

How the wars were won when the Inter Dom come to Victoria

LEAD NEWS (/NEWS/CATEGORY/NEWS/LEAD-NEWS/)

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Harness Racing Victoria will present the Inter Dominion Championships, in my opinion the greatest race series on the Australasian harness racing calendar, in November and December.

It will be the 11th time Victoria has hosted the series from three different venues – Melbourne Showgrounds, Moonee Valley and Tabcorp Park Melton.

The vision of James P. Stratton (WA) and Harry F. Nicoll (New Zealand), along with WA's James Brennan, as a competition between New Zealand and Australia, the first Inter Dominion was held in 1936 at Gloucester Park Perth, where the original facade and tote building still stand.

The victor was Tasmanian Logan Derby (J Agnew), but another Tasmanian, Evicus (Freeman Holmes), was awarded the championship on points.

The Inter Dominion was off and running, involving South Australia (Wayville), Tasmania (Launceston), New Zealand (Addington) and Perth until 1940.

There was a hiatus until 1947 when Perth resumed the series followed by New Zealand (Alexandra Park), South Australia (Wayville) and Victoria (Melbourne Showgrounds), with a rotation system in place for the two-week period of racing that involved three nights of heats in the first week and the Grand Final a week later.

Let's relive the Victorian series!

Author's note: At various stages horses involved represented by the state in which they were owned or country of origin.

1950 – Captain Sandy

The anticipation of the Inter Dominion being in Melbourne drew very large crowds on all four nights, with an official attendance on Grand Final night of 36,055 patrons.

Three heats were held on each of the first three nights over 11 furlongs, 15.5 furlongs and 12.5 furlongs on the three-furlong track, which had held its first meeting three years earlier.

The heat winners were:



Night One: Globe Direct (2:09.2), Claude Derby (2:13.0) and Nevamaid (2:09.6).

Night Two: Claude Derby (2:13.2), Tivoli Star (2:13.2) and Darby Globe (2:13.8).

Night Three: Findon Queen (2:10.8), Nevamaid (2:09.8) and Sprayman (2:11.2).

The final field for a stake of \$21,000 pounds over 12.5 furlongs consisted of Dawn Volo (Tas, Geddes Luck), Findon Queen (SA, Wally Bowyer), Darby Globe (NSW, George Gath), Miss Wingate (Tas, Roy Hughes 12 yards), Sprayman (NZ, Clarry King 12 yards), Jacks Hope (NSW, Tom Wilson 12 yards), Nevamaid (SA, Tom Butterworth 12 yards), Captain Sandy (NZ, Jack Watts 24 yards), Globe Direct (NZ, Maurice Holmes 24 yards) and Silver Peak (NSW, Frank Culbert 24 yards).

After sweeping to the lead and crossing Dawn Volo with around a half-mile to travel, Globe Direct was being hailed the winner, but Jack Watts driving "the race of his life" aboard Captain Sandy (owned and trained by Jock Bain) was able to come from near last and blouse him by a head. Sprayman was third yards away, with Darby Pride a further two yards back in fourth.

An aged gelding by Sandy Dale from Waikura, Captain Sandy recorded a mile rate of 2:12.0.

1959 – Young Pedro

Large crowds were again the order on all four nights of the carnival and with large nominations the Trotting Control Board headed by Chairman Brigadier D. D. Pain elected to hold five heats on each of the first three nights over 11 furlongs, 12.5 furlongs and 15.5 furlongs.

First night winners were Diablo Don (2:10.8), Fiery Land (2:11.0), Gambling Raid (2:09.6), Dusty Miller (2:10.6) and Caduceus (2:07.6).



Second night winners were Dusty Miller (2:12.4), Kodak (2:11.0), Young Pedro (2:13.2), Caduceus (2:06.6) and Billabong Scott (2:11.0).

