



Antony Surace with wife Ann Marie and parents at last year's Racing's Night of Champions

## *The wonder & joy of ownership*

OWNER ANTONY SURACE HAS SEEN THE 'LIGHT'  
AND DABBLES IN RACEHORSE OWNERSHIP – AND HE'S  
HAVING A BALL! WORDS: SHARON HUNT (EXECUTIVE OFFICER – NSWROA)

**A** Happy New Year to all readers and welcome to the beginning of another year for our wonderful industry.

As you would be aware, last year we celebrated 200 Years of Horse Racing in New South Wales and this year NSW Racehorse Owners Association (NSWROA) will celebrate 'A New Era in Racing' with various functions throughout the year.

January also marks the start of a new membership year for NSWROA as well as the start of the yearling sales which will introduce many to the ranks of ownership for the very first time.

A lot of people are under the impression that racehorse ownership is only for the very wealthy – nothing could be further from the truth. The thrill of owning a racehorse is now readily available to all.

So what better way to encourage new

owners into the industry than to tell them about one of our members who has had, what could only be described as a 'dream run' since entering the ownership ranks.

Antony Surace was first introduced to the industry by his parents, Dom and Sue, both horse lovers but in very different ways, at the tender age of five.

Whilst Mrs Surace was an avid equestrian fan, Mr Surace was a keen punter and it was to this arena that Antony placed his allegiance.

Accumulating a knowledge bank from this very young age, Antony quickly became obsessed with the racing industry.

He attended the races for the first time at 14yo and the meeting at Rosehill saw him 'off to a flyer' wisely investing his pocket money (via his father) on the winning combination of Tommy Smith and Mick Dittman.

He backed up the following week at Randwick again relying of the same combination to ensure he would be collecting on the day, which he did.

But it was something more than winning money that would be etched in Antony's memory from this day. He had seen his first champion galloper that day, Red Anchor, who was successful in the Group 2-AJC Apollo Stakes.

To refresh readers' memories, Red Anchor was an outstanding galloper who had to retire early (during his 3yo season) because of injury.

He only faced the starter 14 times for nine wins (eight of which were Black Type and included the Gr 1-WS Cox Plate, Gr 1-Caulfield Guineas, Gr 1-Victoria Derby and Gr 1-Champagne Stakes), 4 second placings and a third placing with \$773,880 in prizemoney. Red Anchor was named

Australian Horse of the Year in 1985.

With his obsession of all things racing constantly growing, Antony was given his first share in a horse when he was a 15yo.

Whilst his name was not recorded on the ownership papers because of his age, he was nonetheless a true convert to the ownership ranks.

Unfortunately for Antony this first foray into ownership was not successful, indeed the horse did not even make it to the races, but notwithstanding this he was not deterred at all – in fact it only strengthened his resolve.

The first official horse ownership for Antony was a share in Sir Spender (Secret Savings (USA)-Cachelle) who had been purchased at the 2002 Inglis Australian Easter Yearling Sale and given to Kerry Parker to train.

Sir Spender was a great learning curve for Antony as he found out very early the ups and downs of racing.

A very big horse, Sir Spender was plagued with injury and didn't face the starter until he was 3½yo but compensated by winning on debut. Antony still marvels at the great horsemanship shown by Kerry Parker with Sir Spender.

"The horse was a slow maturer and his impending first start as a late two-year-old was eagerly awaited. However, Kerry noticed that something was slightly amiss in the horse's gait one morning when riding trackwork.

"Although the horse was passed fit to continue his preparation following a vet's inspection and an x-ray, Kerry was sure something wasn't right and requested permission to submit the horse for a bone scan.

"Sure enough, the scan revealed the very early stages of an injury which would have become far more serious had Sir Spender progressed to his first race.

"I suspect that this would have slipped through the cracks if it wasn't for Kerry's personal handling of each horse, and would have resulted in long spells away from the track."

The next horse to race for Antony was Fille Majestique (King's Best (USA)-Kapalua Bay) who was purchased for a mere \$10,000 at the 2006 Inglis Classic Yearling Sale by Antony and a group of work colleagues under the watchful eye of Kerry Parker.

From the start Kerry felt the group had a real runner and Fille Majestique did not disappoint, recording six wins, 4 second placings and 5 third placings from her 44 starts for the team.

But it was to be the next horse purchased that would see the owners obtain what every owner aspires to; success in the Black Type arena.

The horse to which I am referring is, of course, Brilliant Light who took all before him in the autumn of last season.

Brilliant Light (Fantastic Light (USA)-Trick Taker (USA)) was purchased out of the 2007 Inglis Classic Yearling Sale by the same group that had raced Fille Majestique, namely Antony and his wife Ann Marie and father Dom, Tom O'Callaghan, Greg Debono, Julia Baird, Tony and Darlene O'Neill, Bill and Vicki McCully, Michael O'Callaghan, Mark Davison & Lisa Warlters.

Knocked down for the modest sum of \$32,000, trainer Kerry Parker was impressed straight away with the athleticism of the colt.

Interestingly, the horse wasn't on the initial list Antony and the group had selected for Kerry to look at but the trainer had no doubt this was the horse that he wanted.

Brilliant Light's first preparation commenced with a win in an 800-metre trial at his home track at Kembla Grange. He then ran 2nd at Hawkesbury and 7th at Randwick before having a short break.

