries was so high that six heats were run on each of the first three nights -- a record that stands today and is unlikely to be bettered in the future. It was truly a time when 'the stars raced under the stars'.

The series saw the emergence of a new champion -- the legendary Hondo Grattan. 'Little Hondo', or the 'Bathurst Bulldog' as he became known, had a seemingly endless supply of stamina. He won the hearts of thousands with his courageous displays during the series.

Trained at The Lagoon, outside Bathurst, by his driver, the equally legendary A D (Tony) Turnbull, Hondo Grattan followed in the footsteps of Chamfer's Star by making a clean sweep of the series. He was to make history the following year by winning the Inter-Dominion Grand Final again in Perth, becoming the first pacer to score two years in succession.

His Sydney triumph though, earned him a special place in the record books. In winning the \$50,000 final that year, Hondo Grattan became the first NSW pacer to take out the championship in his home State -- and he did so over one of the best line-ups on record.

The 10 finalists had won 259 races, and the field included the likes of Royal Ascot, Welcome Advice, Robalan, Arapaho, Just Too Good, Reichman, Bold Biemi, Jason King and Glamour Chief - all classy performers in their own right.

A crowd of 31,073 was on hand to see the action as Hondo Grattan produced all his bulldog courage to score in a desperate finish. After a hard run outside the leader, he looked beaten as he straightened for the run home with Royal Ascot looming up outside him.

Royal Ascot got his head in front halfway down the straight, but Little Hondo simply refused to surrender. He came again to score by a head from Royal Ascot, with Glamour Chief running on a close third.

Tony Turnbull was presented with the winning trophy by the then Australian Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam and was later suspended for four weeks. But it was not over his drive on Hondo Grattan ... it was for causing interference on Sling Along in an earlier race on the program.

A D agreed though, that the penalty was not too hard to bear, saying at the time: "After winning a \$50,000 race, I suppose I can afford a holiday."

Hondo Grattan's victory aside, the 1973 Inter Dominion produced the biggest betting spree in harness racing history to that time with punters wagering \$8.5m over the four nights of the carnival. The record turnover was made up of \$1.4m on the on-course tote, \$3.4m on the TAB and \$3.7m in bookmakers' holdings.

1980 - KOALA KING

Moving on to Sydney's sixth Inter-Dominion in 1980, there were two sensations -- apart from the great win of Koala King -- that marked the series. First there was a drug scare involving the favourite Pure Steel following his win in the first qualifying round, then came the disqualification of Lehigh Lad's driver, Richard Hancock, on the eve of the final.

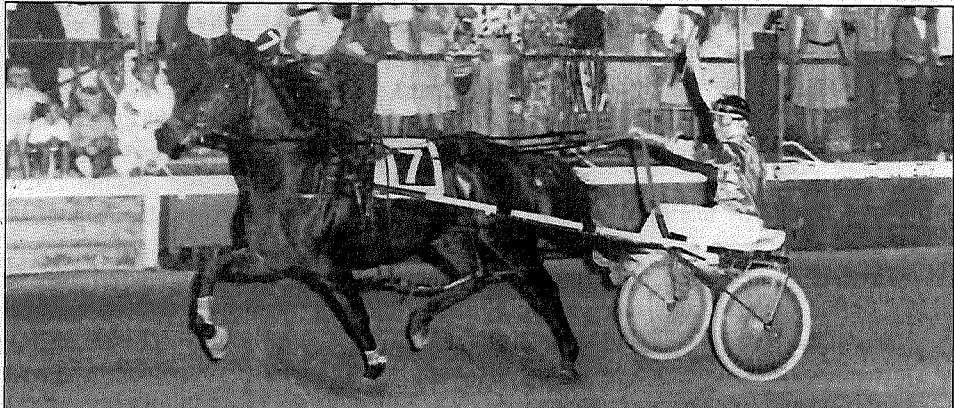
Hancock was 'outed' for 12 months for allegedly not allowing Lehigh Lad to run on his merits when eighth to Koala King in the third qualifying round, but was cleared of the charge on appeal. Although the appeal was not heard until after the final, Hancock was able to drive in the race under the stay-of-proceedings rule which had come into force just a week earlier.

News of the drug scare involving Pure Steel rocked the harness racing world. Kevin Pascoe, the chief steward at the time, announced a "foreign substance" had been found in the urine sample taken from Pure Steel after the WA pacer's heat win on opening night.

At an inquiry before the third qualifying heat, owner Russell Roberts told stewards Pure Steel had been injected with Polyoxyethylated Vegetable Oil (POVO) when he returned home to his Sydney stable after his first-night heat win.

The injection, administered to relieve a tying-up syndrome, had apparently failed to penetrate the neck muscles correctly. Veterinary opinion was that this had delayed the dissipation of the substance entering the horse's metabolism, thereby allowing the finding of it in the urine sample seven days after administration.

Although the outcome of the inquiry may not have been the same under today's rules,



Koala King winning the 1980 Inter Dominion Final.

Pure Steel was cleared to race. He went on to win his third-round heat, but was unable to repeat the performance in the final in which he finished third to Koala King and Locarno.

Koala King, trained to the minute by Ray Wisbey, was driven to perfection by Brian Hancock giving the man who would later become known as the "Inter Dominion King" the first of a record six wins in the race as a driver and/or trainer. Reliving that first triumph, Hancock, in a later interview, said there was nothing to compare with Inter-Dominion success.

"I'd never won a race until I won the Inter-Dominion," Hancock said. "There's simply nothing like the buzz you get when you hit the line. The night Koala King won, everyone thought Locarno had it in the bag when he led coming to the home turn -- except me. It was at that point I was starting to feel confident, and Koala King did not let me down -- he really finished over the top of them."

With Hancock waving his whip high in a victory salute, Koala King motored down the home straight to take out the \$130,000 final with 10 metres to spare.

1988 - OUR MAESTRO

A lucky last-minute drive provided Sydney reinsman John Binskin with the highlight of his career when the Victorian-trained Our Maestro took out the Harold Park Inter-Dominion in 1988 at odds of 7-1. It also added to the birthday celebrations of Binskin's father, Jack, a former top trainer-driver, who turned 81 that day.

While Binskin Snr and his son were overjoyed, they could not help but feel a touch of sadness for Vin Knight, who had the choice of driving Our Maestro or stablemate Bag Limit and pulled the "wrong rein". Knight's drive, Bag Limit started second favourite at 15/4 but failed to beat a runner home.

Knight though, was philosophical about the result -- especially as the winner was trained by his father, Bob -- and was the first to congratulate Binskin on his winning drive.

A master of the art of driving front-runners, Binskin was never seen to better advantage than on that March night of the bicentennial year of 1988. It was Sydney's first Inter-Dominion under mobile conditions, and Binskin jumped Our Maestro straight to the front in the \$400,000 final, driving him to an all-the-way win over Palimar and Tiff's Mystery, rating 2:01.2 for the 2700-metre journey.

Ironically, Knight would pull the "wrong rein" again in Perth the following year, this time electing to drive Our Maestro which was beaten into second place in the final by stablemate Jodie's Babe, driven by Scott Stewart.

It all added to a frustrating Inter Dominion sequence for the flamboyant Victorian reinsman who would die tragically by his own hand, aged 36, in April 1991. During his career, Knight won just about every major race in Australia, but success in an Inter Dominion final eluded him, despite a record of 18 heat wins -- 16 with pacers and two with trotters.

1994 - WEONA WARRIOR

A marvellous training feat and a super drive, were ingredients that paved the way for an upset win by Weona Warrior in the eighth Inter-Dominion run at Harold Park in 1994. Providing the recipe was Brian Hancock, the NSW trainer-driver who was rewriting the record books and rapidly establishing himself as the "Inter-Dominion King".

Hancock, who was to win another three Inter-Dominions at other venues in the following five years, had already won the race

twice before, scoring as a driver with Koala King (trained by Ray Wisbey) in Sydney in 1980 and as a trainer with Thorate (driven by Howard James) in Adelaide in 1990.

In 1994, however, he weighed in as both the trainer and driver of Weona Warrior making the win his most rewarding in an Inter Dominion success until he trained and drove Our Sir Vancelot to win the race at other venues for three years in succession (1997-1999.)

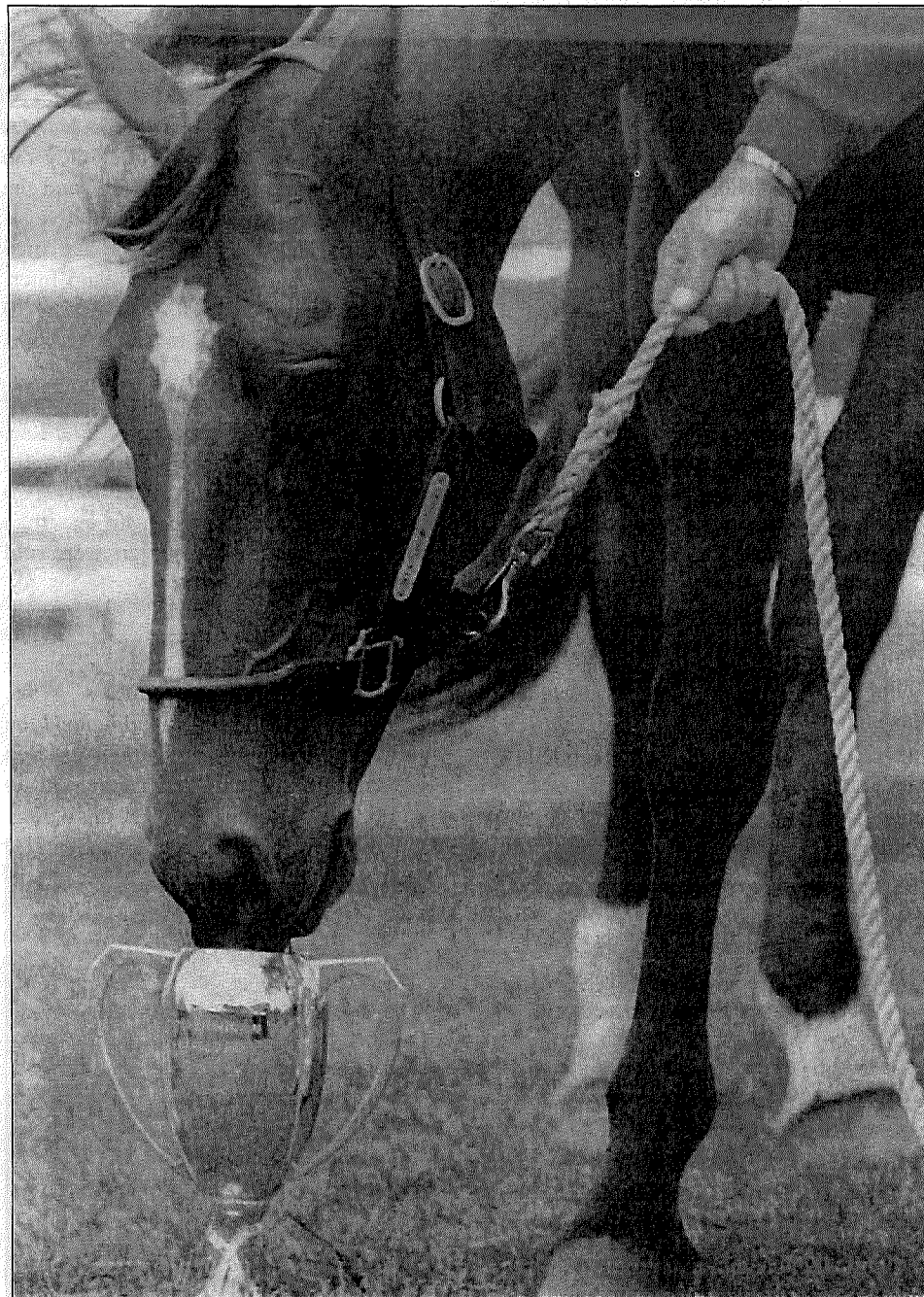
A five-year-old son of Southern Gentleman and the Swan family's broodmare gem Weona Jewel, Weona Warrior was something of an enigma. A difficult horse to train, he gave Hancock plenty of headaches on his way to the top. There were several times when the pacer looked the goods, yet failed to deliver.

While punters dismissed his Inter-Dominion prospects and allowed him to go out at 25-1 in the final, Hancock never gave up on him. Weona Warrior was so far down the point-score table he had to win his last heat of the series to be sure of qualifying for the final line-up.

He did, too, beating Young Mister Charles and Justaboyden, then in the week leading up to the final, Hancock went to work on him. Freshened up, he was all ready for the action in the final, but Hancock still had to produce one of the best drives of his life to land the \$260,000 first prizemoney cheque.

A good run through from the second row at the start of the race helped, but it was the genius of Hancock in the last lap that was the major factor in Weona Warrior's victory. On a rain-affected track, Hancock deftly weaved the pacer between horses from the 600-metre peg, then brought him with a well-timed run to score by a metre from Ultra Jet, with Valley Champ a half-neck away third.

The win took Weona Warrior's earnings to \$482,430 -- not bad for a \$30,000 yearling purchase that gave connections more than the usual share of problems.



Weona Warrior inspects the cup of success.



A jubilant Steve Turnbull and Smooth Satin.

2002 - SMOOTH SATIN

There was no way of knowing at the time, but when Smooth Satin won in 2002, he would become the last-ever winner of an Inter Dominion grand final on the historic Harold Park track.

By the time the following Inter Dominion was to be run in Sydney in 2010, Harold Park was on the verge of closing, and only two rounds of heats were held there, with the final being conducted at Tabcorp Park, Menangle, the new headquarters of harness racing in NSW.

Not only was the year 2002 destined to mark Harold Park's last Inter Dominion, but

the series also broke new ground when the Newcastle Club was invited to join forces with the NSW Harness Racing Club and stage one round of qualifying heats on its spacious track, one of the best in the State.

For trainer-driver Steve Turnbull, Smooth Satin's victory in the grand final gave him a place on the Inter Dominion honour roll alongside his father, the legendary A D (Tony) Turnbull who won the race twice with Hondo Grattan -- at Harold Park in 1973 and at Gloucester Park, Perth the following year.

Like Hondo Grattan, Smooth Satin was trained at The Lagoon outside Bathurst and his win was one of the most popular Inter Dominion victories since Hondo Grattan's first success in the big race 29 years earlier.

There have been many scenes of euphoria involving Inter Dominion winners in the intervening years but few to match the unbridled joy generated by Smooth Satin's victory.

People came from everywhere, spilling on to the track to congratulate not only Steve Turnbull and his wife, Jenny, but also owners Laurie Paton and his wife, Gwen and the pacer's breeders, Wayne and Ann Lamb of Golden Gait Stud Canowindra.

Smooth Satin, nicknamed "Socks" because of distinct white markings on his hind legs, went into the Inter Dominion final as one of the leading point-scorers after winning two of his three qualifying heats. Following an unlucky fifth in the first series at Harold Park, he won a mile heat at Newcastle in 1:56.6, then returned to Harold Park to score over 2160m at a 1:57.9 rate.

With that form, his odds of 7/1 in the final looked good, but against that he was faced with overcoming a second row barrier draw against stiff opposition. However, as Steve Turnbull explained later, the way the race was run ended up with the draw working in Smooth Satin's favour.

In the end, it came down to a two-horse war between Smooth Satin and the favourite, Shakamaker which led for most of the 2565m journey. Perfectly driven by Turnbull, Smooth Satin got the better of Shakamaker 100 metres out and held him at bay to score by two metres rating a record 1:58.3 for the trip. Rank outsider Trois Frere finished third, two and a half metres further back.

Smooth Satin was a five-year-old when the race was run and joined the millionaire club with his victory. First prizemoney of \$300,000 took his overall earnings to \$1,045,266 to that time, making him one of harness racing's great bargains. As a yearling, Socks cost Laurie and Gwen Paton just \$8000.

