

# That's our Kerry...

November 12, 2015



*KERRY MANNING*

WHEN an awkward schoolgirl notched her first win in the small country town of Ararat, onlookers were unaware of the significance the victory carried.

In fact, even the 16-year-old's biggest fan – her mother – had no idea of what was going to unfold, or whether a career in harness racing was even the best option!

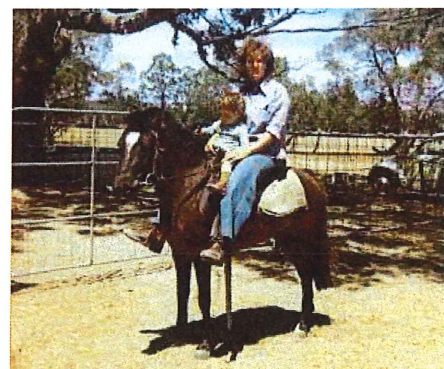
"I wanted her to stay in school, as she was a good student, but all she wanted to do was horses," Mum, Barbara, explained. "Her Dad thought it was okay for her to leave and so she did. I still wasn't convinced, but he always knew she could make it...that she had a gift with horses and he was right."

The win in question was handy pacer Gorgeous Gambit on May 27, 1993 – driven by a fresh-faced Kerryn Manning for her trainer-father, Peter.

While that initial success went largely unnoticed, it didn't take long for the young reinswoman to gain attention as she cut a regular path to the winners' circle throughout Victoria's country tracks.

A little more than a year later, Manning gave an indication of things to come when she joined an elite group of drivers who have scored upon their metropolitan debut.

Again partnering a member of her father's team, Manning was triumphant with talented freshman Scotty Wiper at Moonee Valley on August 20, 1994.



*KERRYNN with her mum Barbara*

"She was so excited with her first win at Moonee Valley," Barbara said. "And we were just so happy for her and proud too."

Six months later Manning registered her first record by becoming the youngest driver to win a Group One in Victoria when she captured the Tatlow Memorial with gritty youngster Allbenz – a horse she picked out of a paddock and purchased for \$500.

Such is the importance of the win, and the gelding's career, Manning's training establishment is named Allbenz Park.

Now a sprightly 23-year-old, Allbenz still holds pride of place in Manning's heart and property.

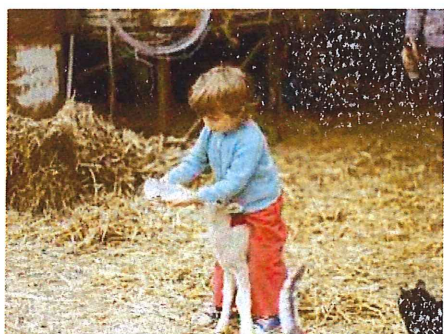
"Allbenz will forever be my favourite," Manning declared. "He's still in a paddock at my place and looks really good."

Firsts continued to flow for Manning, such as becoming the first female to win a Melbourne Metropolitan Premiership, a Victorian Drivers' Premiership, a National Drivers' Premiership, the Vin Knight Medal and six races at a meeting.

She also became the first driver in Australasia to reach a triple century – winning an incredible 371 races during the 2002/03 season.

In less than a decade, the shy country girl had developed into the Southern Hemisphere's premier and most recognised driver.

"She just worked so hard, and although she was driving for her Dad, who had a lot of horses in work, she was just a natural," Barbara said. "Horses just responded to her from the beginning. She loved horses and they seem to love her.



*ALWAYS the animal lover...Kerryn feeding a lamb*

"It wasn't just horses either, she has been an animal lover all her life, which she gets from me. As a child she was always in the paddock with the horses, feeding the sheep and always seem to have a chook named Francis under her arm...she never wanted to let it go."

In what has become "the norm", Manning created history again earlier this week with her triumph in the famed New Zealand Cup.

Combining with Arden Rooney, which she also trains, Manning became the first reinswoman to win the Shaky Isles' most prestigious event. It was her 41<sup>st</sup> Group One success.

"We couldn't be prouder of her," Barbara said. "To go over there and beat the Kiwis at home is no easy task, but she has done it.

"As happy as we are for her to be the first female to win the Cup, it has sort of become the norm with her, which is a shame really."

Manning is no stranger to enjoying overseas glory, having become the first Southern Hemisphere driver to win a European Group One when she combined with former top trotter Knight Pistol to capture the Harley Davidson Trot in 1997.

"That trip to Europe, I believe, is Kerryn's biggest achievement," Barbara said. "Not just the win in Norway, the whole trip.

"To go over there and become caretaker trainer of Knight Pistol as a young 20-year-old was a very big effort and really made her as a horsewoman. She wasn't on the phone constantly asking her Dad what to do, she just made the decisions and got it done.



KNIGHT PISTOL

"She did a tremendous job handling the trip, the publicity and scrutiny."

Manning echoed her Mum's sentiment, by selecting the northern campaign as the highlight of her amazing career.

"The Harley Davidson Trot is still my biggest win, but the whole trip is my most special moment," Manning said. "I realised there was a big wide world away from Great Western, and as you get older, you appreciate it more."

Scaling down her driving commitments several years ago, Manning, who wasted no time establishing herself among the leading trainers, prepares a boutique team with her husband, Grant Campbell.

The pair have enjoyed a high rate of success, including last season's A G Hunter Cup to match their NZ Cup triumph.

In her typical humble manner, Manning is quick to spread the credit, not just in relation to her latest crowning moment, but her entire career.

"When I first started I was just happy to win a race and then hope to win another," Manning said. "I've been very lucky to win so many big races and it is has been a nice journey.

"So many people deserve a lot of credit for every win. When you are mainly driving it is the effort of the trainer that helps you win. Then as you move into training, you have staff who work hard as well, which helps you win.

*ARDEN ROONEY holding off Smolda in the New Zealand Cup*

"Of course, there are also the owners, so without the opportunities from all those people, you can't win any race."

As for the future, Manning still harbours a desire for elusive majors, such as harness racing's 'Holy Grail' – Inter Dominion.

"To win the Inter Dominion would be the icing on the cake," Manning said. "Hopefully one day it will happen."

Barbara has no doubt an Inter Dominion win will eventually come her daughter's way.

"When she sets her mind on something, she can be pretty determined," Barbara declared. "That's our Kerryn!"

- **PAUL COURTS**

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