

NSWROA member repurposing retired Thoroughbreds

HEATH & KRISSY HARRIS ARE PART OF THE THOROUGHBRED SPORT HORSE ASSOCIATION WHICH IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HORSE WELFARE AND PROVIDING RACEHORSES WITH A SECOND CAREER AND PURPOSE

WORDS: **JANE HENNING** (CEO – NSWROA)



ATC Racing Ambassador, Katelyn Mallyon, riding ex-racehorse Mr Bean at the Everest media launch (with trainer Heath Harris in the foreground)

Heath Harris is a horse trainer of a different kind to that usually being referred to in the racing world, however, it's likely that you have heard of Heath or at least seen the fruits of his work.

If there's a movie featuring horse talent, Heath has very likely been involved.

He has trained, horse-mastered, stunt co-ordinated and second unit directed over 40 feature films (including *Phar Lap*, *The Man from Snowy River* and *Racing Stripes*) and approximately 120 commercials and television series.

Heath's profession has resulted in the Thoroughbred becoming his favourite breed to work with.

"They are the ultimate equine athletes," said Heath, "and unfortunately, they are currently highly underutilised by the equestrian industry."

Heath's wife, top show jumping rider Krissy Harris and her friend Dr Karin Attebo, are members of the NSW Racehorse Association.

Krissy represented Australia in the World Cup Final (1997) and World Championships (1998) on the Thoroughbred gelding Mr Popeye, who was 1997 NSW Horse of the Year.

Karin Attebo is an eye surgeon and she and her spinal surgeon husband Andrew Cree are part-owners of over 20 racehorses.

They are passionate about horse welfare and providing racehorses with a second career and purpose.

Group 1-winning former jockey Katelyn Mallyon is now concentrating her riding talents on retired racehorses.

Katelyn, who is the ATC Racing Ambassador for the 2019 Everest Carnival, stole the show at The Everest media launch on the Heath Harris retrained Mr Bean, a More Than Ready son who raced as 'Bold Don', rearing high into the air with the Randwick track as the backdrop.

Nicole Poetsch, whose grandfather was a champion outback jockey and uncle was a country trainer, is a show jumping rider who successfully competes on a Thoroughbred.

She is the fifth person making up the well credentialed team which has formed the Thoroughbred Sport Horse Association.



Thoroughbred Sport Horse Association Director, Krissy Harris, winning a World Cup Qualifier on ex-racehorse, Mr Popeye. They represented Australia at the World Cup Final in 1998

Nicole Poetsch, whose grandfather was a champion outback jockey and uncle was a country trainer, is a show jumping rider who successfully competes on a Thoroughbred.

"The aim of the Association is not only to create productive careers for our Thoroughbreds coming off the track," explained Heath, "but to increase the market value of Thoroughbreds entering equestrian fields.

"Once upon a time, there was a good market for Thoroughbreds in all disciplines and they were competing successfully at International level, including at the Olympics," Heath continued.

"Australian Thoroughbreds that have reached high levels in other disciplines have been sold overseas for seven figure sums in the past.

"The rapidly rising popularity of the Warmblood in dressage and show jumping has led to a decline in the market for Thoroughbreds, who are now practically being given away after

racing.

"Some are just being left in paddocks and even when they are retrained by well-meaning groups, poor market value doesn't make it a long-term solution."

The Thoroughbred Sport Horse Association has some innovative ideas for improving the image and value of our retiring racehorses.

These include obtaining funding for prizemoney to be awarded to dedicated Thoroughbred-only equestrian classes.

"Like bonus schemes so popular in the racing industry, this incentivises people to buy and compete Thoroughbreds. The more demand, the higher the off-the-track prices will be," explained Heath.

"We have had a couple of high-profile studs and owners contribute to our funding, but we would like to obtain more support from the racing and breeding industries."

The Thoroughbred Sport Horse Association is currently seeking tax deductible sponsorship from businesses and individuals for Thoroughbred classes at NSW horse shows for the 2019/2020 financial year.

If you would like more information on how to assist in creating a long-term market for our beloved ex-racehorses, please contact Krissy Harris on 0459 168 782. **RNSW**