Miracle Mile

By Bob Cain & Andrew Georgiou

NO SINGLE Harness Race in Australia, or New Zealand, attracts as much media attention as the Miracle Mile, conducted annually at Sydney's Harold Park Paceway. The Inter-Dominion Pacing Championship is recognised in Australia and New Zealand as the premier Harness Racing event each year, but the Miracle Mile seems to arouse more interest, and certainly more controversy, every season.

When the race was first run on Friday, March 3, 1967, the title of Miracle Mile seemed rather grandiose as the then 'magical' two minute barrier had not been bettered by a pacer in a race in the Southern Hemisphere.

The popularity and standing of this famous event belongs, however, to the vision and dedication of former New South Wales Trotting Club Chief Executive, Len Smith. Following a US study tour in the mid-'60s, Smith perceived a need for a major race that would bring Australian horses to the attention of the American market and prove to the rest of the world that our local horses were in world class.

It was not until after the running of the 1966 Inter-Dominion carnival at Harold Park that ideas for the new event started to take shape. Smith's appointment as NSWTC Chief Executive, after stints as chairman of stewards and chief handicapper, allowed him to spend more time planning programs and promotions.

One of his first assignments was to introduce feature races that would put Harold Park on the Harness Racing map. Smith prepared a list of firms and organisations he planned to approach, one at a time, to sponsor a big new event he had finally decided to call the 'Miracle Mile'.

Although two-minute miles were the benchmark in US Harness Racing, they were non-existent in Australia and New Zealand. The four-minute mile for athletes created tremendous public interest in the early fifties, and Smith wanted a name to create similar public interest in trotting to create discussion and excitement.

A race name that would never be outdated. That is how the Miracle Mile was conceived. It was felt that despite the improvement in times, be it first the breaking of two minutes, or getting down to 1:55, 1:50 or even faster, it would always remain a Miracle Mile.

The next thing was to sell the idea to a sponsor. At that time, sponsorship of horse racing, thoroughbreds and standardbreds, was rather limited. In many respects, the choice of name for the new feature race sold the idea.

Smith dictated the first letter to tobacco giants W. D. & H. O. Wills, then waited for a reply before forwarding any more letters to the remaining firms he had selected.

"I had a list of 12 organisations I was going to approach," Smith said. "Before I got to sending the second letter out, W. D. & H. O. Wills came to me and said they

wanted to sponsor the race. What impressed them most, was the name."

The sponsorship deal parcelled up, the stage was set for the inaugural Craven Filter Miracle Mile. Prizemoney was \$10,000, plus \$5000 in time incentives, including an extra \$1000 if the winner equalled or bettered Mineral Spring's Harold Park record of 2:01.2, and an extra \$4000 if the winner bettered two minutes.

The Miracle Mile was the richest pacing sprint race in the Southern Hemisphere and it changed the pattern of Harness Racing in Australia. The emphasis was now on sheer speed, breaking the somewhat boredom that existed with some of the long distance 'follow the leader' type events.

The next matter to be considered was a suitable date for the big event. It was decided to select a date a few weeks after the Inter-Dominion, giving NSWTC Directors the opportunity to judge performances of the top horses available.

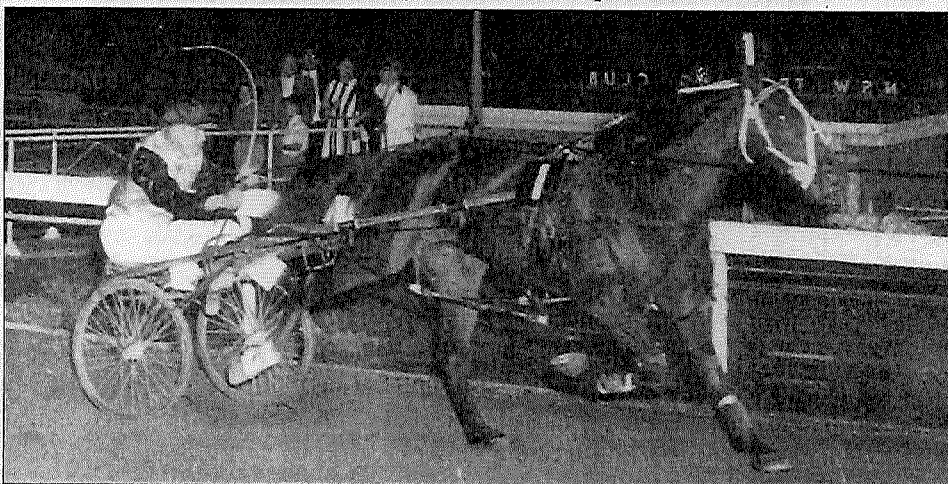
Smith fought hard for the race to have a maximum of six runners. Apart from the track size, and the fact only six horses were across the front line of the mobile at Harold Park, Smith felt a field of six provided every opportunity for all runners, and the pacer in last position had only five horses to pass to win the race. Despite several attempts over the years to increase the number of starters, the six-horse maximum field has been maintained.

1967 - ROBIN DUNDEE

INTEREST was at fever pitch when the six invited runners stepped on to Harold Park for the inaugural Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 3, 1967. One of the first Australian horse races to be sponsored, it was also one of the first shown 'live' on television through the ABC and regional stations.

The field contained three New Zealand pacers - Robin Dundee, Rocky Star and Southern Song - two local Sydney pacers, Tongue Twister and Rachel McGregor, and the Victorian mare Angelique. History was made that balmy March night.

A crowd of 20,287 gave eight-year-old mare Robin Dundee (4/5 fav.) a champion's



Robin Dundee became the first horse to break the miracle 2:00 under race conditions.

ovation in her lap of honour after scorching over the Glebe circuit in 1:59 with Robert Cameron in the sulky to record an effortless 25-yard victory over Tongue Twister (9-2). Angelique (10-1) was three metres away third.

Australian Harness Racing had come of age. The inaugural Miracle Mile did more to put Australia and New Zealand on the centre stage of the world's scene than any other individual event. Five of those six pacers eventually raced in the US. Angelique was the only one to stay home.

1968 - HALWES

THE second Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 8, 1968, attracted a crowd of 19,858. Basic prizemoney was \$10,000, with an additional \$2500 if the winner equalled or bettered two minutes, and a further \$5000 to equal or better Robin Dundee's track record of 1:59.

The Tasmanian champion, Halwes, ruled out of the Inter-Dominion Final at Alexandra Park, Auckland, less than a fortnight earlier with a leg injury, eclipsed the deeds of all previous 'all time' greats of trotting with a sensational victory.

Driven by Kevin Newman, Halwes stopped the clock at 1:58.6 after they ran the first half-mile in 59.2 seconds, and the last 800 metres in 59.4. A prohibitive 4-9 favourite, Halwes came home the final quarter in 29.2 to beat the Auckland Inter-Dominion Champion, First Lee (9-2), by 20 yards, with the New Zealander Great Adios (4-1) 10 yards away third.

The American interest was maintained with three of that year's runners - First Lee, Paddy's Night and Cardinal Bruce - later campaigning in America. After only two editions of the Miracle Mile, no less than eight of the 12 individual starters were sold to race in the United States.

1969 - ADAPTOR

SUCCESS followed success. The following year, 1969, saw 19,593 attend the third Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 14. Basic prizemoney was increased to \$12,500, plus a further \$2500 if the winner

equalled or bettered two minutes, and a further \$10,000 to equal or better the 1:58.6 track record set by Halwes a year earlier.

Victorian speedster, Adaptor (1-2 fav.), driven by his trainer Jack Hargreaves, took the lead after going two furlongs and was untroubled to beat Twinkle Hanover (6-1) by seven yards, after running his final quarter in 29 seconds. Viking Water (8-1) was five yards away third.

Adaptor, which had to be scratched from the race a year earlier after injuring a check ligament, ran the mile in 1:59.2, while Twinkle Hanover clocked 1:59.8 - the first time two runners had gone better than two minutes in a race in Australia.

The exodus to America continued. Three more Miracle Mile starters were later sold to race in the Northern Hemisphere - Adaptor, Twinkle Hanover and Cocky Raider, which finished fourth in 2:00.6. The American export tally was now eleven.

1970 - LUCKY CREED

ONCE again basic prizemoney was increased for the fourth Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 13, 1970 - \$13,000, plus \$2500 for a two-minute mile and \$10,000 for breaking the track record, which was still held by Halwes.

Racing with a perfect trail behind the reigning Melbourne Inter-Dominion Champion, Bold David (6-1), until the two-furlong post, the brilliant Queenslander, Lucky Creed, favourite at 9-10 with Vic Frost in the sulky, finished strongly to just edge out the Victorian gelding by one-and-a-half yards. Another Victorian, Imatoff (12-1) was three yards away third.

Before a crowd of 21,611, the first four placegetters all recorded sub two-minute miles, the first time this had happened in a race in Australia. Lucky Creed stopped the clock at 1:59; Bold David (1:59.2), Imatoff (1:59.4) and Deep Court (1:59.8).

Lucky Creed's 29th win from 35 starts, it was a remarkable effort considering he was only a 2:26 class horse when he arrived in New South Wales unheralded from Queensland six months earlier.

Holder of the Australasian record winning sequence of 24 until Maori's Idol equalled his feat in 1978, which was subsequently extended to 29 by San Simeon in 1981, Lucky Creed was without a doubt the best pacer to come out of Queensland.

His ability to 'back up' after a hard run was incredible. He could race every night of the week and still look fresh. During November 1969, Lucky Creed won eight races for the month. At one stage he won three races in five days. In November and December of that year he won 14 races, and in December he won six races in the space of 15 days.

That was Lucky Creed's last run in Australia for quite some time. Yonkers Raceway President, Martin Tananbaum, was successful in negotiating with owner-trainer

Merv Wanless to take the entire to Yonkers Raceway, New York, for the International Series in May.

Experiencing leg problems in America, Lucky Creed won six of 20 starts in the US before returning home to Queensland. He had one further season of racing in Australia in 1972-73 when 11 starts produced six wins, a second and a third.

1971 - MOUNT EDEN

CHAMPION WA pacer, Mount Eden, fresh from a number of sub two-minute miles during the Inter-Dominion series at Addington in Christchurch, New Zealand, was the star attraction of the fifth Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 12, 1971. Basic prizemoney was increased to \$17,500, with an additional \$12,500 in time incentives.

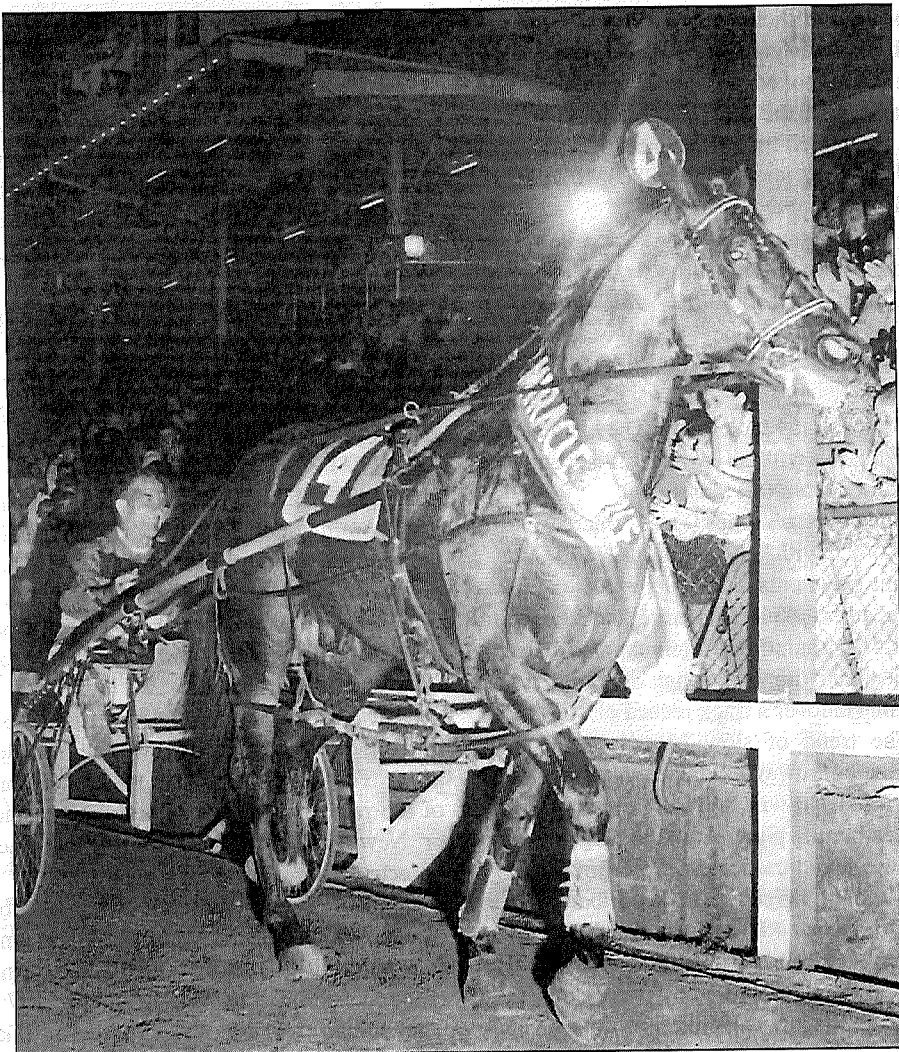
A record Miracle Mile crowd of 24,492 saw Mount Eden, driven by his trainer, Jack Miles, overcome difficulties to win brilliantly in 1:58.8, only .2 of a second outside the record held by Halwes.

In a race of sensations before the biggest crowd at Harold Park since the 1960 Inter-Dominion Final, Mount Eden wanted to trot in the score-up then went into a wild gallop just before the field was released.

Punters, who had backed Mount Eden into 6-4 favouritism, were given another chance, however, when the starter, Clive Salkeld, declared a false start. The field re-assembled, but once again Mount Eden wanted to trot a few strides in his hobbles. Miles restrained him, but the champion broke into a gallop. This time there was no second chance. The starter went without him.

Still in a gallop, Mount Eden was left a conservative 10 lengths as the Kiwi mare Stella Frost and Bay Foyle raced head and head into the first turn. Tailed off for some considerable distance, Mount Eden unwound an amazing turn of speed to catch the field, then swept to the front with three furlongs to go. He then careered away to beat Deep Court (16-1) by 15 yards, with Bay Foyle (8-1) a halfhead away third.

Both Mount Eden and Stella Frost, which finished fourth in 2:00.4, were later sold to race in America to bring the tally of exports to the United States to fourteen.



The sheer speed of Mount Eden was awesome to watch.



The tenacity of Hondo Grattan was his greatest strength seen here defeating his fiercest rival Paleface Adios.

1972 - BAY FOYLE

THE first five Miracle Miles produced five sub two-minute winners, with 1970 featuring four sub two-minute miles. Two years later, on March 10, 1972, a crowd of 24,412 saw Bay Foyle become the first winner not to record a two-minute mile.

The race was expected to develop into one of the fastest run as Reichman, Deep Court, Manaroa and Bay Foyle all appeared contenders for the lead, but heavy rain on the Monday before the Miracle Mile, put ground staff behind in their preparation of a fast surface.

When Reichman drew the pole, there were plenty of supporters to say he could become the first horse to lead throughout and win the Miracle Mile. No leader had been able to win the previous five editions, although Bold David gave it a mighty nudge when beaten narrowly by Lucky Creed in 1970.

Reichman had the right credentials. At his previous start, he became the first pacer to better two minutes in a race on the three furlong Melbourne Showgrounds track, rating 1:58.6 to win the Anniversary Cup Final on February 26.

After a thrilling duel over the last half furlong that had the big crowd on its toes, Bay Foyle (5-1), driven by Charlie Parsons, wore down Reichman (3-1) to win by a head in 2:00.6.

Manaroa, the rat-tailed, roached-back midget from New Zealand, was sensationally backed in from 5-1 to 5-2 favouritism, but was four yards away third.

1973 - REICHMAN

THE NSW Trotting Club was faced with a major problem in trying to select the field for the seventh Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 16, 1973 - an embarrassment of riches. Just about every top-flight pacer in Australia and New Zealand was in Sydney after contesting the Inter-Dominion a fortnight earlier.

