

It's all in the NUMBERS



At a recent NSWROA Night Racing Function at Canterbury Park are (L-R): Michael Kissane, Ray McDowell, Max Whitby, Sharon Hunt and John Vouris

JOHN VOURIS HAS BEEN AN AVID RACING MAN ALL HIS LIFE AND IS LUCKY ENOUGH TO HAVE OWNED A SPECIAL GALLOPER WORDS: SHARON HUNT (EXECUTIVE OFFICER – NSWROA)

In early March 2011, John Youris was appointed vice-president of NSW Racehorse Owners Association (NSWROA) taking on a second role to accompany his existing treasurer position.

A Chartered Accountant by trade and partner at Lawler Partners since 2006, John has been a 'numbers man' for as long as he can remember.

In a career which has spanned some 38 years to date, John has a strong grounding with various firms in a tough industry before taking on his first partnership at Star Dean-Wilcocks from 1990 to 1993.

Since that time he has been a partner at Court & Co (1994-1997), Youris & Bell (1997-2006) and now Lawler Partners.

But where did his fascination with numbers begin you ask? "For as long as I can remember" was John's response.

As a precocious child growing up and attending school in the working class suburb of Redfern in the late 1950's/early 1960's, John's love of numbers ably assisted him with his spotter's job for the local SP Bookie.

John recalled: "It was an exciting time for a youngster back then, watching the money turning over.

"I remember going to Randwick; starting on the Flat (it was free entry) then moving onto the Ledger and finally to the Paddock.

"I dreamt that one day I would be a member of the AJC and to now be a member of the AJC/STC (now the merged Australian Turf Club) and VRC is an honour and privilege."

This introduction into the racing industry was to begin his great love of the sport. It was during his time in High School,

attending both Cleveland Boys High and Kingsgrove North High that a funny situation arose.

"I waggged school and went to Canterbury races with two mates for the afternoon.

"My teacher was there as well and as soon as my mates saw him they skedaddled. The teacher came up to me and said 'what are you doing here and not at school?'

"I said 'more to the point - what are you doing here, sir?' We mutually agreed not tell anyone and exchanged tips."

John also remembers when the TAB was first introduced and that he used to take the betting slips and make believe he was having all these bets.

Racing is in the Youris family's blood with brother Gary the former chief finance



Before Too Long (Jim Cassidy) wins at Royal Randwick. Picture by Steve Hart

officer of the Australian Jockey Club, whilst son Andrew is general manager of Luxbet.

John's foray into racehorse ownership began with a horse named Baffled and he remembers his run at Wyong in a maiden.

"He was four lengths last and made up three lengths at the turn but was still last, and the hairs on the back of my neck were rising. To see my colours of red and green quarters, after the mighty South Sydney, on display was simply magnificent."

Another lasting memory for John was his introduction to 'extras' on a training account.

"I received a bill from the trainer and it had r/h @\$2 a day and this one month had a charge of \$62 on the account.

"I asked the trainer what the charge was and he said rug hire. I said how much for a rug and he said \$50. I said buy him one and don't charge me again."

John has had many horses since the early 1990's but his prized possession has been Before Too Long who was purchased by Sydney trainer Gary Portelli at the Inglis Premier Yearling Sale in Melbourne in 2001 for a modest \$40,000.

John was part of a syndicate which included well-known and respected bloodstock agent Vin Cox, who raced Before Too Long.

In a race career of 20 starts, Before Too Long (Belong to Many (USA)-Asian Reef (GB)) recorded 4 wins (including a Group 2 and Listed Race), 2 second placings (including a Listed Race) and 3 third placings (including 2 Group 3's) and collected \$278,300 in career prizemoney.

Before Too Long commenced racing in her two-year-old year and had five starts. She scored a first-up win at Newcastle over 900-metres, then after failing in the Inglis Sales Incentive race in Melbourne, she returned to Sydney for a second in a 1200m race at Rosehill which showed her connections enough promise to accept for the Group 1-STC Golden Slipper Stakes.

Fillies did quinnella the Golden Slipper that year (Calaway Gal & Victory Vein) with Before Too Long finishing some 3.2 lengths from the winner in 9th place after having led until the final 300m.

Her last run as a two-year-old was to be her best when she bolted away with the Listed-AJC Keith McKay Quality over 1200m and repaid her owners' faith.

Following a spell, Before Too Long resumed racing as a three-year-old with a campaign in Melbourne which was to be her crowning glory.

First-up was a second placing in the Listed-William Crockett Stakes at Moonee Valley followed by a third in the Group 3-McNeil Stakes at Caulfield and a third placing in the Group 3-C.S. Hayes Stakes at Moonee Valley.

Her last run in Melbourne was in the Group 2-MVRC Champagne Stakes at Moonee Valley over 1200m where she scored a very impressive win over Innovation Girl.

John recalls this win with much fondness: "I was with 10 of my mates on our annual Cox Plate tour when Before Too Long won the Champagne Stakes. All of them backed her and I can tell you we had a great night!"

As all owners know the racing game is full of highs and lows, it would be just on 12 months before Before Too Long raced again.

By this stage she was now four-years-old but still seemed on the precocious side which was demonstrated by her easy first-up win over 1000m at Randwick.

That win paved the way for another Melbourne sojourn where she finished fifth in the Group 2-MVRC Schweppes Stakes.

With the autumn carnival sprint races in Sydney the 'game plan' she was sent for a short let-up before resuming in the Listed-STC Satellite Stakes at Rosehill where she finished sixth. Next was the Group 2-Expressway Stakes where she finished in fourth position.

However, prizemoney eluded her in her

remaining two starts that campaign in the Group 3-AJC Liverpool City Cup and the Group 3-STC Star Kingdom Stakes.

After a short spell, it was decided that a trip to the Queensland Winter Carnival was in order but after finishing 6th over 1200m at Doomben she was tipped out again.

Before Too Long resumed as a five-year-old in September 2004 but the old magic wasn't there. Her four starts in what was to be her last campaign netted a fourth, a seventh, a third and a fifth placing.

Whilst Before Too Long has been the best horse John has raced, he regards Kingston Town and Black Caviar the best horses he has seen.

"Kingston Town was a freak – he could win from 1200-metres to 3200-metres; there aren't many of those kind of horses around.

"Black Caviar is our modern day freak horse with acceleration that has to be seen to be believed. It's fantastic for our industry to have a World Champion Racehorse and Black Caviar will, I am sure, bring new people to the races in droves."

John has also ventured in the breeding side of the industry with his broodmare Hula Hoop producing 7 foals for John, three of which have been winners – Hulette, Polynesianprincess and Be Mine Tonight.

Currently John has three horses in training with Barbara Joseph – Ultimate Gaze, Let's Tell A Tail and the recent winner Bella Ballerina.

When asked why he decided to become a racehorse owner, John replied: "For the enjoyment and the thrill of winning.

"It is the only place I know where everyone is equal. If you have a good horse regardless of your colour, creed or religion, you will be accepted."

And his vision for the industry: "To see all participants work together for the good of racing. Whilst we might have different and varied stakes in the business, we should try to achieve a common goal."

Racehorse ownership – there is nothing quite like it!

If you are interested in participating in this wonderful sport why not become a member of NSW Racehorse Owners Association. Simply visit our website - www.nswroa.com.au - or telephone the NSWROA office on (02) 9299 4299. **RNSW**

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