All owners and trainers were desperate to qualify for the final on the third night and those on course were treated to a night of dynamic racing. The winners were Diablo Don (2:11.8), Super Royal (2:09.8), Caduceus (2:10.4), Dusty Miller (2:13.2) and Bannalagh (2:12.6).

The final field over 14 furlongs was made up of Gambling Raid (Vic, Bob Parker), Fiery Land (SA, Norm Gath), Kodak (WA, Max Johnson), Billabong Scott (NSW, Jim Caffyn), Dusty Miller (Vic, G. D. (Dave) Wilson), Young Pedro (SA, Leo Hunt), Super Royal (NZ, Peter Wells, 12 yards), Diablo Don (NSW, Len Treasure, 12 yards), First Kiss (NSW, Joe Turnbull, 12 yards), Mineral Spring (NSW, Merv Adams, 12 yards) and Caduceus (NZ, 36 yards, Frank Kersley).

The rains came down effecting the track, which had an impact on Caduceus' chances, but still a crowd of 30,153 were there to witness the 29,000-pound event.

Kodak was hard driven to cross Gambling Raid, with Dusty Miller skipping away only to be caught outside the leader.

Young Pedro stepped safely and lobbed one/one, while Super Royal broke stride in the early stages when trying to improve, leaving Diablo Don three wide with Billabong Scott three back along the rails.

Caduceus began with zest but was hampered by Mineral Spring as they both vied for positions in the running line.

Young Pedro was eased three wide racing for the bell and, despite being trapped wide for the remainder of the journey, outgunned a brave Dusty Miller to score by three yards, with Billabong Scott third two yards away and Gambling Raid fourth.

A four-year-old entire by Van Derby from Pedro Salute, Young Pedro, who had been victorious in a heat of the Victoria Derby a year earlier, returned a mile rate of 2:11.8.

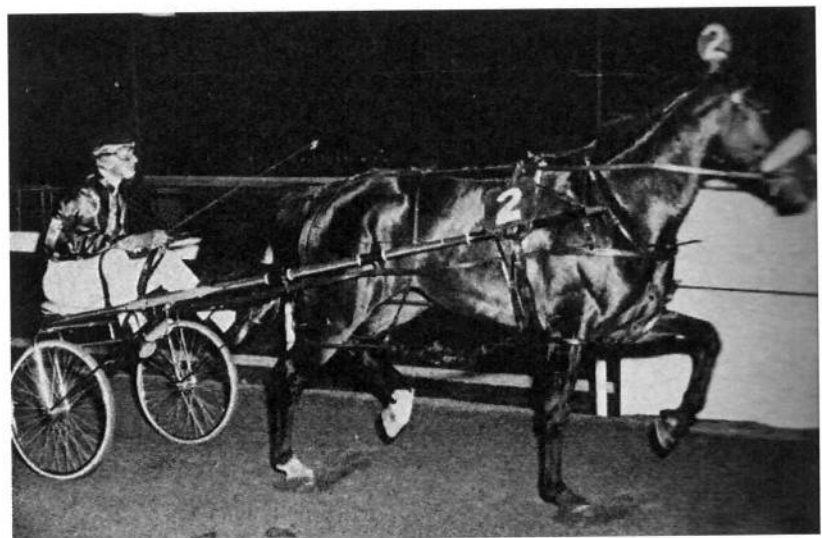
Leo Hunt was quoted after the race saying that if the positions had been reversed, Dusty Miller would have certainly won in easy fashion, while adding that in his opinion the track had raced perfectly despite the conditions.

Fifty-seven-year-old owner/trainer/driver Hunt had started his harness career in Victoria before shifting to South Australia.

1964 – Minuteman

The talk of the Melbourne Inters was the fly-in by American horseman Stanley Dancer with an offer to purchase the great Cardigan Bay, who had won the Adelaide series a year earlier, for 50,000 pounds.

Dancer completed the transaction on the basis the horse would be returned to his Auckland owner, Mrs Audrey Dean, at the American owner's expense when no more than 13 years of age.