Stakemoney was increased to \$40,000. Basic prizemoney remained the same, \$20,000, with the increase coming in incentive payments. There was \$5000 if the winner bettered 2:00, and a further \$10,000 to better the Australian record of 1:58.6. In addition, \$1000 was to be paid to all runners, outside the winner, which bettered two minutes.

Reichman (7-2), runner-up to Bay Foyle a year earlier, was the oldest runner in the field, but showed blistering pace out of the mobile and paced the fastest race mile recorded on an Australian track.

The eight-year-old gelding whirled around Harold Park in 1:58.4 with Rex Hocking in the sulky to win by 16 yards before a crowd of 17,080.

His sheer pace took him to a clear length lead going into the first turn, and then to a two-length break as he breezed through the half in 58.4 seconds.

It was not until the two furlongs post that his speed began to tell. The others wilted and Reichman shot further ahead as he opened up a six-length break running into the final furlong.

With Hocking driving him out with the whip when he realised an Australian record was in sight, Reichman drew clear over the concluding stages and was untroubled to beat Royal Ascot (7-1) by 16 yards, with Manaroa (3-1 fav.) two-and-a-half yards away third, slicing .2 of a second from the track record set by Halwes in 1968.

Once again, the first three placegetters turned in two-minute performances with Royal Ascot in 1:59.8 and Manaroa in 2:00.

1974 - HONDO GRATTAN

REICHMAN and Rex Hocking returned on Friday, March 15, 1974, in an attempt to win an unprecedented second successive

Craven Filter Miracle Mile. Once again the rich sprint was worth \$40,000, with the usual time incentives.

The greatest ovation heard in the history of night trotting in New South Wales greeted the eighth running of Australia's premier sprint. The cheering, from the big crowd of 22,448, rang at fever pitch when two local champions - Hondo Grattan and Paleface Adios - fought out a tooth-and-nail struggle all the way down the straight.

The roar of the crowd was deafening as they turned for home with Paleface Adios holding a slight advantage. For a few strides, the baldy-faced chestnut looked like winning. With sheer determination, tenacious little Hondo Grattan's will to win carried him through.

Driven by an equally determined Tony Turnbull, Hondo Grattan (7-2) simply refused to give in. At the end, his famous bulldog courage triumphed.

His victory over Paleface Adios (6-4 fav.) in that race will be long remembered. To the cheers of an emotional crowd, Hondo Grattan gradually wore down his opponent to win by a head, after giving him a length start from the 400 metres.

Mitchell Victory (6-1) ran a gallant third, six metres behind Paleface Adios, after starting from the extreme outside and being badly checked on the first turn.

Hondo Grattan and Paleface Adios were both credited with a time of 1:59, while Mitchell Victory went 1:59.6.

1975 - YOUNG QUINN

NEW ZEALAND pacer Young Quinn, fresh from a clean sweep of the Auckland Inter-Dominion series a month earlier, established himself as the best pacer in the Southern Hemisphere with a slashing 'last to first' performance to win the ninth Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 7, 1975.

Basic prizemoney was \$30,000, with \$5000 for a two-minute mile and an additional \$10,000 for an Australian record. There was also an extra \$1000 for all runners, outside the winner, that bettered two minutes.

That year produced a record Miracle Mile crowd of 25,632, eclipsing the previous best of 24,492 that saw Mount Eden win four years earlier.

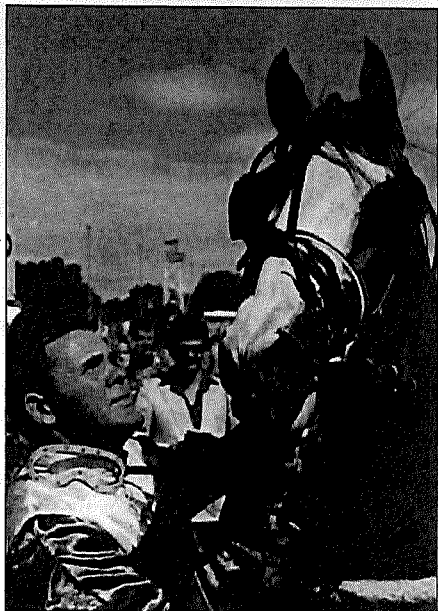
Young Quinn was written off by most Australian journalists after drawing the extreme outside in the six-horse field. No pacer had been able to win the race from a barrier wider than four.

There were several hard luck stories after the race - Mitchell Victory was hemmed in behind the leaders and held up for a clear run, while Hondo Grattan, winner of the race

a year earlier, staged a grand performance to finish fourth after racing three-wide for the final 1000 metres - but it was impossible to detract from Young Quinn's victory.

Driven by Charlie Hunter, Young Quinn (2-1) came from last, raced wide from the 400-metre mark, then dashed away in the straight, unextended by Hunter, to win handsomely by six metres from Mitchell Victory (10-9 fav.), with Royal Gaze (10-1) a head away third.

For the second time, the first four placegetters broke two minutes. Young Quinn (1:58.8); Mitchell Victory (1:59.4); Royal Gaze (1:59.4) and Hondo Grattan (1:59.8).



Colin Pike and Paleface Adios.

1976 - PALEFACE ADIOS

PALEFACE ADIOS, one of Australia's favourite pacers, turned the tables on arch-rival Hondo Grattan when they clashed in the 10th Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 12, 1976.

He picked up \$32,700 for connections, made up of basic stake money of \$22,500 for winning; \$5000 for bettering two minutes; a special bonus of \$5000 for equalling Reichman's race record, plus a \$200 consistency bonus as it was his second successive win at Harold Park.

His third Miracle Mile appearance, a crowd of 20,861 turned out to see if it was going to be a case of third time lucky for the popular chestnut, which was backed in from 7-4 to start the popular pick at 11-8.

Driven by trainer, Colin Pike, Paleface Adios displayed blistering speed from barrier four and cleared the inside horses after going only 50 metres and swept to the lead.

Once in front, Pike let the chestnut run along. He never gave his rivals a look in, running the first quarter in 28 seconds, and the first half-mile in 58.6.

Paleface Adios was untroubled to beat Don't Retreat (11-4) by three metres, with Hondo Grattan (5-1) 10 metres away third, stopping the clock in 1:58.4 to equal the Miracle Mile record set by Reichman in 1973.

For the third time since its inception, the first four placegetters broke the 'magical' two-minute barrier. Don't Retreat went 1:58.7 and Hondo Grattan 1:59.7, while Royal Gaze posted a time of 1:59.8 in finishing fourth.

1977 - ROYAL FORCE

FOR the first time in Australian Harness Racing history, a field made up entirely of sub two-minute performers lined up for the Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 11, 1977. The race, now in its 11th year, was firmly entrenched as the Sprint Championship of Australia.

The classy field lined up in this order: Markovina (1:59); Pure Steel (1:59); Lincoln Star (1:57.3); Don't Retreat (1:58.7); Royal Force (1:57) and Paleface Adios (1:57.6). It was also the richest field with the six runners boasting combined earnings of \$940,049.

Originally scheduled for March 4, the race was postponed for a week because of the water-logged state of Harold Park, caused by heavy rain and an underground spring gushing water onto the track in the back straight.

A week later, a crowd of 18,160 turned out to see WA pacer Royal Force continue the trend for sub two-minute miles.

The race started sensationally when the 2-1 favourite, Pure Steel, paced roughly in the score-up, brushed a knee and became unbalanced and went into a gallop. He had to be hooked almost to a standstill by Jack Retzlaff and was out of the race before the starter let them go.

Driven by Dudley 'Boof' Anderson, Royal Force (7-1) covered the mile in 1:59.5 and held off the fast-finishing Paleface Adios (7/2) to win by a metre. Markovina (15-4) was three-and-a-half metres away third.

After the race, it was revealed that Colin Pike had lost his whip when the field straightened up for home. It was the consensus of opinion that a few reminders with the whip may have turned the one-metre deficit into a winning break for Paleface Adios.

The first three home broke two minutes, going 1:59.5, 1:59.6 and 1:59.9 respectively, while Pure Steel, which finished last, clocked a respectable 2:00.9 after bungling the start hopelessly.

1978 - PURE STEEL

ALTHOUGH the great sprint event maintained its tremendous public interest, 1978, '79 and '80 could be described as the 'slow period' as all three winners recorded times slower than two minutes.

An increase in stake money saw the 12th running of the Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 31, 1978, which attracted a crowd of 20,024, worth \$70,000.

That was made up of basic prizemoney of \$50,000, and incentive payments of \$5000 for a two-minute mile, and an additional \$10,000 if the winner bettered the Harold Park record. There was also an extra \$1000 for each horse, outside the winner, which bettered two minutes.

Markovina, fresh from his victory in the recent Inter-Dominion Final at Moonee Valley, started 2-1 favourite with Kevin Robinson replacing regular driver, Brian Gath, who was under suspension.

Champion WA pacer, Pure Steel, a flop in that Melbourne Inter-Dominion series, returned to top form with a typical powerhouse performance.

Driven by Ted Demmler, Pure Steel (5-2) sustained a strong run from last at the half-mile, and racing three-wide for the last lap, to beat the evergreen Paleface Adios (7-2) by four metres. Michael Frost (40-1) was a nose away third.

Pure Steel clocked 2:00.4, after dropping to the rear in a 28.2 first quarter and a 1:00.6 first half. It was only the second occasion in 12 editions of the race that a time of two minutes or better had not been recorded.

1979 - THE SCOTSMAN

AFTER only 12 years, the Craven Filter Miracle Mile had become Australia's most internationally famous pacing event. The race had gained fame throughout the world, at times even upstaging the time-honoured Inter-Dominion Championship in the eyes of American trotting administrators. The

reason for the increased American interest in the race was quite obvious.

It was decided over a flying mile - the yardstick by which Americans gauge their champions. From the outset in 1967, when Robin Dundee won the inaugural Miracle Mile in 1:59, the first sub two-minute mile in the Southern Hemisphere, trotting in Australia came of age.

Since Robin Dundee's trail-blazing victory, that barrier was broken by no less than 27 Miracle Mile competitors in the ensuing 11 years. It hardly came as a surprise when 16 of them eventually found their way to the US.

Included in that group were five Miracle Mile winners - Robin Dundee, Adaptor, Lucky Creed, Mount Eden and Young Quinn. Other top pacers such as First Lee, Twinkle Hanover, Cocky Raider, Stella Frost and Royal Ascot also ended their racing days in America.

The Scotsman, winner of the 13th Craven Filter Miracle Mile on April 6, 1979, also finished his racing days in the US.

That year's Miracle Mile carried basic prizemoney of \$60,000, plus \$20,000 in time incentives, and was run as the first leg of a TAB feature double with the STC's Golden Slipper Stakes at Rosehill the following day.

Trained and driven by Graeme Sparkes, The Scotsman (3-1) finished strongly to beat Paleface Adios (5-1) by a metre-and-a-half. Lord Module (13-8 fav.) was a neck away third after locking wheels with Paleface Adios 50 metres from the finishing line.

The Scotsman paced the mile in 2:00.7, which was 2.3 seconds slower than the race record shared by Reichman and Paleface Adios. It is still the slowest winning time in Miracle Mile history.

1980 - LOCARNO

TOUGH WA pacer Pure Steel made a habit of re-writing record books. He was aiming at another record when he stepped out at Harold Park for the 14th running of the Craven Filter Miracle Mile on March 7, 1980.

The only horse to win the WA Pacing Cup four times, and the A. G. Hunter Cup three times, Pure Steel was poised to become the first dual Miracle Mile winner.

It was not going to be easy, however, as the race looked the most open for years, with one of the best sprint fields that could be assembled in Australasia.

For sheer speed, the 1980 Miracle Mile field took some beating.

All six starters - Lord Module, Koala King, Pure Steel, Frosty Imp, Paleface Adios and Locarno - had cracked the two-minute barrier. They could boast 25 sub two-minute miles, with the brilliant, but sometimes erratic, Lord Module topping the list with a 1:54.9 clocking. They had banked \$1,966,789 with 281 wins, 129 seconds and 91 thirds from 641 starts.

Basic prizemoney was increased to \$65,000, with an additional \$15,000 in bonus payments - \$5000 for a two-minute mile, an extra \$5000 to better the race record of 1:58.4 shared by Reichman and Paleface Adios, and an additional \$5000 to better Roma Hanover's track record of 1:57.8.

The trend of slow Miracle Mile times continued, however, when Locarno overcame barrier six to win in 2:00.4, landing a long priced betting plunge into the bargain for his New Zealand trainer driver, Robin Butt.

Although he started at 20-1, bookmakers bet as much as 40-1 about the flashy chestnut, which stormed home from last on the turn to beat Pure Steel (3-1) by two metres, after they ran the last half-mile in 57.5 seconds.

Contesting an unprecedented, and unlikely to be matched, seventh consecutive Miracle

Mile, Paleface Adios (16-1), which had been mixing racing with stud duties, was a nose away third. His Miracle Mile record was one win, four seconds, one third and one fifth.

1981 - FRIENDLY FOOTMAN

WITH the start of the 1980s, Australian Harness Racing reached new heights with the number of feature races growing rapidly. It soon became evident that the arduous four-night Inter-Dominion carnival was taxing many top performers. Showing the strain of racing, some became unavailable for the big Harold Park mile.

It was decided a more appropriate time to stage Australia's premier sprint event would be in January before the Inter-Dominion carnival as almost all the top horses were available to compete.

The 15th Craven Filter Miracle Mile on January 30, 1981, attracted a crowd of 17,739. Drizzling afternoon rain probably cost the club an extra five thousand in patronage. It was the second lowest crowd in the history of the race.

Basic stake money was increased to \$70,000 with the usual incentives. \$10,000 for breaking two minutes, \$10,000 for the race record and an additional \$10,000 for breaking the track record.

The new time slot almost produced a two-minute field with victory going to the Frank Day-trained and Kevin Newman-driven Friendly Footman. Newman became the first reinsman to win the rich sprint twice after scoring behind Tasmanian champion, Halwes, in 1968.

Friendly Footman (10-1) downed 1980 Miracle Mile winner, Locarno (5-1), by five metres, with Koala King (4-1) three metres away third. Frosty Imp, the 5-2 favourite, finished fourth. It was a very even field, with the last placed horse, Gammalite, recording 2:00.1.

Despite the rain-affected track, five horses ran two minutes or better for the first time in the history of the race. They were Friendly Footman (1:59.2); Locarno (1:59.7); Koala King (2:00); Frosty Imp (2:00) and Satinover (2:00).

After the race, Kevin Newman declared Friendly Footman would almost certainly have broken the record on a good surface.

1982 - GUNDARY FLYER

THE 16th Craven Filter Miracle Mile on January 29, 1982, was highlighted by several records, the most important being that for the first time all runners broke two minutes. In fact, the six horses recorded faster than 1:58 - certainly a 'miracle' performance.

Prizemoney remained at \$100,000, made up of \$70,000 basic stake money, plus \$30,000 in time incentives. There was \$10,000 for a two-minute mile; \$10,000 to equal or better the race record, and a further \$10,000 to equal Popular Alm's track record of 1:55.9.

Popular Alm was installed 7-4 favourite after coming up with gate four at the barrier draw on the Sunday before the big sprint, but had to be scratched after developing filling in his near hock after being off-loaded from a plane at Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport on Monday night.

He was replaced in the field by Tidy Jason, making the race an all-New South Wales affair. The first time in the 15-year history of the race that there was not an interstate or New Zealand representative, the race attracted a crowd of 20,173.

Gundry Flyer, trained and driven by Michael Day, became only the second four-year-old to win the prestigious sprint, emulating the feat of Mount Eden in 1971. The similarities did not end there. Like Mount Eden, Gundry Flyer gave trouble in the score-up.



The flamboyant Vinny Knight and Popular Alm.

He caused two false starts, and was ordered to start from the extreme outside. Even then, he was many lengths behind the others when the field swept to the starting point.

Private clockers timed Gundry Flyer to run the trip in 1:55.8 as he was at least 20 metres behind the gate at the actual point of despatch. Officially, he was credited with a time of 1:56.9 - 1.5 seconds inside the race record previously shared by Reichman and Paleface Adios.

