

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RACEHORSE OWNERS ASSOCIATION NEWS



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HAPPY NEW YEAR

As we enter another year as horse owners we all, I am sure, enter with a sense of hope. We hope that our unraced horses will prove themselves, we hope that our horses that have been spelling will comeback brighter and better, we hope that we will pick up a good prospect at the upcoming yearling sales, we hope that any success we had last year will be built on in the new year.

We hope. To quote Alexander Pope – “Hope springs eternal in the human breast”. Pope was a famous 18th century poet and satirist who was also responsible for some of the first English translations of the works of Homer – “The Iliad” and “The Odyssey”. I could find nothing about Pope’s interests that would suggest a horse racing background but surely the author of that quote knew something about the ups and downs of involvement with the so called “Sport of Kings”.

Increasingly, with the relaxation of ownership rules to allow 20 owners (all of which can be syndicates) the “Sport of Kings” moniker becomes less and less a reality, in fact almost anyone can buy into this game of hope for a reasonably modest outlay.

More and more people are obtaining small shares in horses and enduring the ups and downs of being race horse owners.

Can I make a suggestion for a belated to New Year’s Eve resolution?

My resolution would be “I will be realistic about the abilities of my horses, I will know when it is time to quit.” I know that I have been very spoiled as quite early in my experiences as an owner I was lucky enough to race a horse capable of competing in Group events in Melbourne. Being involved with that horse has taught me so much about the “racing game”.

Even very good horses can be the source of much frustration, with injuries, sickness and other ailments, and even plain bad luck being major factors in determining how successful your horse can be. “What might have been”, “if only”, seems to be the catch cry to cover involvement with good horses, you never know which run will be their last and you are always aware that the higher you go the further there is to fall. Ability to carry weight and the

temperament of the animal can add to the dilemmas.

The connection between my New Year’s resolution and the Pope quote may seem rather esoteric however in my experience one of the drawbacks of racing a horse in any syndicate is that when the horse is not going well there are many differing opinions on what to do. Unfortunately while hope springs eternal in some owners’ breasts, reality is that most times when the trainer’s assessment is “time to quit” the hope is misplaced and will lead to further angst.

I can honestly say in the cases where I have stayed in a group that has persevered after the trainer has recommended to walk away, that the experience has always been less than the remaining hope would have predicted.

I can also say that of the number of horses that I have quit on advice of the trainer with agreement of the ownership group only one has gone on to taste any sort of real success. I have lost count of the number that have disappeared without a trace; of those that have not won since the sale and of those that have won at a class lower than SA provincial.

My advice to the relatively inexperienced owner is that when your trainer starts to talk about moving a horse on, he is saying to you that he does not consider it worth space in his stable. When you consider the cost of training fees he is really saying he would rather put an untried horse into a stable and be rid of yours because he has assessed your horse’s ability and decided that wins will be few and far between. For most trainers training fees are not enough to make their existence comfortable, they need winners to keep cash flowing and to attract new clients and maintain existing ones.

While it may sound intuitively wrong, financially you are better to buy into a new horse in this instance than to continue to fund a recalcitrant horse that struggles to win. The phrase “throwing good money after bad”, even though something of a cliché, is quite valid in this context.

My suggestion listen to your trainer, try and sell while there is some value in your animal and re-invest in new horse and then hope for better luck.

SAROA CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

Our recent SAROA Christmas Function held at Alistair McFarlane's beautiful Balhannah property Tori Park was a great success and very well attended by our members.

We would very much like to thank our sponsors for the day, Thomas Foods International for supply of the meat, The Francis group of hotels for supplying alcohol and Pizza Hut SA for soft drinks.

With the added benefit of being able to view Alistair's yearling crop for this year, the day was wonderful day out for our members and we cannot thank Alistair and Pattie enough for being such gracious hosts.

OWNER OF THE MONTH

Owner of the month nominations can be made by email or letter or even by a phone call to me; nominations should be received by 10th day of the following month. Nominations can come from the owner or a friend, acquaintance or family member but the nominee must be a SAROA member. We also prefer that the application is combined with a good story about the horse involved, as this award is just as applicable to lowly maiden winners as it is to winners of feature races.

Our committee review all nominations then select the monthly winner, who will receive a \$100 voucher, kindly donated by SAROA members Jenny and Wayne Francis to be used at The Elephant and Castle Hotel either in the hotel or bottle shop, plus a Pizza Hut 'double pizza' voucher with the compliments of SAROA committee member Bill Lianos.

Owner of the Month for November to be advertised.

Good luck and good racing
Richard Stafford, SAROA secretary