Four heats were held each night over 11 furlongs, 12.5 furlongs and 15.5 furlongs.

First night winners were Angelique (2:07.9), Cardigan Bay (2:06.0), Red Adios (2:08.8) and Eaton Hall (2:10.0).

Second night winners were Red Adios (2:08.4), Le George (2:13.8), Minuteman (2:07.4) and Smoke Cloud (2:07.2).

Third night winners were Robin Dundee (2:08.8), Angelique (2:09.4), Tactile (2:09.0) and Pipiriki (2:09.0).

A massive crowd of 45,788 patrons attended the 14-furlong grand final for a stake of 30,000 pounds.

The field consisted of Minuteman (SA, Eric Hurley), Le George (NSW, Kevin Robertson), Angelique (Gordon Rothacker, Victoria's sole runner), Red Adios (NSW, Vic Frost), Pipiriki (Tas, Kevin Newman), Smoke Cloud (NSW, Jack Watts, 12 yards), Robin Dundee (NZ, Doody Townley, 12 yards), Little Maori (NSW, Laurie Moulds, 12 yards) and Cardigan Bay (NZ, Peter Wolfenden, 48 yards).

There was conjecture when Minuteman was withdrawn from the third heat after suffering from arthritis in the near fetlock, but he was placed in the grand final field because his tally of points assured him a run. It was only at 6pm on the night (race time 9.45pm) of the final that he was given the all clear to start by veterinary surgeons.

Jumping straight to the front from the pole as the tapes released, Minuteman led throughout for South Australia to record a two-yard victory over Angelique, who trailed, with Tactile (one/one) four yards away third and Smoke Cloud (mid-field) fourth.

Raced by Jim, Phyllis and his trainer Eric Hurley, Minuteman was a four-year-old entire by Field Battery from Adistar, who had been bought in foal at a dispersal sale for only 18 guineas. He returned a mile rate of 2:08.8.

1970 – Bold David

The Trotting Control Board Chairman Russell T White ran four heats on the first three nights over 11 furlongs and 36 yards, 12 furlongs and 134 yards and 15 furlongs and 134 yards.

First night winners were Adios Court (2:07.6), Tara Meadow (2:05.8), Deep Court (2:06.6) and Bylaw (2:07.8).

Second night winners were Bold David (2:08.2), Bon Adios (2:09), Adios Court (2:08.6) and Moonstone Bay (2:09.2).

Third night winners were Adios Court (2:15.4), Deep Court (2:11.8), Lucky Creed (2:12.2) and Garry Rowan (2:08.0).

Some 38,467 were in attendance on grand final night with a stake of \$40,000.

The field consisted of Moonstone Bay (SA, Ron Cox), Bylaw (SA, Dick Webster), Tara Meadow (Vic, George Gath), Adios Court (SA, Joe Webster), Deep Court (SA, Jim Hurley), Bold David (Vic, Alf Simons), Bon Adios (SA, Bill Shinn, 12 yards), Daintys Daughter (WA, Bernie Cushing, 12 yards) and Lucky Creed (Qld, Vic Frost, 12 yards).

South Australians showed their dominance by having five runners in the field of nine.

Beginning brilliantly from outside the front line, Bold David, raced by trainer/driver Alf Simons in partnership with Ron Morrison and Charlie Blanchfield, was rated to perfection and led throughout, accounting for Bylaw, who trailed by two lengths. Bon Adios was third, a further 1.25 lengths away, with Daintys Daughter fourth. The mile rate 2:06.6.

A gelded son of Bold Brigade and Girl David, Bold David had raced well without luck in Adelaide the year before.

Alf Simons had been involved in the sport since gaining a licence to ride and drive trotters at the age of 12 when growing up in Wedderburn.