Gundry Flyer (7-2) was simply magnificent, racing without cover from the 1200 metres before coming away to beat Frosty Imp (7-4) by three-and-a-half metres. Double Agent (5-4 fav.) was a nose away third.

Frosty Imp ran 1:57.3 and was followed in by Double Agent (1:57.3); Tidy Jason (1:57.8); Lord Pancho (1:57.8) and Koala King (1:57.8).

1983 - POPULAR ALM

FLAMBOYANT Victorian reinsman Vin Knight declared he would be going for the world record when he drove superstar pacer Popular Alm in the 17th Craven Filter Miracle Mile on February 4, 1983. The NSWTC, quick to respond to Knight's boast, arranged for an additional bonus of \$20,000 if he could achieve the feat.

Although the club arranged for the extra money to be paid to the winner if he broke the world half-mile track record of 1:54.6 set by Temujin at Delaware, Ohio, the previous September, no one really doubted the winner would be Popular Alm. He was quoted at 1-7 in early markets, making him the shortest pre-post favourite in the race's history.

Carrying basic prizemoney of \$70,000, plus original time incentives of \$30,000 and the additional \$20,000, the winner had the opportunity to take home a cheque for \$95,000 - \$45,000 first prize; \$10,000 for breaking 1:58; \$10,000 for a track record of 1:55.9; \$10,000 for an Australian time trial record of 1:55.4 and \$20,000 for a world record of 1:54.6.

Popular Alm was poised to break a long drought for Victorian trained pacers in the big sprint. No horse prepared south of the Murray River had won the race since Reichman took out the race for Ballarat-based horseman Rex Hocking in a track record 1:58.4 in 1973.

Unbeaten in four Harold Park starts, and the track record holder at 1:55.9, a second faster than the Miracle Mile record, Popular Alm drew barrier four, the most successful alley in the 16-year history of the race.

Once again the entire field bettered the two-minute barrier with Popular Alm starting a prohibitive 2-9 favourite, the shortest priced favourite on record. Facing the breeze for the last lap, Popular Alm wore down arch-rival, Gammalite (12-1), to win by a metre-and-a-half Bill's Student (20-1) was nine metres away third.

Popular Alm ran 1:57.7, and was followed in by Gammalite (1:57.9); Bill's Student (1:58.8); Double Agent (1:59.1); Copper Way (1:59.3) and Jikk Adios (1:59.4).

1984 - DOUBLE AGENT

PRIZEMONEY was increased to \$130,000 for the 18th Craven Filter Miracle Mile on January 27, 1984, consisting of \$100,000 basic stakemoney, plus a \$5000 oil painting of the winner if he, or she, equalled the track record of 1:55.9.

There was also an additional \$10,000 for the Australian race record of 1:54.5, plus \$15,000 for the winner to eclipse the Australian time trial record of 1:53.2. All records were held by Popular Alm.

Although the entire field went inside two-minutes in 1983, a year later, only the winner, the durable 12-year-old gelding Double Agent (1:59.6), and runner-up, Bundanoon (1:59.6), went better than two minutes. Double Agent is still the oldest winner of the big event.

Driven by his 61-year-old trainer, Joe Ilsley, Double Agent (6/1) showed his younger rivals a trick or two when he won. Emotions overflowed as Ilsley and 'Old Dub' added a fairy tale chapter to the 18-year-old history of Sydney's premier sprint event.

The large crowd of 20,076 cheered themselves hoarse, as Ilsley drove with all the vigour he could muster over the last 50 metres to get the old gelding home by a half-head from Bundanoon (7-1), driven by Brian Hancock.

A grand victory, it revived memories of the titanic 1974 Miracle Mile when Hondo Grattan wore down Paleface Adios to win in the last few strides.

The Victorian, Thor Lobell (8-1), was six metres away third in 2:00.2 for Stephen Dove, after disputing the lead with top mare Karamea Duplicity through the first quarter in a blistering 26.5 seconds.

Champion Perth pacer, Preux Chevalier, subject to rumours about recurring leg problems in the week leading up to the big sprint, was a prohibitive 8-11 favourite, but raced many lengths below his best form and failed to beat a runner home.

1985 - PREUX CHEVALIER

AUSTRALIA'S premier sprint had a change of name in 1985. After 18 years as the Craven Filter Miracle Mile, it became the JPS Miracle Mile, but basically nothing else changed. It was the fastest field yet assembled for the race. The six-runners had posted 34 sub two-minute clockings in winning races or time trials.

The biggest crowd of the season was expected to turn out for the 19th running of the glamour race on January 18, 1985. By tradition, patrons would also indulge in a huge betting spree.

Since Robin Dundee won in 1967, the Miracle Mile had always attracted the season's biggest crowd, excluding the Inter-Dominion Final. So far, a total of 376,510 fans had seen the big sprint - an average of 20,917. Collectively, they had wagered \$38.1 million on the 18 meetings for an average turnover of \$2,114,208.

The 1985 edition attracted a crowd of 17,892. They wagered \$611,631 with the on-course tote, and a further \$1,431,260 with bookmakers. TAB figures of \$1,197,894 took combined turnover to \$3,240,785.

An abject failure twelve months earlier, Preux Chevalier and his trainer-driver, Barry Perkins, were back at Harold Park. This time with better results.

Favourite at 11-8, the six-year-old exploded to the lead at the 600 metres after trailing the pace for most of the race, and then treated his five rivals with utter contempt.

He quickly opened up a winning break in the straight and was untroubled to beat Paleface Bubble (20-1), a son of 1976 Miracle Mile winner, Paleface Adios, by nine metres. The Queensland champion, Wondai's Mate (7-2), was three-and-a-half metres away third.

Once again, every runner clocked under two minutes. Preux Chevalier ran a race record 1:56.7, slicing .2 of a second off Gundry Flyer's record set three years earlier.

He was followed in by Paleface Bubble (1:57.6); Wondai's Mate (1:58); Karamea Duplicity (1:58.9); Quite Famous (1:59) and Dyama (1:59.1).

1986 (January) - VILLAGE KID

PREUX CHEVALIER, which went on to annex the A. G. Hunter Cup and a clean sweep of the Melbourne Inter-Dominion series at Moonee Valley later that season, unfortunately broke down after a New Zealand Cup campaign in November 1985, and never raced in Australia again.

Another WA pacer, Village Kid, was the heir apparent to Preux Chevalier's recently vacated throne. Runner-up to Preux Chevalier in the Inter-Dominion Final, he had come back better than ever and was expected to dominate the JPS Miracle Mile on January 24, 1986.

The five-year-old gelding had won his last seven starts, and had recently raced outside the leader to win his second WA Pacing Cup at Gloucester Park.

Village Kid could boast 29 wins and 12 placings from 47 starts. He also had 12 sub two-minute miles to his credit.

Although Village Kid was having his first start at Harold Park, which was considered some disadvantage, when he drew the pole, pre-post bookmakers immediately installed him an odds-on favourite for the 20th running of Australia's premier sprint.

Basic stakemoney was increased to \$125,000, plus a \$5000 oil painting if he, or she, equalled or broke the race record of 1:56.7. There was an additional \$25,000 in time incentives. A crowd of 21,227 turned out, and combined turnover for the night, including TAB figures, was \$3,428,962.

It took only a breathtaking 1:56.9 for Village Kid, trained by Bill Horn and driven by Chris Lewis, to demonstrate he was the best pacer in Australia when he simply toyed with the top class field.

Favourite at 4-5, Village Kid held the lead into the first bend and gave Lewis an armchair drive, going to the line untouched to beat Atashy Luck (14-1) by 13 metres, with Paleface Bubble (4-1) two metres away third.

Once again all runners bettered two minutes. Village Kid ran the trip in 1:56.9, only .2 of a second outside Preux Chevalier's race record, and was followed in by Atashy Luck (1:57.8); Paleface Bubble (1:58); Quite Famous (1:58.3); Glenn's Thunder (1:58.4) and Lindy's Laodicea (1:58.7).

1986 (December) - MASTER MOOD

VILLAGE KID was seeking a lasting place in history books when he stepped on to Harold Park on December 5, 1986. The gelding was poised to become the first dual winner of the JPS Miracle Mile. If successful, he would create a record which probably would never be equalled.

Because of a reshuffle of Australian Grand Circuit dates, that season's Miracle Mile was brought forward from its traditional January date and run a month earlier, making it the second Miracle Mile for 1986. The race carried basic prizemoney of \$140,000, plus a further \$30,000 in time incentives.

The big sprint attracted two classy New Zealand performers in Master Mood and Trident, but they both fared poorly in the barrier draw, coming up with gates five and six respectively.

Trained and driven by Kevin Williams, Master Mood had shown his class with a 1:56 victory in a heat of the Inter-Dominion at Albion Park earlier that year. His recent form was impeccable, too, having captured the New Zealand Cup - Air New Zealand Free-For-All feature double at Addington in November.

Trident could boast 12 wins and eight placings from 35 starts and a best time of 1:56.9 at Addington. He was prepared by Brian O'Meara, who grabbed Miracle Mile headlines more than a decade later.

The select six had banked \$1,797,040 from 143 wins, 47 seconds and 24 thirds from 296 starts. The fine weather attracted a crowd of 16,268. Combined turnover for the 21st running of the Miracle Mile was \$3,017,585.

Bookmakers thought Village Kid could make history as he started 4-9 favourite, but Master Mood (7-1) upset the party when he sprinted home strongly to beat My Lightning Blue (25-1) by two metres. Village Kid was a metre away third.

Master Mood covered the trip in 1:56.1, slicing .6 of a second off Preux Chevalier's race record. My Lightning Blue, credited with a time of 1:56.2, was followed in by Village Kid (1:56.3); Trident (1:56.5) and Riverlea Jack (1:57.6). Only Riverlea Jack and Paleface Bubble, which was pulled up, failed to go under Preux Chevalier's previous record time.



Village Kid and Chris Lewis.

1987 - VILLAGE KID

THE 1987 Miracle Mile once again underwent a name change. The 22nd running of Australasia's biggest sprint race became the Commodore Miracle Mile. Run on November 27, the name change brought a stakes increase from \$170,000 to a record \$205,000, made up of basic stakemoney of \$175,000, plus \$30,000 in time incentives.

The six contestants had raced 325 times for 169 wins, 55 seconds and 26 thirds for \$2,463,960. The race gave Village Kid and My Lightning Blue the chance to enter the records books again. Both horses had an Inter-Dominion Championship win to their credit, and were expected to fight out the finish.

If Village Kid won, he would become the first horse to win the race twice. If My Lightning Blue was successful, he would become the first pacer in history to win the Inter-Dominion, New Zealand Cup and Miracle Mile in the same year.

The fine spring night attracted a crowd of 23,166, which saw Village Kid become the first dual Miracle Mile winner. Combined turnover on the meeting was \$3,575,978.50.

Shooting for his 13th straight win and 4-7 favourite, Village Kid sped to the front on the first turn and was untroubled to beat Happy Sunrise (16-1) by three metres, with Jay Bee's Fella (11-1) a halfhead away third. Once again every runner bettered two minutes.

Village Kid won in 1:57.7 and was followed home by Happy Sunrise (1:58); Jay Bee's Fella (1:58); Gay Adam (1:58.2); Whirley Dream (1:58.5) and My Lightning Blue (1:58.5).

Chris Lewis joined Kevin Newman as the only drivers to have won the rich sprint twice.

1988 - OUR MAESTRO

Prizemoney for the 23rd running of the Commodore Miracle Mile on November 25, 1988, was a record \$250,000, made up of basic prizemoney of \$200,000, plus time incentives of \$50,000. With record prizemoney on offer, the race attracted record pre-race publicity, mainly on the annual guessing game of trying to pick the field.

The first official invitation was issued to Village Kid, but there was shock news from Perth in the second week of November. Never before in the history of Australia's greatest sprint had an invitation for a start in the event been rejected, but part-owner and trainer, Bill Horn, was about to make history with Village Kid.

According to Horn, a Sydney trip for Village Kid was in doubt due to a wrangle over expenses between the NSWHR and part-owner, Gordon Cox.

On the other hand, Cox said Horn would not make the trip as he did not want to parade the horse at the barrier draw at the Rosehill races.

The club was desperately keen to have the reigning Miracle Mile Champion at Harold Park, but it was the club's firm policy not to subsidise any runner coming for the race. They did not want to set a precedent in Village Kid's case.

Village Kid, the only pacer to win the Miracle Mile twice, had his invitation withdrawn on Tuesday, November 15, "due to the connections' inability to meet the conditions of the race".

Connections contacted the NSWHR asking that Village Kid miss the parade and barrier draw at Rosehill Racecourse on Saturday, November 19. Directors voted against the proposal, after a heated debate, and withdrew the invitation.

The bold decision to rescind Village Kid's invitation attracted a mixed reaction. Some were critical of the club's decision, claiming promoters were neglecting their 'duty' to ensure the race contained the best six horses available.

There were just as many, however, applauding the club's decision not to provide any more favorable treatment to the connections of the WA star than to connections of other Miracle Mile aspirants.

The race attracted 23,915. For the first time in Miracle Mile history, more than \$4 million was invested on the meeting with combined turnover of \$4,285,827.

Vin Knight and Our Maestro wrote themselves into the record books with an effortless win. Knight, who won the race with Popular Alm in 1983, became the third reinsman to win the prestigious sprint event twice, joining Kevin Newman and Chris Lewis.

Favourite at 10-9, Our Maestro worked to the front soon after the start and was untroubled to beat Luxury Liner (7-2) by seven metres, with Thorate (16-1) four metres away third. The first five placegetters broke two minutes, with Our Maestro stopping the clock at 1:58.1.

1989 - WESTBURN GRANT

ONE of the longest sponsorship arrangements in the history of Australian sport ended with the running of the Commodore Miracle Mile on November 25, 1989. It was the 23rd running of the premier sprint event, and the 23rd year the race was sponsored by W. D. & H. O. Wills.

The tobacco company was there from the outset in 1967. The race was known as the Craven Filter Miracle Mile for 18 years, then had three years as the JPS Miracle Mile and finally two years as the Commodore Miracle Mile.

Following a Federal and State Government clampdown on tobacco advertising, Wills and the NSWHR ended their association in the 1988 Commodore Miracle Mile.

The NSWHR turned to Coca-Cola for support and that company readily accepted the offer. The 24th running of Australia's most prestigious sprint on November 24, 1989, became the Coca-Cola Bottlers Miracle Mile. Although the name of the race changed slightly, nothing else did, especially the annual guessing game of trying to pick the field. Once again the committee of the NSWHR did not have an easy task.

The select six had raced 414 times for 167 wins and 115 placings for \$3,394,208. The race attracted a crowd of 23,991, with combined turnover of \$4,314,712.

History was made that year when Tess Gleeson partnered Koala Sunrise to become the first woman to drive in the feature event. Gleeson's Miracle Mile dreams turned into a nightmare, however, when Koala Sunrise got onto the sulky wheel of Jodie's Babe soon after the start and broke before finishing last.

Vic Frost grabbed his share of history when he won with the brilliant four-year-old Westburn Grant. Joining Kevin Newman, Chris Lewis and Vin Knight as a dual winner of the race, Frost won the Miracle Mile almost two decades earlier behind Lucky Creed in 1970.

Favourite at 5-4, Westburn Grant became the third four-year-old to win the Miracle Mile, joining Mount Eden and Gunday Flyer, with a blistering first quarter that sapped the strength of his five rivals.

Charging out of the gate, Westburn Grant matched strides with Thorate at a breakneck

speed through the first quarter. Two talented pacers and two champion reinsmen - Vic Frost and Brian Hancock - staged a virtual war for the first 400 metres, carving out a phenomenal 26.2 seconds - the fastest first quarter recorded at Harold Park.

Westburn Grant headed off Thorate, and when Frost was able to get away with a couple of 'slow quarters', the race was as good as over.

