



Preparing for the 'big show'

A look at our maturing mini trotting drivers

by Nerissa Clarke

Over the past 28 years of mini trotting in New South Wales, many youngsters have emerged from the sport to go on and carve successful careers in senior harness racing.

Mini trotting is viewed as playing a vital role in the harness industry, providing a sound development pathway for interested children.

Upon reaching the 16 years-of-age limit or "retirement", many mini trotting drivers continue their association with harness racing by gaining a stable hand, driving or training licence.

Many youngsters also become involved in the organisation and administration levels at their local harness clubs, or continue their involvement by aiding and educating other children in the sport.

A great number of former members have gone on to successful careers in many different areas of the senior version of harness racing.

This issue we take a moment to introduce you to some recently "retired" mini trotting drivers, some of whom are already making their presence noticed at their local

racetracks with their classy skills and abilities whilst others have become involved by helping out where they started by passing on their knowledge to children currently participating.

New South Wales Mini Trotting Association is proud of the efforts and achievements of all of these youngsters, and take this opportunity to wish them, and other recent retirees such as Courtney Sutherland (Tamworth), Luke Farrugia (Inner City), Tanya Farrugia (Inner City), Ben Carroll (Riverina) and Mark Pitt (Leeton), the very best of luck in their future endeavours:



JINAYA NIASS

Hailing from Riverstone, Jinaya Niass (aged 15) has been driving mini trotters since the age of 11.

Jinaya recalls a race at Bathurst Carnival of Cups where her pony went head to head with Midnight Express down the straight but managed to hold on by a neck to take the victory as being her most memorable moment in the sport.

Jinaya has recently been assisting Peter Morris to gain more experience in the sport and to date has had 16 trial drives notching three wins and six placings.

Jinaya's advice: "Listen and learn as much as you can. Be thankful to your family. I would really like to thank my nan, Janice Niass, for buying my first pony and taking me to race meetings".



SAM ISON

Tamworth Club is a relatively new club in terms of mini trotting but is already producing top-notch drivers of the future.

Sam Ison, 16, is on his way to completing the TAFE course and trial drives which should see him driving at race meetings within the next couple of months.

Although only competing for two seasons, Sam is able to recall many good memories and fun times, the highlight being his first ever win driving Darth Vader, who was a riding pony that had never seen a gig before!

Sam's advice: "It doesn't matter if you win or lose as long as you and your pony are having fun!"



TODD PREST

Winning major races such as Inter Dominions and State Championships is only something that most drivers dream about.

Yet Todd Prest (16) from Leeton has already been fortunate enough to taste such success.

With only a handful of qualifying drives remaining, it will only be a matter of weeks before Todd officially joins the senior ranks at registered race meetings.

Todd credits mini trotting for aiding him in his progression to senior harness driving by allowing him to get into the game early and be taught the correct methods of both driving and treating a horse, as well as developing a healthy respect for rules and regulations!

Todd's advice: "Listen to the older people, organisers and those there to help you out. The biggest thing is to have heaps of fun both on and off the track!"



SAMANTHA MOORE

Winning the 2010 Shetland Championship driving Secret Mission and finishing runner up in the Midget Division driving Magic Floss was the perfect send-off for Samantha Moore.

Samantha, 16, has been racing with

the Newcastle/Maitland Club since she was seven and plans to continue assisting the mini trotters but would also like to drive "big" trotters further down the track.

Samantha thanks mini trotting for providing her with the opportunity to make friends from across the nation and allowing her to see places she normally would not have.

Samantha's advice: "Just be safe, have fun... remember it's not just about winning but how much fun you have, every place counts."



ASHLEIGH JACKSON

Ashleigh Jackson started driving mini trotters at age five.

Now 16, Ashleigh retired at the end of last season after 11 years with the Newcastle/Maitland club.

She still follows the mini trotting and is planning to start driving big horses soon.

During her time mini trotting, Ashleigh drove two ponies, Ashleigh's Honey and Magic Floss and she finished second at the 2010 Inter Dominion in the Midget division and lists this as her career highlight.

Ashleigh's advice: "It's simple - to be safe and careful!"



MARTELLE MAGUIRE

Taking home a double on your first night out as a qualified driver is a feather not many drivers would have in their caps.

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Yet Martelle Maguire (16) from Leeton has that rare honour.

Martelle began driving mini trotters when she was just five and while many drivers name victories as their memorable moments, Martelle recalls a night when the pony she was driving, The White Knight, decided to do a bolt during a race, causing another pony to take off as well.

Martelle laughs now as she recalls the clerk of the course taking quite some time to coax the ponies into slowing down a little!

Martelle's advice: "It's great fun, so enjoy it while it lasts! It's not all fun and games when you're out against everyone racing big horses who only want to take home a cheque."



RICKY JUDD

Ricky Judd, aged 19, was another driver that enjoyed success during his time mini trotting by recording multiple NSW Championship wins and competing in the Inter Dominion series in Tasmania.

Ricky began competing when he was eight and was a member of the Riverina Club.

Ricky credits mini trotting for providing him with some great memories over the years, particularly at the Championships each year.

Ricky is looking forward to getting back onto a race track himself in the future driving the big horses.

Ricky's advice: "It will bring you many unforgettable memories and friends. BUT most of all enjoy it and have fun!"

DAVID WHITE

David White from Junee (aged 19) has created an impression on harness racing circles since his entry into the senior ranks 18 months ago.



Already recording 24 race wins, tying for first place in the NSW Rising stars series, and winning the 2010 Country Junior Driver Encouragement Award from Harness Racing NSW, David competed with the Riverina Club from the age of 13 driving ponies Apache Jack and Twebbly Twotter and set the standard on his first night of racing by winning his very first race.

David's advice: "Patience is important because they can be very frustrating! Have a go, enjoy yourself, and have fun."



REBECCA LAMB

Since retiring from mini trotting, Wyalong's Rebecca Lamb (aged 18), has been busy completing her HSC and buying shares in a horse called Girlsniteout!

Driving mini trotters from the age of five, this share ownership has allowed Rebecca to still be involved in the sport she loves.

Rebecca also enjoyed much success in her year's mini trotting, winning two Cups and finishing second at the State Championships. She was rewarded for her efforts by winning her very last race as a mini trotting driver.

Rebecca's advice: "Always listen to what you have been told and try to enjoy yourself as much as you can. It's not about winning it's about having fun!"



KELSEY DEEVES

Kelsey Deeves (18) from Leeton began driving ponies at the age of 12 and recalls good times with good friends as being the highlights of her mini trotting days.

With two younger siblings still competing, Kelsey can still be found assisting the mini trotters at race meetings.

Kelsey lists her most exciting race victory as being when she won the Retiring Drivers Race aboard the reliable Cinderella at the 2009 Leeton Championships.

Kelsey's advice: "The person who crosses the line first isn't the only winner, you don't have to be a champion to be the best that you can be. Never give up and keep trying."



SIMONE ELDER

Simone Elder (17) raced with the Newcastle/Maitland Club from the age of five until her retirement. Simone was lucky to encounter many exciting experiences whilst mini trotting including driving at the Queensland Inter Dominion and contesting many state championships.

Simone is currently undertaking her trial drives and TAFE course completion to enable her to receive her full drivers licence.

Simone's advice: "You really have to understand your horse to get the very best out of him. Also the quickest way home is the pegs!"