1978 – Markovina

It was a new era for Melbourne harness racing Chairman Graeme Cochran and the Inter Dominion as the race changed from a mobile start and was held at the Moonee Valley circuit, which had only opened two years earlier inside the famous racecourse situated in Moonee Ponds (Essendon).

Three heats each night were held over 2400 metres, 1609 metres (one mile) and 3300 metres.

First night winners were Markovina (2:05.0), Sole Command (2:02.0) and Hermosa Star (2:02.0).



Second night winners were Dont Retreat (1:59.9), Royal Gaze (1:59.4) and Sole Command (1:59.6).

Third night winners were Paleface Adios (2:03.3), Dimante Hanover (2:04.1) and Markovina (2:05.7).

The points tally field for the \$109,000 grand final over 2900 metres consisted of Dont Retreat (NSW, Laurie Moulds), Sole Command (NZ, Terry Knowles), Markovina (SA, Brian Gath), Velvet Prince (WA, Fred Kersley), Tan Heel (Vic, Ken Rickard), Junction Road (NSW, Les Treasure), Hermosa Star (NSW, Peter Norrgard), Paleface Adios (NSW, Colin Pike), Royal Gaze (Vic, Ken Pocock) and Dimante Hanover (NSW, Henry McDermott).

Junction Road began with a wing on every foot from outside the front line with Dont Retreat trailing, Tan Heel in the breeze being followed by Markovina, Hermosa Star three back along the rails with Royal Gaze on his back, Velvet Prince one/two and both Sole Command and Paleface Adios at the rear.

Kersley and Velvet Prince (backed for plenty at cricket score odds) wasted no time in going forward to park exposed within a lap.

Nothing had changed racing for the bell with Brian Gath and Markovina going forward three-wide in the last lap with Sole Command trying to follow him up.

Surging to the front on turning, Markovina, trained by Brian Gath for the Croft and Nunn families, had two metres to spare on the wire from Hermosa Star after being angled away from the inside in the straight, with Peter Norrgard immediately lodging a short-lived protest to the roar of the crowd. Velvet Prince was game in finishing third a further two metres back, with Dimante Hanover fourth.

A six-year-old entire by Mark Lobell from Wainoni, Markovina returned a mile rate of 2:05.2.

1985 – Preux Chevalier

A power-packed pacer from the west by the name of Preux Chevalier (nicknamed 'The Frog'), trained and driven by media shy West Australian Barry Perkins, had won two features at Harold Park prior to the commencement and dominated the series, winning all three heats and the grand final, but not before a great deal of controversy took place.

Four heats were held on each of the first three nights over 2400 metres, 1900 metres and 2870 metres.

First night winners were Bundanoon (2:01.7), Kamea Duplicity (1:58.6), Gosh (2:01.0) and Preux Chevalier (2:04.4).

Second night winners were Enterprise (1:59.2), Preux Chevalier (1:56.7), Game Oro (1:59.4) and Village Kid (2:02.1).

Third night winners were Bundanoon (2:02.8), Gammalite (2:03.9), Preux Chevalier (2:02.3) and Panyan (2:02.6).

A stellar field lined up for the \$180,000 2870-metre grand final in front of a record crowd estimated at more than 40,000. The gates had been closed and many people jumped the fence or entered through the car park.



The field in order were Toby Duane (NSW, David Aiken), Quite Famous (Vic, Jim O'Sullivan), Rite (WA, Fred Kersley), Village Kid (WA, Chris Lewis), Gosh (Vic, Henry McDermott), Game Oro (Vic, Ken Pocock), Panyan (Vic, Vin Knight), Gammalite (Vic, Bruce Clarke), Bundanoon (NSW, Brian Hancock) and Preux Chevalier (WA, Barry Perkins).

However, before the race unfolded, rumours were rife across the track that Preux Chevalier was suffering a serious case of colic and was in doubt of taking his place in the big race.

An announcement as the race drew closer by Chairman of Stewards Rod Osborne was made giving the all clear on advice of veterinary surgeons, which came as a relief to all parties and 'The Frog' was free to start as a very short-priced favourite.