Sprinting home in 28.7 seconds, Westburn Grant was untroubled to beat a courageous Thorate (9-4) by eight metres, with Jodie's Babe (5-1) three-and-a-half metres away third. Westburn Grant stopped the clock in 1:57.9.

1990 - WESTBURN GRANT

TWELVE months later, Westburn Grant and Vic Frost were chasing further glory in the Coca-Cola Miracle Mile on November 30, 1990. Westburn Grant was hoping to join Village Kid as a dual Miracle Mile winner, while Frost was shooting for a record third win in the famous sprint.

The six starters had posted 141 wins, 64 placings and \$3,077,184 from 284 starts. They were racing for basic stakemoney of \$250,000, plus \$50,000 in time incentives.

For the first time in history, the entire field went under 1:57, with Westburn Grant turning in a race record 1:55.6 - shaving .5 of a second off Master Mood's race record, and .3 of a second off Popular Alm's track record.

Charging out of barrier two, Westburn Grant passed the first light in 27.3 seconds. The middle half of the race was just as imposing. The half-mile from the 400-metre point to the 1200-metre mark was covered in 57.9.

Westburn Grant ran the second quarter in 29.7, before slipping up the back straight in 28.1. With his main danger, Thorate, on his back, Frost waited patiently until the home turn before asking Westburn Grant for his final effort.

Favourite at 4-6, Westburn Grant raced away to win by six metres from Almeta Boy (16-1), with Defoe (20-1) a nose away third.

Almeta Boy turned in an incredible performance after galloping at the start and losing about 30 metres. On face value, Tight Connection was disappointing in finishing last, but he was no more than two lengths from the placegetters in 1:56.5 - a time that would have been good enough to win most Miracle Miles.

Westburn Grant picked up \$180,000, including \$20,000 for breaking Popular Alm's track record. That boosted his earnings to \$1,148,411 from 29 wins in only 40 starts - an amazing \$28,710 each time he stepped on to the track.

Thorate also joined Village Kid, Gammalite and Westburn Grant in the millionaire bracket by finishing fourth to take his stakes tally to \$1,004,268.

1991 - CHRISTOPHER VANCE

WESTBURN GRANT, in line for an unprecedented Miracle Mile hat-trick, was the first horse invited to contest the race on November 29, 1991. Tragically, the entire five-year-old career was dramatically cut short soon after winning the WA Pacing Cup at Gloucester Park on January 4, 1991.

He fractured the pastern bone in his near hind leg, but following an operation at Murdoch University, he returned to the racetrack with four surgical screws in the leg to hold the pastern together.

That Miracle Mile was noteworthy for reasons other than the comeback of Westburn Grant, however. For instance the controversial omission of tough Kiwi pacer Franco Ice, and the equally controversial inclusion of the brilliant Chokin, which became the first three-year-old to start in the rich sprint.

The omission of Franco Ice, which had beaten Westburn Grant in a world record 1:55.1 in the Queensland Pacing Championship at Albion Park in October, caused Australia-wide controversy.

It also led to a miserable weekend for Victorian trainer-driver Graeme Lang. He was denied the chance to win his first Miracle Mile, and lost the horse he thought could do it.

When NSWHR directors left Franco Ice out of the field, they astonished Lang, and many fans across the country. To make matters worse, the owners of Franco Ice arrived at Lang's Melton stables on Saturday, the day after the Miracle Mile field was announced, and took the horse away.

While Franco Ice was home in his box, six of Australasia's best pacers, which could boast earnings of \$3,488,818 from 131 wins and 67 placings from 217 starts, were chasing a record \$400,000 in stakemoney and time incentives.

Basic prizemoney was increased to \$300,000, with time incentives of \$25,000 for breaking Westburn Grant's track record of 1:55.6, plus \$75,000 to better Thorate's Australian record of 1:53.9.

Westburn Grant started even money favourite, but had to be content with third behind the New Zealanders, Christopher Vance (7-2) and Defoe (15-1), beaten five metres and six metres. Trained by Barry and Roy Purdon and driven by Tony Herlihy, Christopher Vance ran the trip in 1:57.2, while his stablemate, Chokin, crashed heavily to the track on the home turn, totally exhausted.

Chokin went roughly in his gear when the starter released the field and galloped, losing several lengths. Recovering from that early bungle, Brian Gath took off three-wide with Chokin coming to the bell, but that was as close as he got.

Gath said the youngster had been overawed by the occasion and the close proximity of the Harold Park crowd. "The occasion was too much for him," Gath said. "He was a frightened little boy, and I doubt that another three-year-old will ever be invited to start in a Miracle Mile."



Westburn Grant was a champion every season.

1992 - FRANCO TIGER

EARLY speculation on the annual guessing game of selecting the field for the 1992 Coca-Cola Miracle Mile was dominated by a then relatively unknown Western Australian pacer named Jack Morris. "Jack Who?" screamed the banner headlines, as few people outside Perth had heard of the Sean Harney-trained star.

Sensational times at recent starts, however, including some startling wins, had Jack Morris primed for a late invitation to compete against the best pacers in Australasia.

Harney had already tasted Grand Circuit success, guiding Tarport Sox to victory over Whitby Timer and Jodie's Babe in the 1990 WA Pacing Cup at Gloucester Park.

Stakemoney for the 27th running of Australasia's most prestigious sprint remained at \$300,000, with an additional \$100,000 in bonuses. The field could boast earnings of \$4,685,937, the result of 168 wins, 73 seconds and 32 thirds from 352 starts.

The Glen Tippet-trained Franco Tiger, driven by Brian Gath, surged to his third consecutive Grand Circuit victory for the season in the most open Miracle Mile on record. Franco Tiger (13-4) led throughout to win by two-and-a-half metres from Christopher Vance (3-1), with Jack Morris (8-1) five metres away third.

Franco Tiger clocked 1:56.7, leaving his opponents with no excuses, although a history-making protest by Harney on behalf of Jack Morris may have suggested otherwise.

The first protest in the 27-year history of the Miracle Mile, Harney alleged interference by the winner on the first turn cost him the chance of leading, and ultimately, his chance of winning. After a hearing lasting nine minutes, the objection was dismissed.

After that controversial third, Sean Harney declared the gelding would get better and we would be hearing a lot more about Jack Morris. Well we certainly did, and more about Harney, too.

Jack Morris was voted Australian Harness Horse of the Year for 1992-93. He was also the leading stake earner in the country with \$526,430 from 11 wins from 18 starts that season.

At his next start after the 1992 Miracle Mile, Jack Morris led throughout to win the M H Treuer Memorial at Bankstown, beating Band Magic and Christopher Vance with Miracle Mile winner, Franco Tiger, fifth. Later in the season, Jack Morris beat Warrior Khan and Blossom Lady in the Inter-Dominion Final at Albion Park.

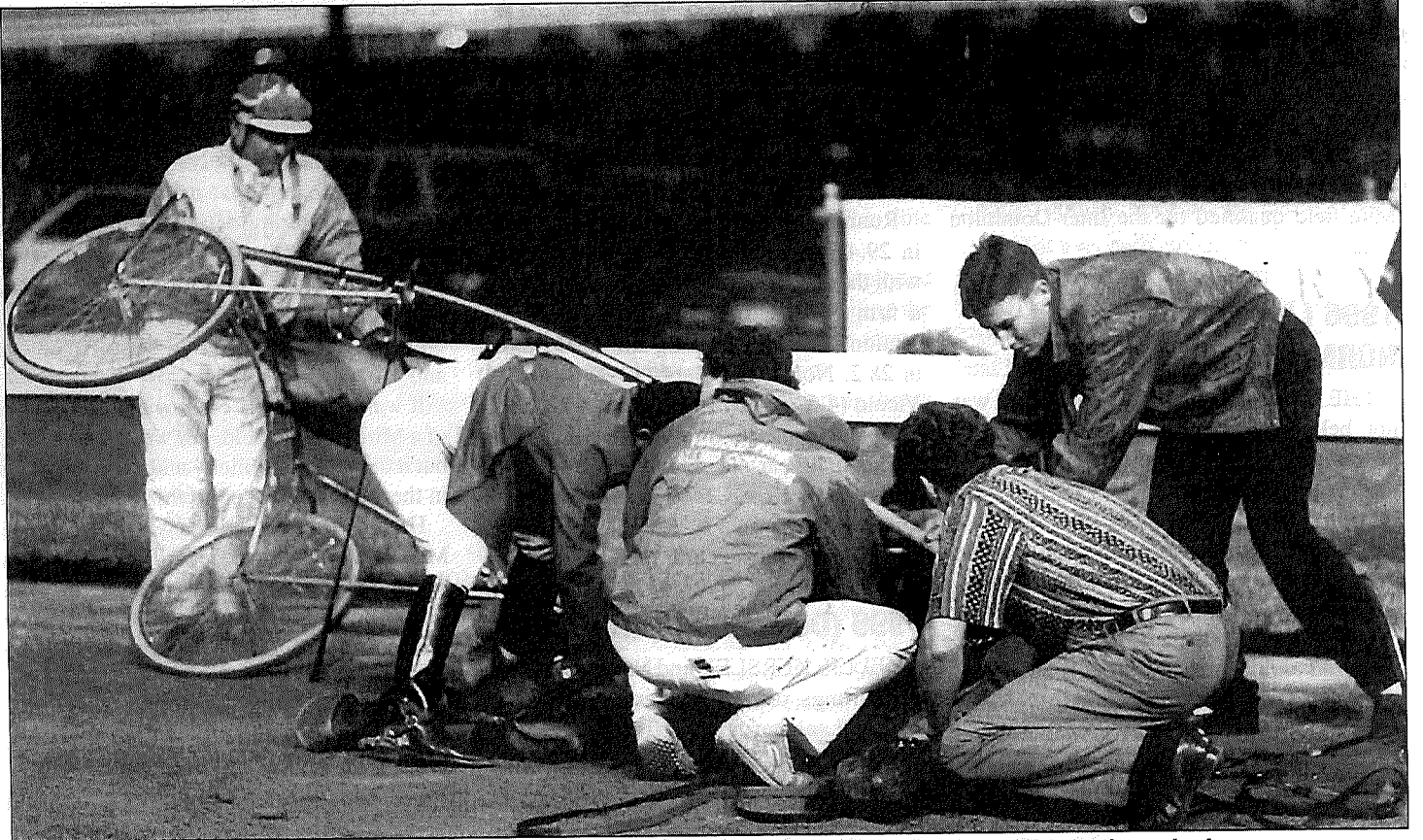
1993 - CHOKIN

JACK MORRIS returned to Sydney for the 1993 Miracle Mile on November 26. The 28th running of the famous sprint, once again six trained-to-the-minute pacers were chasing \$300,000, plus a further \$100,000 in time incentives. They had posted 142 wins, 92 placings and \$3,983,413 from 311 starts.

Chokin was also there, much tougher and stronger than the raw inexperienced three-year-old that crashed to the track on the home turn two years earlier when totally exhausted. He was in scintillating form, too, having recently won the New Zealand Cup and Air New Zealand Free-For-All at Addington.

The 1993 Miracle Mile received unprecedented media coverage - in the press, radio and television - mainly due to the flamboyant and colourful Sean Harney.

All that pre-race publicity, plus more than 12 months hard work by NSWHR officials, went down the drain, however, when the warning siren sounded at approximately 10.15pm on Friday, November 26.



The juvenile Chokin suffered stage fright in the Miracle Mile of 1991 and crashed to the track on the home turn.

In one of the biggest sensations to precede a major Australasian race, Jack Morris was withdrawn only seconds before the race was scheduled to start.

Dominating betting at 4-6, Jack Morris was scratched on the recommendation of veterinary surgeon, Dr David Evans, as the field lined up behind the mobile barrier in the back straight when blood was noticed trickling from one nostril.

Pandemonium broke out when it was announced the odds-on favorite had been scratched. It was later estimated almost \$2 million wagered in bets involving Jack Morris had to be refunded.

The start of the race was delayed 20 minutes and fresh betting was ordered. Chokin opened 4-5 favourite in revised betting before running the popular pick at 5-4.

One of the greatest comebacks in Harness Racing history did not receive the tributes it deserved when Chokin led throughout. With all the hullabaloo surrounding the late scratching of Jack Morris, many forgot to pay tribute to Barry Purdon and Tony Herlihy for Chokin's remarkable comeback.

That the race was run in two minutes flat, the slowest time in 13 years, was irrelevant. You could blame anyone but the Chokin camp - they just went out to win the race, and they did it in fine style, too.

After running the first quarter in 28.8 seconds, Herlihy and Chokin were able to stroll through the next 400 metres in 33.9, the slowest second quarter in Miracle Mile history.

Chokin ran the next quarter in 29.5 and came home the last 400 metres in 27.8 to beat the US-bred mare Sabilize (15-1) by four metres. Master Musician (2-1) was four metres away third.

The 1993 Miracle Mile may not have packed much punch as a spectacle, and in time to come it will probably be best remembered as the year the hot favorite was scratched at the barrier.

What should be remembered, however, is that Chokin set the seal to his greatness by becoming only the third horse to complete one of the most sought after trebles in Australasian Harness Racing - the New Zealand Cup, the Air New Zealand Free-For-All and the Miracle Mile - all run in the space of a month.

Only two other pacers - Master Mood (1986) and Christopher Vance (1991) - had won the three races in the same year.

1994 - CHOKIN

SEAN HARNEY, who figured prominently in the previous two editions of the Miracle Mile grabbed the headlines again late in September 1994, but for all the wrong reasons. The likeable larrikin of Harness Racing lost a battle with cancer of the throat and spine and died in St John of God Hospital, Perth, on September 29, a month before his 40th birthday.

At the end of October, and in the early days of November, Vic Frost had good reason for being confident of landing a record fourth Miracle Mile win on November 25. Frost, who had won with Lucky Creed in 1970, and twice with Westburn Grant (1989 and '90), had taken over the training of brilliant WA pacer Chandon some five months earlier.

Six starts for Frost had produced five wins, two of them in Grand Circuit races, and a close second. The flashy son of Classic Garry was arguably the best pacer in Australia at the time.

Meanwhile, over in New Zealand, Miracle Mile plans for Chokin were thrown into turmoil when he basically stopped to a walk in the New Zealand Cup.

It was the most stunning loss in New Zealand Harness Racing history. Two other members of the Barry Purdon stable - Montana Vance and Christopher Vance - also went absolute shockers.

Amid all the controversy of the flop of the Purdon trio, Bee Bee Cee and Jim Curtin did not get the recognition they deserved for their gutsy win over Master Musician and Matthew Lee in the New Zealand Cup.

After beating Master Musician and Lento in the Air New Zealand Free-For-All three days later, when he rated 1:58 with the last 800 metres in 56.7 seconds and the last quarter in 27.5, Bee Bee Cee headed to Harold Park for the Miracle Mile.

Despite his New Zealand Cup flop, Chokin was still in contention for a Miracle Mile berth, but he had to perform in a special trial before NSWHR President, Keith Adams, at Alexandra Park in Auckland. He did that, and was issued with an invitation to defend his Miracle Mile crown.

Chandon drew ideally in gate two, but in a bombshell announcement to rival the late scratching of Jack Morris a year earlier, Chandon was scratched four days before the sprint with a high suspensory strain to his off foreleg.

This allowed the first reserve, Young

Mister Charles, into the field, which could boast 126 wins, 80 placings and \$4,457,947 from 284 starts.

History was almost repeated when only a second veterinary opinion saved Bee Bee Cee from a worthless trans-Tasman trip. There was much drama during the meeting when rumours swept the racecourse early in the night that Bee Bee Cee was lame.

Stewards ordered Dr David Evans, at the centre of the previous year's storm with Jack Morris, to examine the New Zealand Cup winner. Dr Evans told stewards the horse was suffering soreness in his off hind leg and should be scratched.

That sent race promoters into a wild panic before they quickly organised a second opinion from Dr Peter Knight, who reported the horse was not lame.

Trainer Colin Calvert and Jim Curtin were confident he would prove his fitness with a pre-race workout. At first it appeared stewards would not allow the trial. Wild rumours again swept the course that the club would not run the Miracle Mile unless Bee Bee Cee was afforded the opportunity to trial.

