

# Old mates horse about

AFTER A LIFETIME IN GAME OCTOGENARIANS LEO AND EDDIE CONTINUE TO CLOCK UP LAPS

By Gregor Mactaggart

Eddie Walsh and Leo Newbound are living proof that harness racing is good for the blood.

The two may be well into their 80s, but they remain an active part of the sport as trainers.

Each morning at the Kialla Training Complex, you will find Eddie and Leo floating around the stables, readying their horses for trackwork.

The octogenarians then jump straight into the sulky to drive slow work, sharing the training track with such renowned names as David Moran, Nathan Jack and Amanda Turnbull.

Both have just the one horse in their stable these days — Eddie's is a lovable rogue called Our Punt.

"He's had 34 starts and had 34 breaks," Eddie said with a laugh.

"He's a reject from the Lang stable, but I love him.

"He gets frightened of other horses, I reckon he had an accident early on which causes him to get his head up and gallop when he gets horses around him.

"But he's a lovely horse."

It is that devotion to Our Punt, despite his quirks, that sees Eddie spring out of bed at the crack of dawn.

"I get up at 6 am to feed him and also feed (fellow trainer) David Moran's horses," he said.

"I work him, do the boxes, go home by 9 am and make my wife's breakfast."

A Broadmeadows boy, Eddie has been married to Carmel, a Coburg girl, for 62 years, the past three decades spent in the Goulburn Valley.

From his first winner Wilver Direct at Warragul in 1952, Eddie has enjoyed much success as a driver and trainer since.

Asked which horse was the standout, Eddie had little hesitation before mentioning a striking black colt.

"Meadow Lawn was the best," Eddie said.

"He had a big fall as a two-year-old and never fully recovered, but he still won the



**Still going strong:** Leo Newbound, 83, enjoys some slow work with Olympus at Kialla.



**In the sulky:** Eddie Walsh, 85, works his horse Our Punt.

Pictures: Ray Sizer

Central Victorian Pacing Championship in 1967 and the American Cup, two of the good races."

But it is the pursuit of the next winner which still drives Eddie today.

Our Punt is in at Echuca tomorrow and asked if it was worth having a sneaky \$10 each-way, he replied.

"No way, I'd be broke if I did," Eddie joked.

"I had two trainers at the Shepparton trials in Graham Lyon and Mick Blackmore (who trains gun mare Claudys Princess) tell me to tie my horse's head down. It worked at the trials, but I don't know how he'll go on race day."

Leo, 83, was a bit more confi-

dent about the progress of Olympus, a mare that has overcome a touch of adversity along the way in her career.

"She is lucky to be here," Leo said.

"Last year she tipped me out of the sulky and I was laying on the ground with the reins to stop her bolting.

"She fell over backwards, hit

her head on the ground and started to bleed from the ears.

"I thought she was in big trouble . . . but then she half sat up, got back on her feet and staggered across into the paddock.

"Even though she has had a couple of setbacks, she's good enough to keep persevering with."

From a renowned harness racing family, Leo, grew up at Chiltern and was bitten by the bug early.

"I won a merit award in the eighth grade and the old man gave me a horse. It was in the family really, three of Dad's brothers had licences and drove," Leo said.

"One of my uncles, Bill, drove a horse in a sulky from Adelaide to Barnawartha (886 km).

"He didn't do it just once, but three times, there and back."

Leo and his brother Kevin started a stud at Chiltern in the early 1950s, enjoying great success.

"We've had some great horses," he said.

"We bred horses that won Derby races at metropolitan level 14 times, such as Court Jester, who won three derbies in three states and Rip Van Winkle.

"We sold a lot of horses, but also raced the odd one.

"My best horse that I bred and trained was Exemplify, who won 20 races, including seven in a row down at Moonee Valley.

"Gay Acres was a mare who won 20 races, Provocative won an Oaks, the list goes on."

Leo also spent more than two decades in the police force, a time that included a stint with the mounted branch, which saw him help escort Queen Elizabeth during her stay in Melbourne in the Olympic year of 1956.

But now he is just happy working his horse and spending times with friends such as Eddie, who revealed the two have known each other for more than 50 years.

"We've been great mates for a long time," Eddie said.

"He's a good bloke, a real character," Leo said.

## Echuca attracts strong fields

By Gus Underwood

Echuca Harness Racing Club has hit the jackpot with fields for its cup meeting tomorrow night.

Most races, including the showcase race, the \$25 390 Moama Bowling Club Echuca Pacing Cup, have drawn capacity fields to contest the 10-race card.

Elmore-trained Road To Rock has the draw to run a bold race in an even cup field.

Backmarker Sunset Invasion will be hard to beat in another of the feature events, the \$12 390 J. A. Connelly Crystal Bucket for T5 or better class trotters.

Many of Victoria's best reinswomen will pit their skills in the Tiffany Murray Memorial Pace.

Ace reinsman Nathan Jack will honour the late Tiffany Murray by wearing her driving pants.

Tiffany, a popular local harness racing figure, died in 2011 after a brave battle with cancer.

Jack knew Tiffany well through his good mate and Tiffany's partner, Leigh Sutton.

Jack will also donate \$100 per winning drive to the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation and \$200 should he win the Echuca Cup, and Sutton will match it dollar for dollar.

Other features are heats of the Vicbred Platinum Sprint Championship and Echuca Sulky's Vicbred Platinum Country Series.

The minor races on the card will also contain plenty of interest, particularly the Bendigo Bank Pace in which the Amanda Turnbull-trained Hes Okey Dokey shoots for his fifth successive win.