Fellow West Australian Village Kid began best to lead as Preux Chevalier was given plenty of time to balance.

Within a lap he circled the field and assumed control after the leader had been softened a little by Quite Famous, who had dropped to his back. That relegated Toby Duane to four back on the markers, leaving Gosh facing the breeze, Gammalite one/one, Bundanoon one/two, Panyan five back along the rails and Game Oro midfield, with Rite at the rear.

Gammalite, hard driven as usual, was first to make a move three-wide in the last lap, with Panyan, after being extricated from the inside, following and Game Oro easing four-wide at the straight entrance.

Keeping Village Kid in a tight pocket all the way up the running, Preux Chevalier, to the delight of owners Ken and Wendy Lavin, greeted the judge two metres in advance of Village Kid, who may have made the margin a lot closer had he got clear earlier. Game Oro was a half-head away third, with Gammalite fourth.

A six-year-old stallion by Lumber Dream from Heather Frost, Preux Chevalier returned a mile rate of 2:00.4.

1992 – Westburn Grant

More than 25,000 patrons were in attendance at Moonee Valley to witness New South Wales stallion Westburn Grant, who was raced by Barney and Coleen Breen and Vic and Margaret Frost, lead for the majority of the \$400,000 2840-metre journey of the Inter Dominion.

Once again drama was to unfold in the lead up to the grand final as Westburn Grant went missing when required for security stabling and couldn't be located by HRV stewards. Instead, he was hidden miles away at Venus Beach to work on the sand with no mobile phone signal available.

Three heats were held in the lead up to the grand final over 2380 metres, 1940 metres and 2840 metres.

First night winners were Impressionist (1:58.5), Lord Muckalee (1:58.5) and Level Advice (1:59.1).



Second night winners were Level Advice (1:57.8), Christopher Vance (1:57.1) and Blossom Lady (1:56.5).

Third night winners were Impressionist (1:59.2), Christopher Vance (1:59.2) and Blossom Lady (2:01.2).

The final points tally field consisted of Mark Hanover (NZ, Mark Purdon), Impressionist (Vic, Ted Demmler), Master Musician (NZ, Robert Dunn), Thorate (NSW, Brian Hancock), Franco Tiger (Vic, Brian Gath), Westburn Grant (NSW, Vic Frost), Lord Muckalee (Vic, Graeme Morgan), Blossom Lady (NZ, Anthony Butt), Christopher Vance (NZ, Tony Herlihy), Defoe (NZ, Peter Ryder) and Level Advice (Vic, Andrew Peace).

A cloud was hanging over Impressionist, who had pulled up lame after the final round, but vets had passed him fit to compete a couple of days before grand final night.

As the field was released, Franco Tiger and Westburn Grant came out as one, with Franco Tiger holding the advance but Vic Frost persisting on Westburn Grant who was able to cross him in the back straight on the first occasion. That left Level Advice, who had received a dream passage from the extreme left draw, uncovered.

Positions outside the leader changed mid-race with Impressionist going forward from three back to face the breeze before gaining cover from Defoe, who followed him forward. Blossom Lady, after trailing the pair, then advanced to race parked from the bell. Thorate, Mark Hanover and Christopher Vance were bailed along the pegs.

After being allowed to dictate terms with a couple of easy quarters, Westburn Grant, in a last half of 59.1 and final quarter of 29, scored by a metre from Franco Tiger, who finished fast when finally extricated from the back of the leader. Blossom Lady kept on giving to be third three metres away, a head in advance of Defoe. The mile rate 1:59.4.

2000 – Shakemaker

Harness Racing Victoria Chairman Ian McEwen was to make a radical announcement that the series of that year would for the first time allocate points in two lead-up races – the Victoria and A.G. Hunter Cups – as well as the usual heats, and not only that the series would be given the title of Interdom 2000, carrying a grand final stake of \$1 million.