Following the conflicting report from Dr Knight, and at the request of NSW Harness Racing Authority members present at Harold Park, and the host club, stewards reluctantly allowed the trial to go ahead. At the conclusion of the trial, both vets passed the five-year-old fit to run.

That drama out of the way, the crowd let out an almighty roar as the mobile barrier headed towards the first turn in anticipation of a keenly contested race. They were not disappointed, but tragically, the race was over before it started for Master Musician.

Midway through the score-up, Master Musician galloped and blundered, resulting in the gelding slipping his crupper and tailing out a long last. He did not interfere with any other runner, so the starter went without him.

Starting at 9-2 and driven a treat by Tony Herlihy, Chokin proved too strong for his rivals, downing Bee Bee Cee (4-1) by a metre, with Golden Reign (13-4) a half-head away third. Weona Warrior, the 11-4 favourite, finished fourth. Chokin stopped the clock at 1:56.2, almost four seconds faster than he went a year earlier.

Chokin joined Village Kid and Westburn Grant as a dual Miracle Mile winner, while Tony Herlihy stood alongside Vic Frost as the sprint's premier reinsmen with three victories each.

NSWHRC Directors were also big winners. Despite the criticism and divided opinion that comes with the difficult task of selecting the Miracle Mile field, the directors' opinions were 'spot on' in 1994. That was highlighted at Addington just under four months later when the entire 1994 Miracle Mile field qualified for the Inter-Dominion Final.

1996 (June) - NORMS DAUGHTER

THE great Harness Racing sprint was not held in 1995. In June, 1995, it was announced that the Miracle Mile, scheduled to be run on December 1, 1995, had been 'put on hold' until June 28, 1996, to allow the NSWHRC to complete extensions to the track and facilities. With the postponement, it meant there were two Miracle Miles in the calendar year of 1996.

Harold Park, which had hosted eight Inter-Dominion carnivals, was closed for nine weeks while a revolutionary new circuit was constructed. The circumference of the track was enlarged to 804.5 metres - an exact half-mile - with the width increased from 13 metres to 17 metres.

With the increased track size, the distance of the Miracle Mile was also increased from 1996. It was now the Miracle Mile over 1760 metres.

Stakemoney remained at \$400,000, including time incentives of \$50,000 if the Australian mile race record of 1:53.9 held by Thorate, was broken by the mile rate, plus a further \$50,000 for the world record of 1:50.8 held by Silver Almahurst.

The incentives, if won, would be distributed between the elite six, which could boast earnings of \$4,858,406, the result of 137 wins and 81 placings from 311 starts.

Kellie Kersley, born the same year Robin Dundee made history by winning the inaugural Miracle Mile in 1967, became the first reinswoman to win the time-honored sprint with a daring drive behind Norms Daughter.

The champion WA mare drew gate five, a difficult one to cross from as it required tremendous speed to do it with comfort before the first turn. Kersley knew, however, that her best chance, indeed her only chance, was to use the mare's greatest commodity - stamina. Lurking at the back, making a mid-race move wide out or near the end, was not an option.

Crossing the reins and giving the mare a couple of hard cracks with the whip, Kersley and Norms Daughter charged out in search of the lead. Her actions at the start resulted in a \$50 fine, but the penalty would have been more severe if her judgment had been

out by as much as a centimetre on the first turn.

Kersley cut it fine, just clearing Il Vicolo, which was not quite sharp enough to hold her out. Once she reached the front, Norms Daughter was always going to be hard to run down.

Running the first quarter of the last mile in 29.4 seconds, Kersley steadied the pace with the second quarter in 30.7, and still had a firm grip on the reins through the third section in 28.6. Sprinting the final quarter in 28.2, Norms Daughter (13-2) downed Il Vicolo (4-5 fav.) by two metres, with Beefy T (7-1) four metres away third.

The five-year-old daughter of Northern Lights covered the 1760 metres in 2:06.4, a mile rate of 1:55.6, equalling Westburn Grant's 1990 race record.

1996 (December) - IRAKLIS

KELLIE KERSLEY and Norms Daughter, the darlings of WA Harness Racing, also achieved another honor - the shortest reign as Miracle Mile Champions in history. Less than six months after winning the prestigious sprint, they were back defending their Coca-Cola Miracle Mile crown on December 6, 1996.

For the second time in a decade, the NSWHRC conducted two Miracle Miles in 1996 - one in June and one in December. The club also ran the feature race twice in 1986, in January and December, due to a change in the scheduling of dates for the Grand Circuit.

Il Vicolo, runner-up to Norms Daughter in the June Miracle Mile, again put himself into Miracle Mile contention when he came off 10 metres to beat Anvil's Star and Surprise Package in the New Zealand Cup at Addington on November 12. It was his second successive win in the big two-mile event.

Another Kiwi grabbing the headlines at that New Zealand Cup meeting was emerging star, Iraklis. He made mince-meat of New Zealand's best pacers with a sensational victory in the Air New Zealand Free-For-All, storming past his rivals to beat Brabham and Whale Of A Tale by a length-and-three-quarters. Il Vicolo finished seventh. Iraklis sizzled over his final 800 metres in 55.8 seconds, and his closing 400 metres in a brilliant 26.9 to win effortlessly, rating 1:56.2.

The brilliant four-year-old was part-owned and trained by Robert Cameron, who drove Robin Dundee to her memorable victory in the inaugural Miracle Mile in 1967. Cameron also finished second with Twinkle Hanover behind Adaptor in the Miracle Mile two years later.

With Il Vicolo and Iraklis assured of a Miracle Mile start, four races at the Harold Park meeting on November 29 decided the last four spots with NSWHRC Directors announcing the final field later that night.

Controversy always seems to go hand in hand with this annual announcement, and this was no exception. This time directors dropped a bombshell when they included restricted class performer, Manaville, ahead of proven Grand Circuit performers, Our Sir Vancelot, Young Mister Charles and Tibet.

It was not the first controversial selection of a Miracle Mile field, nor will it be the last, but it did ensure publicity and a talking point in the week leading up to the feature sprint.

Harold Park was lightning fast on Miracle Mile night. The track record of 1:55.5 was broken just over an hour before the big sprint by the Brian Hancock-trained and driven Our Sir Vancelot - a horse considered not good enough to be in the big sprint - in the Bohemia Crystal Free-For-All over 2160 metres - or 400 metres longer than the Miracle Mile.

Our Sir Vancelot rated 1:55.4, a world record for 2160 metres on a half-mile track, and just inside the 1760-metre track record set by Manaville a week earlier and equalled later that night by Norms Daughter.

With a world record over 2160 metres to whet their appetite, the big Harold Park crowd sat back and waited for the fireworks to explode in the 31st edition of the Miracle Mile. The field could boast 127 wins, 66 placings and \$2,715,671 from 269 starts.

Dominating betting proceedings, Iraklis started 11-8 favourite after opening at 10-9. Receiving a punctured tyre in the home straight approaching the bell, Iraklis was caught in a pocket coming off the back straight, but managed to get clear when Manaville galloped near the 350 metres. Ricky May had plenty of room to ease Iraklis to the centre of the track, and the issue was put beyond doubt in a couple of giant strides.

Gathering in the leader, Il Vicolo, and the tiring Norms Daughter as Brian Hancock angled for a run with Sabilize, Iraklis flashed down the outside as though he had just joined in and came away to beat Il Vicolo (9-2) by three-and-a-half metres, with Sabilize (9-1) two-and-a-half metres away third. The final two quarters were put away in 28.8 and 28.6 on the rain-affected track.

Iraklis covered the 1760-metre trip in 2:04.9, rating a track record 1:54.2, which was 1.4 seconds inside the Miracle Mile race record previously shared by Westburn Grant and Norms Daughter. In a remarkable statistic to emerge from the race, the six runners broke the existing 1760-metre track

record of 1:55.5 shared by Manaville and Norms Daughter. Rainbow Knight, which finished last and 16.5 metres behind the winner, rated 1:55.3.

For the record, Our Sir Vancelot went on to win the M H Treuer Memorial at Bankstown, the WA Pacing Cup at Gloucester Park and the Inter-Dominion Final at Globe Derby Park to end the season as Australian Grand Circuit Champion for 1996-97.

How he missed getting a run in the December 1996 Miracle Mile remains one of the great mysteries of all time. His moment of Miracle Mile glory was just around the corner, however.

1997 - OUR SIR VANCELOT

WHEN the new season dawned on September 1, 1997, Brian Hancock appeared to have excellent prospects of finally winning the Miracle Mile with either of his stable stars - Our Sir Vancelot and Quantum Lobell - just over two months later.

There was no doubt Hancock was overdue for a win in the prestigious sprint, and it had not been for the want of trying. Hancock had driven in the race a record 11 times, but the closest he had come to winning was seconds behind Bundanoon in 1984 and Thorate in 1989. He had also finished third three times.

Hancock was denied the opportunity to improve his Miracle Mile driving record in 1997, however. He was suspended for six weeks after Our Sir Vancelot was a fast-finishing second behind the 33-1 outsider, Peter Santos, in the Queensland Pacing Championship in October.

Favourite at 1-3, Our Sir Vancelot rocketed home from fourth last, seven lengths from the leader, at the 400-metre mark. Hancock later described his drive as: "The worst in history". He also admitted that: "I murdered the horse".

Failing in an appeal against the severity of the sentence, Hancock was still on the sidelines when Our Sir Vancelot gave him his first Miracle Mile victory on December 5. Long regarded as Australia's most controversial race, the Miracle Mile lived up to its reputation that night.

Stewards dropped the first bombshell when they ordered the scratching of brilliant New Zealand three-year-old, Christian Cullen, only 10 minutes before the advertised starting time after a pre-race swab revealed traces of a prohibited substance.

Aiming to create history by becoming the first three-year-old to win the premier sprint, Christian Cullen bowed out in disgrace without stepping on to the famous Glebe circuit.

The dramatic late scratching of Christian Cullen overshadowed Our Sir Vancelot's brilliant win in the Grand Circuit event, which was eventually run 22 minutes after the scheduled starting time.

Driven by Howard James, Our Sir Vancelot (5-2) worked around the field to find the lead from his stablemate, Quantum Lobell (6-1), and was untroubled to score by three metres, with the 9-10 favourite, Iraklis, a similar margin away third after facing the breeze for most of the trip.

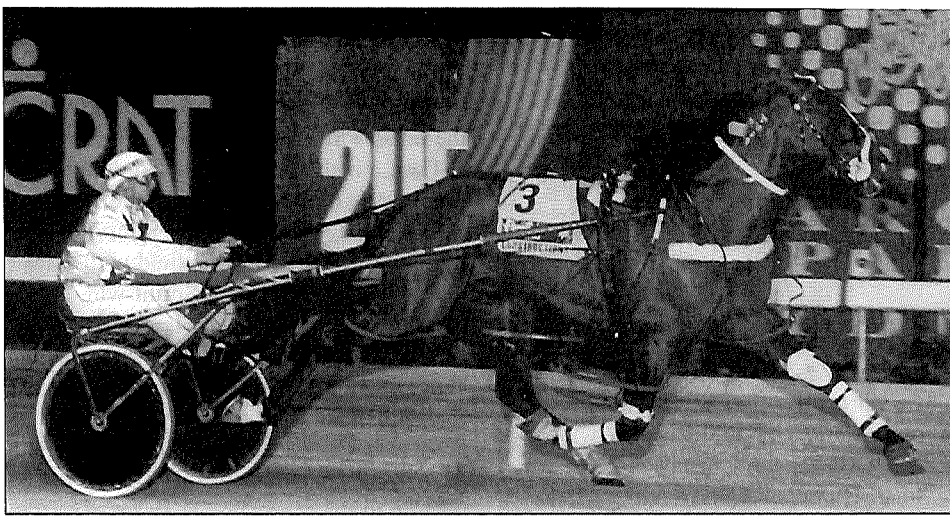
Our Sir Vancelot ran the 1760-metre journey in 2:06.3, a mile rate of 1:55.5 - the second fastest Miracle Mile on record, but 1.3 seconds outside the track record set by Iraklis a year earlier.

A week later, Brian O'Meara, the New Zealand trainer of Christian Cullen, was off the hook, but hot on the trail for compensation, when it was announced testing of the reserve urine sample taken from the colt had found the swab's accompanying control fluid had been contaminated.

Relieved the nightmare was behind him,



Iraklis (1:54.2) remains the fastest horse to have raced and won at Harold Park.



The incomparable Christian Cullen in full flight.

O'Meara threatened legal action. Despite the slur on his name, the hardest thing for O'Meara to take was the fact he believed Christian Cullen would have become the first three-year-old to win the Miracle Mile. He declared he had never had him fitter going into a race.

1998 - CHRISTIAN CULLEN

IN THE heat of the moment when Christian Cullen was sensationally withdrawn from the 1997 Miracle Mile, Brian O'Meara declared he would never race another horse at Harold Park, but 12 months later, he was back for another tilt at the 2UE Aristocrat Miracle Mile on November 27 with Christian Cullen. He had a point to prove.

The four-year old was in superlative form, too, scoring brilliant wins in the New Zealand Cup and the Air New Zealand Free-For-All during Cup Week at Addington. After winning the New Zealand Cup, O'Meara stunned the media throng by declaring Christian Cullen was yet to reach the fitness peak he did before the previous year's Miracle Mile.

"He's nowhere near as sharp to be honest," O'Meara said. "I had him tip-top, 100 per cent as sharp as he could be for that race last year. I only hope I can get him back to that sort of level again for this year. I'm so determined to prove a point with this horse now. He's won the New Zealand Cup proving himself a great horse, and now we'll head to Sydney to take the Miracle Mile home."

It was not going to be easy, however. Two of Christian Cullen's rivals were Iraklis and Our Sir Vancelot - the fastest Miracle Mile winners in history - plus top performers like Tailmade Lombo, rated by some over-zealous 'experts' as the best mare ever produced in Australia, NSW Derby and Chariots Of Fire winner, Franco Hat Trick, and Franco Lotmore. The elite six, again racing for \$400,000 in basic stakemoney and time incentives, had credentials of 132 wins, 73 placings and \$4,537,704 from 260 starts.

Christian Cullen, favourite at 11-8, made them look like 'second-raters', however. When his young New Zealand reinsman Danny Campbell charged him straight into the lead from gate three, the 1998 Miracle Mile was as good as over. Leading easily into the first turn, Campbell made sure the race was his when he ran the first two quarters of his last mile in 29.4 and 30.5 seconds.

His supporters started queuing for their cash. The son of In The Pocket stretched out magnificently, running his last two quarters in 28.3 and then a blistering 27.6, his last half in a sensational 55.9 seconds, one of the fastest last halves recorded on the famous Glebe circuit, to win with consummate ease.

Claiming his third Grand Circuit victory in the space of 17 days, the four-year-old demolished the strong field in sparkling time. What the race lacked as a contest was more

than compensated by Christian Cullen's sheer brilliance as he won by 20 metres without being fully extended. Tailmade Lombo (7-1) was a gallant second, while Our Sir Vancelot (13-4) was four metres away third. Iraklis (13-4) was a distant last.

The electronic semaphore board, which displayed a mile rate of 1:54.4 for the 1760-metre trip - only .2 of a second outside the track record held by Iraklis - failed to do justice to his incredible performance. Danny Campbell later delivered a knockout blow to those thinking about a re-match when he said Christian Cullen could have gone faster if the pressure had been applied. He firmly believed the entire could have gone at least two seconds faster if he had been pushed out.

Eight nights later, Christian Cullen added the M. H. Treuer Memorial at Bankstown to his list of credits - his fourth Grand Circuit win in 26 days. At the end of that month, Christian Cullen joined Golden Reign and Our Sir Vancelot as the only horses to win five Grand Circuit races in a season when he overcame a 10-metre handicap and 14 rivals to win the \$200,000 Auckland Cup at Alexandra Park - his fifth Grand Circuit win in 49 days.

Unfortunately for Australasian Harness Racing fans, illness and injury forced Christian Cullen out of the rich Melbourne 'Nights Of Glory' carnival at Moonee Valley last January, and from all but the opening night heat of the Inter-Dominion series in Auckland in March, but there is every chance he will be back to defend his Miracle Mile crown later this year.

