

# feature

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## CREAM OF NSW RACING HONOURED AT GALA DINNER



Bart Cummings, Dave Meijer (holding Tuesday Joy's award) and Gai Waterhouse

When it comes to racing awards nights, they don't come any bigger than the NSW Racehorse Owners Association's Racing's 'Night of Champions'.

At this night of nights for the NSW RACING industry, the equine equivalent to the Academy Awards, the NSW Racehorse

Owners Association (NSWROA) pays homage to the best New South Wales has to offer both in the equine and human categories.

This year's black tie event was held at The Pavilion, Royal Randwick Racecourse, in August and entering via "the red carpet"

guests ventured into a magical setting which looked a bit like fairyland with lights twinkling amid table settings fit for royalty.

The "full house" sign was up early for the function, weeks before the actual date, with those unlucky enough not to have tickets being 'wait-listed' for the event.



The glamorous 'red carpet' entrance

There was glitz and glamour in abundance with celebrities proudly stepping out in support of NSWROA's chosen charity Redkite.

Redkite, Australia's leading cancer support charity, provides valuable assistance to children with cancer and their families.

Their essential emotional, financial and educational services ensure that children with cancer and their families feel supported through the often long and difficult cancer journey.

From the moment the hosts, TVN presenters Bruce Clark and Caroline Searcy walked on stage, to be joined a short time later by racing legend Bart Cummings, the room was abuzz and the atmosphere was set for the night.

And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, the Aria Award-winning Human Nature provided an incredible evening of entertainment.

The top honour of the night, the NSW Champion Horse of the Year title, went to the wonderful mare Tuesday Joy who is owned by John Singleton and trained by Gai Waterhouse.

For the first occasion, NSWROA presented an Industry Recognition Award; a special award to honour an outstanding contribution made to the industry. The inaugural winner of the award was Brother Dan Stafford.

Brother Dan, who is the chaplain to the Australian Jockey Club and Sydney Turf Club, is a Kogarah-based Redemptorist and long-time volunteer with the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Brother Dan has made many friends and contacts in the racing fraternity in Australia through his role as chaplain.

For the past 15 years, Brother Dan has been the master of ceremonies at Melbourne's annual racing Mass (in the week preceding the Melbourne Cup) and has now started the annual racing Mass in Sydney which is held prior to the Autumn Carnival.

As we would expect, Brother Dan was quite humble when accepting his award but provided the quotation of the night when he said: "One of the great things God has given us is the thoroughbred".

Amid thunderous applause, this gentle man of the cloth spoke from the heart about his great love of the thoroughbred and our industry.

Brother Dan has seen many great horses over the years but rates the great Tulloch as the best: "Seeing Tulloch win the Brisbane Cup in his last race in 1961 is a day I will



NSW racing's elite gathered at the impressive 'The Pavilion' at Royal Randwick



Ali Mutch was the fashion expert during the night; pictured with Frank Coletta who ran the Silent Auction and Red Carpet proceedings

always remember," he said. "Tulloch knew he was a champion and it was a privilege to see this beautiful animal in action."

Brother Dan is also a champion and it is our privilege to honour him in this small way.

NSWROA presented an additional seven awards on the night. These category awards and the winners were:-



## AWARD

NSW TWO-YEAR-OLD OF THE YEAR  
 NSW THREE-YEAR-OLD OF THE YEAR  
 NSW SPRINTER/MILER OF THE YEAR  
 NSW MIDDLE DISTANCE HORSE OF THE YEAR  
 NSW STAYER OF THE YEAR  
 NSW COUNTRY CHAMPION HORSE OF THE YEAR  
 NSW PROVINCIAL CHAMPION HORSE OF THE YEAR

## WINNER

Sebring  
 Heavenly Glow  
 Racing To Win  
 Sirmione  
 No Wine No Song  
 Takeover Target  
 Samantha Miss

Other awards to be presented on the night included the Queen of the Autumn Award (Heavenly Glow), the TJ Smith Award (Gai Waterhouse), the George Moore Award (Blake Shinn) and the Theo Green Award (Peter Wells).

Yet another highlight of the night was the keynote speaker from Redkite, Jeremy Medlock, who had the audience literally in the palm of his hand.

Simply telling his life story about his fight with cancer with accompanying film footage, the vast crowd rose as one at the completion of his address. It was said by many a guest in the room that his speech was truly inspirational.

It would be remiss of me not to mention our sponsors. The success of the racing's Night of Champions dinner relies predominantly on sponsorship monies, the monster auction and the silent auction.

The event this year was proudly sponsored by the Count Charitable Foundation, Emirates Airlines, Racing NSW, Centrebet, Sydney Turf Club, New Zealand Thoroughbred Marketing, New Zealand Bloodstock, Deutsche Bank Group, Ambassador Travel Services, Taylors Wines,

Tooheys, BT Investment Management, BMW Sydney, Carrazzo Consulting, Optus Business and Opportune Home Loans.

Our thanks also to Bruce Clark and Caroline Searcy, our hosts for the night; Bart Cummings, our guest presenter; Jeremy Medlock, our keynote speaker; James Keenan, our auctioneer for the Monster Auction; Geoff Illingworth, our penciller for the Silent Auction and Red Carpet proceedings; Frank Coletta, for his assistance with the Silent Auction and Red Carpet proceedings; Ali Mutch, our Fashionista, and the incredible Human Nature.

I would also like to thank my fellow Racing Night of Champions Committee members – Darren Farnham, Max Whitby, Kelly McLean, Fiona Read and Peter Lovitt for their tremendous work and also Robyn Bowes, David Cohen and Angela Barbato.

NSWROA also extends it thanks to Lynell Peck and staff, especially Roger Brassington, from the Australian Jockey Club.

And finally in closing, my thanks to all who attended the function to support Redkite. I look forward to seeing you all at the 2009 Racing's Night of Champions.



TVN's ace presenters Bruce Clark and Caroline Searcy



Brother Dan Stafford accepts his award with Bart Cummings alongside