Kicking off on Hunter Cup night (January 15) with Kiwi Yulestar victorious in a rate of 2:01.3 over 3020 metres from a standing start, the Victoria Cup (2540 metres) took place the following week with Breenys Fella the winner in two minutes even), with further heats that night over 2060 metres from the mobile.

The heat winners on Hunter Cup night were Shakamaker (1:59.1), Kyema Kid (1:58.7) and Safe And Sound (1:59.1).

The heat winners on Victoria Cup night were Grumpy Ole Man (2:02.6), Admirals Avenue (2:00.6) and Zyuganov Leis (1:59.6).



Then came speed night over 1609 metres and the heat winners were Courage Under Fire (1:55.9), Yulestar (1:55.6), Deeks Guy (1:55.6) and Slug Of Jin (1:56.4).

The stage was then set for the 2540 metre (\$1,000,000) Grand Final on Saturday February 12 with a near capacity crowd in attendance.

The field consisted of Kyema Kid (NSW, Richard Hancock), Courage Under Fire (NZ, Colin De Fillippi), Admirals Avenue (WA, Justin Warwick), Slug Of Jin (Qld, Alan Donohoe), Yulestar (NZ, Tony Shaw), Shakamaker (Vic, John Justice), Happy Asset (NZ, Anthony Butt), Safe And Sound (Vic, Brian Hancock), Colebruce (Vic, Noel Shinn), Atitagain (NSW, Darren Hancock), Captain Rufus (Vic, Ted Demmler) and Breenys Fella (Vic, Craig Demmler), with Zyuganov Leis (Tas) emergency.

Yet again there was controversy at the start after Courage Under Fire's nose hit the gate and galloped, with many thinking a false start should have been called. However, they were off and running with Slug Of Jin leading from Admirals Avenue and Kyema Kid, with the outside division gradually making formation.

Racing for the bell, the order was Slug Of Jin, Courage Under Fire outside him being trailed by Yulestar and Happy Asset, with Admirals Avenue, Kyema Kid, Breenys Fella and Captain Rufus on the inside and Safe And Sound starting a forward three wide move from midfield being followed by Atitagain and Shakamaker, with Colebruce at the rear.

Easing five-wide on the home turn, Shakamaker and John Justice sprinted like a gazelle to race to the front halfway up the running and defeat Breenys Fella out very wide, Happy Asset third and Yulestar fourth after gaining a split through the centre.

Raced by Glenys Wolfe, Shakamaker in quarters of 29, 30.8, 28.3 and 29.3 returned a mile rate of 1:59.5. The margins being two metres by 1.5 metres.

2008 – Blakes A Fake

The 2008 series saw HRV (Chairman Neil Busse) introduce a new format, where Grand Circuit winners since the last Inter Dominion were automatically given a start in the semi-finals, those being Blacks A Fake, Robin Hood, Manwarra Goforgold, Safari and Smoken Up, with the balance of the field made up from horses who qualified in the heats at Geelong and Moonee Valley.

Four qualifying heats over 2570 metres were held – the winners being Report For Duty (2:01.1) and Reba Rajah (1:59.0) at Moonee Valley, and Penny Veejay (2:00.1) and Cincinnati Kid (1:57.9) at Geelong.

The 2570-metre (\$750,000) Grand Final field consisted of Divisive (NSW, Peter Rixon), Perfect Gold Lombo (Vic, Kerryn Manning), Smoken Up (NZ, Lance Justice), Sequoiahs Spirit (Vic, Daryl Douglas), Diamonds N Furs (Vic, Kate Thompson), Blacks A Fake (Qld, Natalie Rasmussen), Karlsruhe (Vic, David Aiken), Report For Duty (NZ, Anthony Butt), Penny Veejay (Vic, Chris Alford), Robin Hood (Vic, Gavin Lang) and Safari (Vic, Brian Gath), with Amorts (NSW) the emergency.