1999 - HOLMES DG

If anything, the 1999 edition of the Miracle Mile was one of the most uneventful in the race's history.

Top Kiwi Holmes DG was issued one of two early invites and after winning the NSW Derby and Chariots Of Fire on the Harold Park track, had done more than enough to convince selectors of his inclusion.

The other went to West Australian star Shattering Class, who had registered 13 straight wins going into the Mile, including a win in the Newcastle Mile a fortnight earlier.

NZ Cup winner Homin Hosed was missing due to injury, while Safe And Sound was invited a little later than the first two.

The others who made up the field were Sports Tonight Sprint winners Breenys Fella and American import Slug Of Jin, while Ladyship Mile winner Tailmade Lombo was given the last spot.

Trainer Barry Purdon, having won three Miracle Miles already with Christopher Vance and Chokin (two), had luck on his side at the draw, coming up with the pole.

That is all he needed and come race time, Holmes DG showed good enough speed out of the mobile to lead and dictate terms. Slug Of Jin, settling one-one, sprinted hard over

the final quarter, but couldn't get any closer than two metres, with Breenys Fella putting up a good effort for third after going off stride at the start.

Shattering Class, who was the subject of pre-race discussions as to whether he could show his blistering gate speed and lead, was next in, while Safe And Sound and Tailmade Lombo made up the rest of the field and came in in that order.

It was Purdon's first win as a reinsman in Australasia's premier sprint, as Tony Herlihy had driven his previous winners.

It also meant that Holmes DG became the first, and only pacer until this point, to complete the Harold Park treble of winning the NSW Derby, Chariots Of Fire and Miracle Mile.

2000 - HOLMES DG

THE previous year's Miracle Mile may have been low-key, however, the 2000 version was the total opposite!

A dramatic finish, then an even bigger sensation after the race has made this particular edition of the Mile one of the most controversial on record.

Two great warriors - Holmes DG and Atitagain - hit the line locked together, with nothing separating them to the naked eye. After viewing the photo-finish for several minutes, Holmes DG's number came up.

The official margin - a nose.

Believing their horse had not lost, or won, connections of Atitagain, including trainer-driver Dennis Wilson, wished to see a print of the finish.

"I honestly thought it was a dead-heat," Wilson has always said.

Atitagain had sat three-wide and then outside of Holmes DG for most of the final lap, showing tremendous strength and stamina to push the Kiwi, who drew barrier one again, to the limit.

The mile rate of 1:54.6 is one of the fastest times ever recorded at the Glebe circuit.

A hot field, the duel at the back of the pack between Brian Hancock (Courage Under Fire) and John Justice (Shakamaker) was also fierce, with both drivers jostling for a spot on the back of the three-wide, Atitagain. Both drivers let each other know exactly how they felt after the race.

This tussle would prove each horse's undoing. Tailmade Lombo (Chris Alford) would eventually finish third, with Shakamaker, Courage Under Fire and Ablazin Star (Brian Gath), who won a Sprint a week earlier, fading to last after sitting outside the leader.

The theatre and drama of having the first dead-heat in Miracle Mile history gone, Wilson had a point to prove in the Treuer Memorial the following week, scoring a runaway success.

There was further controversy about the photo-finish of the Miracle Mile shortly after, when Wilson was credited with quotes that weren't flattering to the decision, or that of the NSWHRRC and the Harness Racing NSW stewards.

The quotes, however, were taken out of context and were made at a function and in private and were in no way, meant to be repeated in the media.

2001 - SMOOTH SATIN

Holmes DG was attempting to become the first horse to win three Miracle Miles, all consecutive, and remarkably, drew barrier one again - for the third straight year!

Courage Under Fire, known as 'the people's horse', showed too much early toe from barrier four for the ageing Holmes DG, and found the front after a brief battle. Hancock, had, of course, won Miracle Miles as a trainer previously, but was never in the

sulky himself, and many believed that this was his time to shine.

Controversy again hit the Miracle Mile, this time with the inclusion of gun five-year-old Smooth Satin. No one could begrudge him a spot in the field, after all, he had won the Chariots Of Fire and two Sires' Stakes finals at the track.

The problem came when he was beaten in a Cordina Sprint the week before the big one by Leftrightout. Believing he had blown his chance to gain an invitation to the Miracle Mile, trainer-driver Steve Turnbull left the course immediately.

To his shock, and to the connections of Leftrightout, Turnbull received a phone call on his truck phone to tell him he was invited at the expense of Leftrightout.

Turnbull gained the one-one in the big race and the pair produced a sizzling finish to outgun Courage Under Fire down the straight, with NZ Cup winner Yulestar third.

Shakamaker and Kyms Girl were next in, just two and four metres behind the winner respectively, while Holmes DG was the last of the six runners.

2002 - DOUBLE IDENTITY

Double Identity's rise to become a multiple Grand Circuit winner is the stuff that dreams are made of.

Trainer-driver Harry Martin, in the twilight of his career, became the oldest driver to win a Miracle Mile at the age of 62.

Double Identity hadn't found his way into Martin's stable until he was four. Making his way through the grades, he left Martin's stables for a brief period before returning at the start of 2002.

Not afraid to test the waters, Martin pushed hard for a Miracle Mile invite by traveling to Queensland and snaring a host of features along with the Queensland Pacing Championship. A second to Jofess in the Newcastle Mile sealed his invite, along with the winner.

Smooth Satin, whose form wasn't to its usual high standard since resuming, was at the centre of debate once more, but Directors of the NSWHRRC thought it appropriate that he be able to defend his title.

Young Rufus, the brilliant New Zealander, Hearts Legend (Legends Mile) and Seelster Sam made up the field, with Yulestar back for another shot at the premier sprint.

Earlier in the year, the decision by Directors to increase the size of the Miracle Mile for the first time in history, from six to seven, ultimately helped ease the selection pressure of including Smooth Satin.

Not that the horse didn't perform, in fact, Turnbull and 'Socks' almost stole the show again, coming from barrier seven to go down by a short half-head to Double Identity, who sat one-one.

Jofess was brave in defeat and was third, just a neck further back, giving NSW a trifecta finish and underlying once more what a fabulous generation of pacers the State was blessed with.

All three were the same age and came through the NSW Sires' Stakes system together.

2003 - SOKYOLA

This particular running of the SEW-Eurodrive Miracle Mile was particularly historic; it being the first that contained eight runners.

Having extended the field the previous year to seven contestants, Directors of the NSWHRRC were that impressed with the increased turnover and interest generated in the larger field size, that only an eight-horse field would do the Miracle Mile justice in this day and age.

One of the least fancied runners in the 2003 Miracle Mile, and the last to gain an invitation to the event, Sokyola flew the gate and led from start to finish.

It wasn't an easy task though, as he was pressured for a majority of the trip by West Australian star and Newcastle Mile winner, The Falcon Strike.

Applying the pressure ultimately cost The Falcon Strike in the end, as he dropped out, but Sokyola kicked, and despite late challenges from Jack Cade, Double Identity and Baltic Eagle, the Victorian held on to score in a mile rate of 1:54.5.

Jack Cade gave Mark Purdon his third second placing in the big sprint, following on from Il Vicolo's efforts in the mid to late 90s.

Inter Dominion winner Baltic Eagle was never in it, having to settle back towards the tail of the field. The same could be said for NZ Cup winner, Just An Excuse.

Blake Fitzpatrick became the youngest reinsman in the Mile's history at the age of 20, and finished fifth on Selby Bromac, just ahead of Smooth Satin.

2004 - SOKYOLA

A year later and it was the same story once again, however, it was a much easier win.

Jodi Quinlan became just the second female reinswoman to win the event, substituting for the suspended Lance Justice, who was forced to watch from the stands.

Handed the first invite to the race this year and then winning the Legends Mile aboard his stable star, Justice was quickly bought back down to earth.

He was suspended just days later by Harness Racing Victoria stewards after causing interference on Spirit Of Bee Jay, at a provincial meeting at Yarra Valley on November 8.

Quinlan, 29, had sat behind the tough and speedy former Kiwi previously with success.

Drawn one, Sokyola showed his customary speed to lead with ease and with no real challenges, the pair ran through the first half in a leisurely 59.2 before rattling off a 56.7 final 800 metres.

Ladyship Mile winner Sand Pebbles, which sat behind the leader, was second, with Hexus producing a career-best effort to finish third. The three Kiwis, Mister DG, Elsu and Roman Gladiator were next in, followed by Flashing Red.

Last of the eight was Blue Gum Forest, who lost his chance at the start when going off-stride 50 metres after the barrier released the field.

2005 - BE GOOD JOHNNY

The amount of drama and controversy that surrounded the Miracle Mile of 2005 was enough to last the great race a lifetime,

and once again, ensured that it was the main story on all mainstream media outlets.

For the first time since the field was extended to eight runners, just seven lined up in the event. Newcastle Mile winner Sly Flyin suffered a leg injury at caretaker trainer Vic Frost's property during the week, with connections then ruling him unfit to take his place in the elite field.

This naturally put in place a chain of events that saw the first emergency, former Mile winner Smooth Satin, gain a start in the field. Connections, surprisingly, declined it, preferring instead to race in the Bohemia Crystal FFA on the MM undercard.

Many were dumbfounded and perplexed by this turn of events, however, connections of the pacer decided it was in the best interests of Smooth Satin and the Club, that he not take his place in the field, going into it second-up from a spell.

Adding insult to injury was the fact the Directors of the NSWHRRC had only declared one emergency runner, leaving no alternative but to race with seven.

This was the second part of the controversial week leading up to the \$500,000 event, with West Australian speedster Looklikelighting dominating most of the headlines.

The subject of a sale prior to his brilliant 1:54.7 win in a Cordina Sprint the week before the Miracle Mile, a legal battle then ensued. With the money for the sale never arriving by the agreed time, trainer Pat Keating and his owner-brother Dave, believed they were well within their rights to renege on the sale of their horse.

The interested parties, who offered \$100,000 for Looklikelighting, then pursued legal avenues in order to obtain the horse, just days before the Group One sprint. Eventually, the Keatings kept their horse, however, their Miracle Mile experience was soured.

Focusing on the race and defending champion Sokyola, shooting to become the first horse to win three straight trophies, engaged in a speed war with Looklikelighting, who eventually led.

The effort told on the pair, with the leader fading to last with Sokyola just ahead of him. Queenslander Be Good Johnny sat in the 'death' and outstayed the opposition.

In a driving three-way finish, Be Good Johnny held on by a short half-head over stablemate Slipnslide, with Robin Hood a similar margin away in third.

It Is I was an unlucky fourth after getting dragged back the tiring Looklikelighting, while Foreal was fifth but never looked a winning hope after missing the start.

Victorious trainer-driver John McCarthy, a former Bathurst butcher, and his son Luke (Slipnslide), created history by becoming the first father-and-son combination to quinnella a Miracle Mile.

2006 - BE GOOD JOHNNY

Defending champion Be Good Johnny was handed the first invite to the 2006 SEW-Eurodrive sponsored Miracle Mile, however, all the focus was on another pacer - Pay Me Christian.

Handed the second invitation by NSWHRRC Directors after establishing a new Australasian mile mark of 1:52.8 when winning the Newcastle Mile, Pay Me Christian was the latest 'superstar' to come out of New Zealand.

The third invitation was handed to iron-horse Flashing Red, an impressive winner of the NZ Cup for the Queensland-based duo of Stuart Hunter and Norm Jenkin.

An air of mystery surrounded Inter Dominion champion Blacks A Fake, with trainer-driver Natalie Rasmussen assuring everyone that there was nothing wrong with her champion's preparation leading into the Mile. He had raced just twice in over two months leading into the big one.

The rest of the invitations were handed out to Sly Flyin (NZ FFA winner), returning after being a shock scratching the previous season, Toe Taper (Cordina Sprint), Smooth Crusa and Slipnslide. Foreal was made first emergency while Ladyship Mile winner Lucky Elsie, despite beating Foreal, was named second emergency.

Effectively, the race was over at the start, when Be Good Johnny led from the pole but despite the pressure from Flashing Red, the son of Fake Left kept kicking.

Racing through the quarters in 27.8, 29.7, 29.4 and 28.6, he had two metres to spare over Blacks A Fake, who sustained a long run from the tail of the field, with Smooth Crusa close up in third.

The mile rate of 1:54.3 was the second-fastest time in history, at Harold Park and just 0.1 seconds outside Iraklis' mark, set in the 1996 Miracle Mile (December).

Pay Me Christian, who began brilliantly from the outside gate, was able to slot in behind Be Good Johnny when it was apparent he wouldn't cross, however, after having his chance in the straight, could only manage fourth.

Toe Taper, Flashing Red, Sly Flyin and Slipnslide came in thereafter.

The win cemented the seven-year-old gelding's reputation as being one of the great modern day sprinters, boasting a record of seven wins and three placings over distances considered 'sprints'.

2008 - DIVISIVE

The Miracle Mile of 2008 was shaping up to be one of the best ever, with an assortment of talent from both Australia and New Zealand being courted for the event.

Champion Queenslander and three-time Inter Dominion champion Blacks A Fake was the first invited, shortly followed by Melpark Major, a brilliant winner of the Legends Mile and then gun Kiwi, Auckland Reactor.

With two weeks still remaining before the prestigious sprint, two-time defending champion Be Good Johnny hadn't been invited but his name would surely add to the intrigue of the race, as he strived to be come the first horse to win three consecutive miles.

Of course, the 2007 running was cancelled due to equine influenza.

Changeover secured his invitation shortly after his brilliant New Zealand Cup triumph, while Special Albert forced his way into the field on the back of a thrilling Newcastle Mile victory.

Be Good Johnny was issued invitation number six, leaving just two spots left from a potential choice of five runners.

Then, in the space of three days, drama engulfed the Miracle Mile!

First, Australasia's fastest horse Smoken Up, who took a 1:51.9 mark at Menangle just months earlier, had been withdrawn by trainer Lance Justice due to concerns over the horse's fitness.

Then, on the morning of Cordina Sprint night, both Auckland Reactor and Be Good Johnny had succumbed to injury on the training track - leaving the field in disarray.

Following his Cordina Sprint win, Robin Hood, who sat three-wide to defeat Blacks A Fake, was handed his invite while Deanna Troy was also given an invite for her Ladyship Mile win.

NSW-based horses Iron Hudge, who had been somewhat of a media darling in the lead-up to the event, and Divisive, were the last two in.

However, more drama would soon follow, with connections of Deanna Troy declining their invitation, stating that the Miracle Mile was out of their depth and that they had no intention of lining up in the race.

This then gave first emergency, Make Me Smile, from the Paul Fitzpatrick yard, a spot in the field.

The field lined up for the Miracle Mile in this order: Special Albert (one), Blacks A Fake (two), Iron Hudge (three), Changeover (four), Divisive (five), Robin Hood (six), Make Me Smile (seven) and Melpark Major (eight).

Almost immediately, Blacks A Fake was made an odds-on favourite despite his defeat in the Sprint a week out from the race.

On the evening of the race, more drama unfolded as Special Albert and Blacks A Fake were involved in an early speed duel for the front, with Dawson refusing to hand up, as Special Albert's best performances were when he was able to lead.

Going through the first two splits in 30.6 and 30.9, it was expected that the leaders would be able to sprint home, however, that scenario didn't eventuate.

Amy Tubbs had come three-wide at the 1000 metre point with Melpark Major, with Robin Hood on her back, but despite the wide trip, Melpark Major had hit the front at the quarter mark.

Meanwhile, Special Albert and Blacks A Fake started to tire; Robin Hood, despite trailing up, looked jaded from his mammoth sprint win the week before and dropped out, as did Changeover, who had enjoyed the one-one.

Peter Rixon, on Divisive, needed some luck, having sat behind the leader, and got it when Changeover began lagging. Moving off the pegs at the quarter, he quickly set out after the runaway Melpark Major, who was still traveling strongly.