His second preparation started with a win at Kembla Grange over 1000m and then an 8th placing at Canterbury. A slight setback then enforced another break.

Brilliant Light's first run in his third

preparation was a fifth at Warwick Farm but all was not well and he was spelled again.

When he returned for his fourth preparation, Brilliant Light had filled out and was starting to grow into the beautiful frame that his trainer had so admired as a yearling.

His first-up run yielded a 4th placing on the Kensington track followed by a seventh at Newcastle.

He then strung together three consecutive wins at Kembla Grange, Gosford and Rosehill before being spelled again for his tilt with the autumn carnival.

His fifth preparation was to be his crowning glory in his career to date. His first run back netted him a win at Rosehill Gardens followed by a second in the NJC Newcastle Newmarket at Group 3 level.

This was followed by a win in the Gr 2-STC Ajax Stakes at Rosehill, a win in the Listed-AJC Royal Parma Stakes at Randwick and a third placing in the Gr 1-AJC Doncaster Handicap at Randwick; a mere 1.7 lengths from the winner Rangirangdoo (NZ) – a fantastic effort considering the horse had drawn barrier 16.

To the great delight of his owners and indeed all present on the night, Brilliant Light was crowned NSW Provincial Horse of the Year at the 2010 NSWROA Racing's Night of Champions last August.

Brilliant Light returned for his sixth preparation shortly thereafter but could not capture the form of his previous preparation finishing a fighting 6th in the Gr 2-AJC Warwick Stakes, before a disappointing 9th in the Gr 2-STC Theo Marks Stakes and 8th in the Gr 3-AJC Bill Ritchie Handicap.

The ever prudent Kerry Parker decided another break was in order and tipped the horse out again.

Brilliant Light came back to work early last month after a 10-week break and is likely to follow a similar pattern as last autumn culminating with the Doncaster Handicap.

The next horse purchased, Eleecopter (Spinning World (USA)-Eleebana), was the horse the group never intended to buy as the plan was to sit the year out.

A bargain buy at the 2009 Inglis Classic Yearling Sale (presumably because of equine influenza) at \$14,000, Kerry Parker liked the filly a lot.

In fact she was the first horse the team

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had picked that had received Kerry’s blessing. The plan was to race for fun only with no high expectations.

Luckily that was the plan as the filly bowed her tendon in her initial preparation and had to have six months off.

Returning as a 3yo she ran second in an 800m trial at her home track of Kembla Grange and then won comfortably on debut at Queanbeyan last November over 1200m.

At the time of writing Eleecopter had just finished a close-up fifth in her second race start in a Goulburn Benchmark 55 after having a torrid run.

Antony is confident that Kerry’s patience with the filly will see her in the winner’s circle again in the not too distant future.

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Although purchased as a birthday present, Antony insisted the group came into the filly because “racing wouldn’t be the same without them”.

Excitabella had her first preparation and despite some initial setbacks, is now back on track and should be in work in the near future.

Antony is very quick to point out that he has had great assistance from various people within the industry over the years but would like to thank in particular:-

- Kerry Parker who “is not only is a great horseman and the most patient person I have ever met, but also a great friend”;
- the vets at Illawarra Equine Centre and in particular Dave Searle who “has held our hands through various setbacks”;
- Jay Ford who “has been a big part of



Antony Surace collects the NSW Provincial Champion Horse of the Year Award

the success we have had with Brilliant Light”;

- Tom O’Callaghan and Greg Debono who are racing ‘tragics’ with a passion for the industry like myself”;
- my parents who “continually encourage and support my interest in racing” and, of course
- my wife Ann Marie who “has gone from tolerating my obsession to sharing the passion (just about!) and makes everything worthwhile”.

When asked the question: “What would you say to someone contemplating entering into the ownership ranks?”

Antony said: “There are two ways of doing this – either with an accredited syndicate or with a good bunch of friends who have similar goals.

“It is essential to have a trainer/ bloodstock agent who can pick you a good horse like Kerry has continually done for us. And most importantly, don’t spend all your money on the initial purchase – have a reserve “bank” to cover things in case everything does not go to plan.”

In closing Antony remarked: “After the

success we have had with Brilliant Light last season it seems hard to imagine we could do it all again this autumn.

“Never in my wildest dreams did I think we would achieve so much with Brilliant Light so quickly culminating in his winning the NSW Provincial Champion Horse of the Year Award at the NSWROA Racing’s Night of Champions”.

Who’s to say that Brilliant Light cannot go that one step further this year and take out the race that Antony would like to win more than any other – the Group 1-AJC Doncaster Handicap. Only time will tell.

Racehorse ownership – there is nothing quite like it! Racehorse owners are very special people – are you one? If not, why not give it a go!

If you are interested in participating in this wonderful sport why not become a member of NSW Racehorse Owners Association.

Membership applications are now being taken for the 2011 membership year. Simply visit our website - [www.nswroa.com.au](http://www.nswroa.com.au) or telephone the NSWROA office on (02) 9299 4299. **RNSW**



Brilliant Light (Jay Ford, green, white sleeves & cap) holds off Centennial Park (Michael Rodd, orange) to take out the Group 2-Ajax Stakes at Rosehill Gardens. Picture by Steve Hart