Beginning swiftly from gate three, Smoken Up led out but with Blacks A Fake applying pressure, Lance Justice elected to allow him to cross with a mile to travel leaving Safari in the open after going forward three wide to give Diamonds N Furs one/one cover. Divisive after originally trailing was relegated to three back the inside being followed by Report For Duty and Perfect Gold Lombo. The outside division apart from Safari and Diamonds N Furs consisting of Sequoiahs Spirit, Penny Veejay, Robin Hood and Karlsruhe.

Being the champion he was, Blacks A Fake defied all rivals to defeat Divisive, who flashed when clear of a pocket by 1.9 metres, returning a mile rate of 1:56.4 (last half 56.4, last quarter 28.7). Smoken Up was third 1.9 metres away and Safari a tough fourth.

Raced by Cheryl Rasmussen, Trevor Titcombe and Helen Pointer, it was Blacks A Fake's third Inter Dominion Grand Final victory in a row, having won in Tasmania (Elwick) and Globe Derby (Adelaide) in the two previous years.

2018 – Tiger Tara

It was to be 10 years before Melbourne hosted another series – the venues being Tabcorp Park Melton, Ballarat and Cranbourne with the Grand Final at Melton and Dale Monteith Chairman of HRV.

First night saw three heats over 2240 metres with winners being Spankem (1:54.3), Galactic Star (1:54.1) and Cruz Bromac (1:53.8).

Night two (Ballarat over 1710 metres) went to Wrappers Delight (1:53.6), Im Pats Delight (1:52.2) and Cruz Bromac (1:53.5).

Night three (Cranbourne over 2555 metres) was won by Spankem (1:58.0), Tiger Tara (1:57.1) and Cruz Bromac (1:56.5).



The 2760-metre (\$500,000) Grand Final field consisted of Galactic Star (WA, Ryan Warwick), Cant Refuse (Vic, Mattie Craven), Im Pats Delight (NZ, Gavin Lang), Mach Doro (NSW, Luke McCarthy), Spankem (NZ, Mark Purdon), Maximan (NZ, Lauren Tritton), Tiger Tara (NSW, Todd McCarthy), San Carlo (Vic, Rebecca Bartley), Cruz Bromac (NZ, Natalie Rasmussen), Our Uncle Sam (NSW, Anthony Frisby), Wrappers Delight (Vic, Kima Frenning) and Cash N Flow (NZ, John Caldow) with Audi Hare (NZ) the emergency.

After going through the series undefeated, Cruz Bromac was the highly fancied second elect, with stablemate Spankem backed into favourite ahead of Pats Delight, Galactic Star and San Carlo.

Mach Doro was best to begin before handing over to Tiger Tara, with Cant Refuse three markers back after Galactic Star broke on the first turn after initially trailing Mach Doro.

On settling it was Tiger Tara, Mach Doro, Cant Refuse, Cash N Flow and Galactic Star on the inside, with Im Pats Delight in the open momentarily prior to San Carlo easing away from the inside to race exposed. They were followed by Spankem, Cruz Bromac and Our Uncle Sam, with Maximan at the rear.

The runs commenced at the bell as Spankem went forward three-wide, trailed by both Cruz Bromac and Our Uncle Sam.

Given full rein prior to the final bend, Tiger Tara raced away appearing to have the race in his keeping with Spankem, Cruz Bromac and Our Uncle Sam giving chase and the rest of the field struggling.

Holding a commanding lead on turning, Tiger Tara in quarters of 30.1, 28.7, 26.3 and 27.8 scored by 14.4 metres in a brilliant mile rate of 1:53.9 much to the delight of part/owner/trainer Kevin Pizzuto and family, accounting for Our Uncle Sam (five-wide home turn), who ran the race of his life. Cruz Bromac was third 1.4 metres away and Spankem fourth.

It's now time for another chapter of Melbourne Inter Dominion history to take place.

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