The pair staged a dramatic two-horse war down the straight with Rixon and Divisive getting up in the shadows of the post to score by a half-neck, with Make Me Smile, who sat three-pegs, nine-and-a-half metres away third.

Iron Hudge, who sat one-by-two, was dragged back by the tiring Changeover and only saw daylight late to get fourth, with Blacks A Fake, Special Albert, Robin Hood and Changeover completing the race.

The final two quarters of 28.1 and 27.8 produced a mile rate of 1:56.1 - not one of the fastest miles, but arguably one of the most memorable, as it would be the final time the race would be run at the historic Harold Park circuit.

Rixon wore the colours of his father-in-law, AD Turnbull, and added a third MM trophy to the family, following his brother-in-law Steve Turnbull's triumph on Smooth Satin in 2001. AD Turnbull, of course, had won with Hondo Grattan in 1974.

The son of Live Or Die provided Rixon and his wife, Cindy, who owns the pacer, their biggest career win and they were able to share it with their three children, who were trackside to witness the 'Miracle'.



Divisive and Peter Rixon victorious in the final Miracle Mile at Harold Park.

Miracle Mile

HAROLD PARK HONOUR ROLL

1967 - \$15,000 ROBIN DUNDEE (Robert Cameron) 1, Tongue Twister (Kevin Newman) 2, Angeliq (Gordon Rothacker) 3, Rocky Star (Ivan Schwamm) 4, Rachel McGregor (John Menzies) 5, Southern Song (Colin McDonald) 6. Time 1:59.

1968 - \$17,500 HALWES (Kevin Newman) 1, First Lee (Kevin Robinson) 2, Great Adios (Ray Norton) 3, Paddy's Night (Alf Phillis) distanced, Macaree (Les Chant) fell, Cardinal Bruce (Barry Stocks) fell. Time 1:58:6 (Race record).

1969 - \$25,000 ADAPTOR (Jack Hargreaves) 1, Twinkle Hanover (Robert Cameron) 2, Viking Water (Kevin Robinson) 3, Cocky Raider (Gordon McWilliam) 4, Richmond Lass (Cyril Caffyn) 5, Celevale Van (John Heath) 6. Time 1:59.2.

1970 - \$25,500 LUCKY CREED (Vic Frost) 1, Bold David (Alf Simons) 2, Imatoff (Kevin Innes) 3, Deep Court (Joe Webster) 4, Dainty's Daughter (Kevin Newman) 5, Tara Meadow (George Gath) 6. Time 1:59.

1971 - \$30,000 MOUNT EDEN (Jack Miles) 1, Deep Court (Joe Webster) 2, Bay Foyle (Charlie Parsons) 3, Stella Frost (Doody Townley) 4, Neutrodyne (Buddy King) 5, Manaroa (Alan Harrison) 6. Time 1:58.8.

1972 - \$32,500 BAY FOYLE (Charlie Parsons) 1, Reichman (Rex Hocking) 2, Manaroa (Alan Harrison) 3, Welcome Advice (Alan Harpley) 4, Deep Court (Joe Webster) 5, Monara (Don Dove) 6. Time 2:00.6.

1973 - \$40,000 REICHMAN (Rex Hocking) 1, Royal Ascot (Alan Harrison) 2, Manaroa (Neville Hargreaves) 3, Welcome Advice (Bernie Clarke) 4, Yankee Rhythm (Trevor Warwick) 5, Just Too Good (Keith Pike) 6. Time 1:58.4 (Race record).

1974 - \$40,000 HONDO GRATTAN (Tony Turnbull) 1, Paleface Adios (Keith Pike) 2, Mitchell Victory (Kevin Newman) 3, Reichman (Rex Hocking) 4, King Frost (Ian Mutton) 5, Apollo Eleven (John Sheehy) 6. Time 1:59.

1975 - \$50,000 YOUNG QUINN (Charlie Hunter) 1, Mitchell Victory (Kevin Newman) 2, Royal Gaze (Ken Pocock) 3, Hondo Grattan (Greg Turnbull) 4, Paleface Adios (Colin Pike) 5, Adios Victor (Arthur Bray) 6. Time 1:58.8.

1976 - \$55,000 PALEFACE ADIOS (Colin Pike) 1, Don't Retreat (Lawrie Moulds) 2, Hondo Grattan (Tony Turnbull) 3, Royal Gaze (Ken Pocock) 4, Wilbur Post (Wally Wood) 5, Micron (Jack Carmichael) 6. Time 1:58.4 (Equal race record).

1977 - \$60,000 ROYAL FORCE (Dudley Anderson) 1, Paleface Adios (Colin Pike) 2, Markovina (Brian Gath) 3, Don't Retreat (Lawrie Moulds) 4, Lincoln Star (Bob Conroy) 5, Pure Steel (Jack Retzlaff) 6. Time 1:59.5.

1978 - \$70,000 PURE STEEL (Ted Demmler) 1, Paleface Adios (Colin Pike) 2, Michael Frost (Joe Ilesley) 3, Hermosa Star (Peter Norrgard) 4, Dimante Hanover (Tom Hutchings) 5, Markovina (Kevin Robinson) 6. Time 2:00.4.

1979 - \$80,000 THE SCOTSMAN (Graeme Sparkes) 1, Paleface Adios (Keith Pike) 2, Lord Module (Cec Devine) 3, Koala King (Kevin Robinson) 4, Michael Frost (Joe Ilesley) 5, Markovina (Kevin Newman) 6. Time 2:00.7.

1980 - \$85,000 LOCARNO (Robin Butt) 1, Pure Steel (Ted Demmler) 2, Paleface Adios (Colin Pike) 3, Frosty Imp (Kevin Robinson) 4, Koala King (Brian Hancock) 5, Lord Module (Cec Devine) 6, Time 2:00.4.

1981 - \$100,000 FRIENDLY FOOTMAN (Kevin Newman) 1, Locarno (Robin Butt) 2, Koala King (Brian Hancock) 3, Frosty Imp (Kevin Robinson) 4, Satinover (Max Johnson) 5, Gammalite (Bruce Clarke) 6. Time 1:59.2.

1982 - \$100,000 GUNDARY FLYER (Michael Day) 1, Frosty Imp (Terry Robinson) 2, Double Agent (Joe Ilesley) 3, Tidy Jason (Graham Moon) 4, Lord Pancho (Kevin Bayley) 5, Koala King (Brian Hancock) 6. Time 1:56.9 (Race record).

1983 - \$120,000 POPULAR ALM (Vin Knight) 1, Gammalite (Kevin Robinson) 2, Bill's Student (Terry Robinson) 3, Double Agent (Joe Ilesley) 4, Copper Way (Ted Demmler) 5, Jikk Adios (Brian Hancock) 6. Time 1:57.7.

1984 - \$130,000 DOUBLE AGENT (Joe Ilesley) 1, Bundanoon (Brian Hancock) 2, Thor Lobell (Stephen Dove) 3, Tempo Cavallo (Ross Olivieri) 4, Karamea Duplicity (Brian Forrester) 5, Preux Chevalier (Barry Perkins) 6. Time 1:59.6.

1985-\$130,000 PREUX CHEVALIER (Barry Perkins) 1, Paleface Bubble (Colin Pike) 2, Wondai's Mate (Darryl Reinke) 3, Karamea Duplicity (Robert Martin) 4, Quite Famous (Jim O'Sullivan) 5, Dyama (Kevin Hampton) 6. Time 1:56.7 (Race record).

1986 (January)-\$155,000 VILLAGE KID (Chris Lewis) 1, Atashy Luck (Chris Gleeson) 2, Paleface Bubble (Michael Ilesley) 3, Quite Famous (Jim O'Sullivan) 4, Glenn's Thunder (Vic Frost) 5, Lindy's Nymph (Darrell Alexander) 6. Time 1:56.9.

1986 (December) - \$170,000 MASTER MOOD (Kevin Williams) 1, My Lightning Blue (Jim O'Sullivan) 2, Village Kid (Chris Lewis) 3, Trident (John Hay) 4, Riverlea Jack (Ted Demmler) 5, Paleface Bubble (Michael Ilesley) pulled up. Time 1:56.1 (Race record).

1987 - \$205,000 VILLAGE KID (Chris Lewis) 1, Happy Sunrise (Ricky May) 2, Jay Bee's Fella (Fred Kersley) 3, Gay Adam (David Aiken) 4, Whirley Dream (Lance Justice) 5, My Lightning Blue (Jim O'Sullivan) 6. Time 1:57.7.

1988 - \$250,000 OUR MAESTRO (Vin Knight) 1, Luxury Liner (Tony Herlihy) 2, Thorate (Brian Hancock) 3, Speedy Cheval (Peter Ryder) 4, Rowleyalla (Kevin Rivett) 5, Riverlea Jack (Gavin Lang) 6. Time 1:58.1.

1989 - \$250,000 WESTBURN GRANT (Vic Frost) 1, Thorate (Brian Hancock) 2, Jodie's Babe (Vin Knight) 3, Luxury Liner (Tony Herlihy) 4, Earth Station (Kevin Thomas) 5, Koala Sunrise (Tess Gleeson) 6. Time 1:57.9.

1990 - \$300,000 WESTBURN GRANT (Vic Frost) 1, Almeta Boy (Stephen Dove) 2, Defoe (Robert Dunn) 3, Thorate (Brian Hancock) 4, Sinbad Bay (Vin Knight) 5, Tight Connection (Tony Herlihy) 6. Time 1:55.6 (Race record).

1991 - \$400,000 CHRISTOPHER VANCE (Tony Herlihy) 1, Defoe (Robert Dunn) 2, Westburn Grant (Vic Frost) 3, Franco Tiger (Gavin Lang) 4, Tip Top Prince (John Justice) 5, Chokin (Brian Gath) fell. Time 1:57.9.

1992 - \$400,000 FRANCO TIGER (Brian Gath) 1, Christopher Vance (Tony Herlihy) 2, Jack Morris (Sean Harney) 3, Westburn Grant (Vic Frost) 4, Impressionist (Ted Demmler) 5, Level Advice (Andrew Peace) 6. Time 1:56.7.

1993 - \$400,000 CHOKIN (Tony Herlihy) 1, Sabilize (Steve Turnbull) 2, Master Musician (Robert Dunn) 3, Weona Warrior (Brian Hancock) 4, Franco Tiger (Brian Gath) 5. Time 2:00.

1994 - \$400,000 CHOKIN (Tony Herlihy) 1, Bee Bee Cee (Jim Curtin) 2, Golden Reign (Chris Alford) 3, Weona Warrior (Brian Hancock) 4, Young Mister Charles (Terry Robinson) 5, Master Musician (Robert Dunn) distanced. Time 1:56.2.

1995 Race not conducted due to Harold Park renovations. The event, which was scheduled for December 1, 1995, was transferred to June 28, 1996.

1996 (June)- \$400,000 NORMS DAUGHTER (Kellie Kersley) 1, Il Vicolo (Mark Purdon) 2, Beefy T (Michael Langdon) 3, Master Musician (Robert Dunn) 4, Desperate Comment (Peter Jones) 5, Sunshine Band (Kevin Chisholm) 6. Time 2:06.4. Mile Rate 1:55.6 (Equal race record).

1996 (December) - \$400,000 IRAKLIS (Ricky May) 1, Il Vicolo (Mark Purdon) 2, Sabilize (Brian Hancock) 3, Norms Daughter (Kellie Kersley) 4, Manaville (Michael Hunt) 5, Rainbow Knight (Lisa Justice) 6. Time 2:04:9. Mile Rate 1:54.2 (Race record).

1997 - \$400,000 OUR SIR VANCELOT (Howard James) 1, Quantum Lobell (Mark Tracey) 2, Iraklis (Ricky May) 3, Sovereign Hill (Darren Hancock) 4, Commander Monty (Michael Formosa) 5. Time 2:06.3. Mile Rate 1:55.5.

1998 - \$400,000 CHRISTIAN CULLEN (Danny Campbell) 1, Tailmade Lombo (Chris Alford) 3, Our Sir Vancelot (Brian Hancock) 3, Franco Lotmore (Robbie Byrnes) 4, Franco Hat Trick (Peter Morris) 5, Iraklis (Ricky May) 6. Time 2:05.1. Mile Rate 1:54.4.

1999 - \$300,000 HOLMES D G (Barry Purdon) 1, Slug Of Jin (Alan Donohoe) 2, Breenys Fella (Ted Demmler) 3, Shattering Class (Lindsay Harper) 4, Safe And Sound (John Justice) 5, Tailmade Lombo (Chris Alford) 6. Time: 2:07.3. Mile Rate: 1:56.4

2000 - \$400,000 HOLMES D G (Barry Purdon) 1, Atitagain (Dennis Wilson) 2, Tailmade Lombo (Chris Alford) 3, Shakamaker (John Justice) 4, Courage Under Fire (Brian Hancock) 5, Ablazin Star (Brian Gath) 6. Time: 2:05.3. Mile Rate: 1:54.6.

2001 - \$400,000 SMOOTH SATIN (Steve Turnbull) 1, Courage Under Fire (Brian Hancock) 2, Yulestar (Peter Jones) 3, Shakamaker (John Justice) 4, Kyms Girl (Colin De Filippi) 5, Holmes DG (Barry Purdon) 6. Time: 2:07.8. Mile Rate: 1:56.9.

2002 - \$300,000 DOUBLE IDENTITY (Harry Martin) 1, Smooth Satin (Steve Turnbull) 2, Jofess (Darren Hancock) 3, Young Rufus (Mark Purdon) 4, Hearts Legend (Kerryn Manning) 5, Yulestar (Peter Jones) 6, Seelster Sam (Dennis Wilson) 7. Time: 2:06.0. Mile Rate: 1:55.2.

2003 - \$550,000 SOKYOLA (Lance Justice) 1, Jack Cade (Mark Purdon) 2, Double Identity (Harry Martin) 3, Baltic Eagle (Kim Prentice) 4, Selby Bromac (Blake Fitzpatrick) 5, Smooth Satin (Steve Turnbull) 6, Just An Excuse (Todd Mitchell) 7, The Falcon Strike (Gary Hall Jnr) 8. Time: 2:05.3. Mile Rate: 1:54.3.

2004 - \$550,000 SOKYOLA (Jodi Quinlan) 1, Sand Pebbles (Blake Fitzpatrick) 2, Hexus (Nathan Giles) 3, Mister D G (Anthony Butt) 4, Elsu (David Butcher) 5, Roman Gladiator (Colin De Filippi) 6, Flashing Red (Chris Petroff) 7, Blue Gum Forest (Emma Turnbull) 8. Time: 2:05.7. Mile Rate: 1:54.9.

2005 - \$500,000 BE GOOD JOHNNY (John McCarthy) 1, Slipnslide (Luke McCarthy) 2, Robin Hood (Gavin Lang) 3, It Is I (David Murphy) 4, Foreal (Anthony Butt) 5, Sokyola (Lance Justice) 6, Lookslightning (Ryan Warwick) 7. Time: 2:06.7. Mile Rate: 1:55.9.

2006 - \$500,000 BE GOOD JOHNNY (John McCarthy) 1, Blacks A Fake (Natalie Rasmussen) 2, Smooth Crusa (Gavin Fitzpatrick) 3, Pay Me Christian (David Butt) 4, Toe Taper (Daryl Douglas) 5, Flashing Red (Anthony Butt) 6, Sly Flyin (Tony Herlihy) 7, Slipnslide (Luke McCarthy) 8. Time: 2:05.0. Mile Rate: 1:54.3.

2007 - Not Held Due To Equine Influenza.

2008 - \$500,000 DIVISIVE (Peter Rixon) 1, Melpark Major (Amy Tubbs) 2, Make Me Smile (Gavin Fitzpatrick) 3, Iron Hudge (Mark Rolfe) 4, Blacks A Fake (Natalie Rasmussen) 5, Special Albert (Michael Dawson) 6, Robin Hood (Josh Willick) 7, Change-over (David Butcher) 8. Time: 2:06.9. Mile Rate: 1:56.0.

From 2009 the SEW Eurodrive Miracle Mile moved to Tabcorp Park Menangle.